

# Friendship grew out of hospitality

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

New Year's Eve 1959 is a date that will forever stand out in the mind of Father John Rosse.

He was 32 years old at the time and had been chaplain at Rochester's St. Mary's Hospital for one year. That evening, a hospital staffer told him a young soldier was looking for his sister, Marion Amon. The soldier, who had flown to Rochester from his station in Germany, said the Red Cross informed him that Marion was dying at St. Mary's Hospital. But no patient by her name had been admitted.

As it turned out, 22-year-old Pfc. Gabriel Amon was at the right hospital but in the wrong state. After calling the chaplain of St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minn., Father Rosse confirmed that Amon's sister was indeed there, and wasn't expected to live much longer.

Amon was unable to get a flight out of New York that night, so Father Rosse let him stay in one of the hospital's guest rooms. The two men stayed up all night talking and getting to know each other. After attending Mass and eating breakfast the next morning, Father Rosse drove Amon to the airport. When he arrived in Rochester, Minn., Amon's family brought him to the hospital to see his sister, who died six days later.

"I was just glad that I got to see her before she died," Amon said. Father Rosse's kindness and com-



Leila Navidi/Catholic Courier

An act of hospitality by Father John Rosse (right) during his tenure as chaplain of the former St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester resulted in more than 40 years of friendship with Gabriel Amon of Crookston, Minn. The two are shown Sept. 6 at St. Margaret Mary Church during Amon's visit to Irondequoit.

passion toward Amon resulted in a friendship of more than 40 years.

Touched by what Father Rosse did for him, Amon wrote him a letter, and the two began corresponding as well as exchanging Christmas cards and phone calls. Through the years they kept each other updated on their lives — Amon told of his marriage and the birth and growth of his three children, and Father Rosse of his 1983 appointment as pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in

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Greece.

More than 40 years later, Amon and Father Rosse decided it was time to meet in person once again. In early September, Amon and his wife, Jenny, made the trip from their home in Crookston, Minn., to St. Margaret Mary Rectory in Irondequoit, where Father Rosse resides.

"This visit has just been wonderful," Father Rosse said Sept. 5.

Father Rosse said he escorted his guests to a variety of area attractions, including the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard, Holy Name of Jesus Church, the former St. Mary's Hospital and Rochester's George Eastman House. They also traveled to Niagara Falls and Finger Lakes wine country. Amon, whose family is Lebanese in origin, returned the favor by cooking a Lebanese meal for Father Rosse while staying at the rectory.

"We hope to see one another more frequently in the future. Now it's my turn to go out there," Father Rosse said.

Neither Amon nor Father Rosse is certain how that long-ago mishap came about, but both agree that something positive came out of it.

"It certainly has taught me the value of hospitality. It was always interesting to get correspondence and to talk to him on the phone. I think that's taught me how important it is to really go out of your way and help people that are in trouble," Father Rosse said.

Amon said when he arrived at St. Mary's Hospital in 1959 and was told his sister wasn't there, he was thinking, "My God, now what do I do?" He felt relief after talking to Father Rosse, and said he is glad to have kept in touch with the priest.

"It was just that he was a very nice man and priest, and he was very kind," Amon said.

Faith & Family Catholic Courier | Diocese of Rochester, NY | October 9, 2003

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