

## **The Iceman Doesn't Cometh Anymore**

Many years ago, it was not uncommon to determine what day of the week it was by the person who knocked on our doors, or shouted from the streets that they had their products for sale. The ragman, the milkman, the coal man, the insurance man, the umbrella repairman, the pharmacy delivery boy, your personal physician and even the iceman used to come. It was not only a delightful opportunity for socializing, but it was like watching a number of moving parts intersect. It was a demonstration of community with each person sharing their gifts and talents as they eked out a living.

Today no one comes to the door. Maybe the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons might knock on the door occasionally, but without a front porch on newer homes - it may be a brief encounter. But the sadness is - even the priest doesn't come anymore. The remaining businesses are now centralized, and if you wish to interact with them, you must go to their web site or press 4 on your digital phone to speak with Customer Service! Also, we don't need the people anymore who used to come to our door. If something wears out, we dispose of it. Who fixes umbrellas anymore, and your prescription can come in the mail. But where is the priest? Sadly, in far too many places if you wish to see your priest you need to make an appointment to see him at the church. What used to be called "The Rector's Study" is now more like a business office, and in many instances, we keep "regular office hours." My early life in terms of church involvement was, to some extent, a result of many visits to our house by our priests. I dare say that many priests today have not been in the houses of their people, to see how they live, how they interact in their own environment.

Indeed, we have many good reasons for not visiting - but Facebook, email, Twitter, and Tweeting are poor substitutes for human interaction. We can offer what the TV Evangelists cannot - the personal element, and the Grace that comes from two Christians sharing their Faith in Jesus Christ.

As a Diocesan Bishop I would ask my priests to give me the names of some people to visit - a shut-in, a person who was angry with the church, a person who needed a friendly face. I cannot convey in words what those visits meant to me as I saw people in my Diocese, simply seeing them in their home element, with a cup of coffee, a few tears and some prayer.

Human beings need the Church, and the public ministry of Jesus shows Him in many homes. Years ago one of my curates told me that home visits were a waste of time because no one was home during the day anymore. I agreed with him and thanked him. I then told him that I would work the "daylight shift" and he could work the "afternoon/ evening shift" when there were people at home!

Well, perhaps the iceman doesn't cometh any more, but that does not mean that the clergy shouldn't.