

Chapter 26

Building

I formed a building committee from the year-around parishioners. We got permission from the bishop's building board to hire an architect, whom a man on the bishop's building board highly recommended. This architect explored the possibility of converting the convent building into a religious teaching center. His report was that the rooms would be too small. My committee decided to sell the hall and convent and build a hall near the church. The architect was to draw plans for the new hall. I put my trust in him because he was recommended by the bishop's building board. No one on the board told us that he had been hired by a school to draw plans for several buildings. For this school he drew on and on. One of the priests from the school later told me that the architect had dreams of grandeur. So they fired him and paid him off to get rid of him. As a beginner in building I fell into the same trap.

When I first contacted this architect he said, "Since you have a small parish, I will charge you less and save you money." He drew preliminary plan after plan. Each week he would make changes and I would go to see him and object to the changes and he would say, "Oh, I will change that by next week." I took one of his building sketches to my building board, one member said, "The building looks like a hotdog." He drew for several months and never finished a plan, just ran up the bill. I met with the bishop's building board and this architect to get some help. The bishop's building board ignored me and gave this architect the green light to draw stone walls and a big fireplace. I got no help. The bishop's building board is suppose to help

pastors when they build. I now realize that the bishop had a hand in this. I was his scapegoat.

My building committee became upset. We needed help. I added to my committee four men from the vacation home parishioners who were knowledgeable of building, a doctor and a builder, a commercial appraiser, a chemical engineer and a lawyer. This whole committee met with the architect and voted to fire him and pay him off to get rid of him. We just couldn't let that architect run up a bill for nothing. The bishop called me and said that I had poor judgement. Now we got only opposition from the bishop's board. So my building committee met and decided to work around the bishop's building board. With permission we had sold the convent and the old hall and we had to have a place for religious instructions. The doctor on my committee recommended a corporate builder, whose owner had a vacation home in the parish. This corporation had its own architect and building foremen. The committee appointed the doctor to take over the project. The corporation drew the plans and the doctor took them for approval of the bishop's building board. This board wanted to study them; they were delaying. Meanwhile, we had to buy property across the street to provide enough parking.

A couple months later, my parish had another meeting with the bishop's building board. I sent my committee. I would not go as I would have told them off. The doctor on my committee, by pure determination, forced them to approve our plans. Afterwards, one of the men from my committee said, "I'm convinced that the bishop's building board hates our parish." This was sad; the bishop's board treated us badly.

The plans were perfect, a multi-purpose building with good design, an attractive building. A building completely equipped for all activities. The surprising thing was that we would pay cash for it. Very few churches can do that. We signed the contract. Later, I got a call from the bishop claiming that I had vacation home people on my committee ~~who~~ were forcing their will on the people of the parish. This was not true as the vacation home people were only put on the committee after we needed help. The bishop's building board was trying to show its authority. I will never build another building with this kind of treatment.

The foreman came to start the building. The carpenters poured concrete for the footings and floor. Then the rain came and the water ran across the concrete like a river. In between the showers, the carpenters built the walls. Before they could put on the roof, it began to rain in earnest. We received 20 inches of rain in a month. The weatherman saw no relief in sight. Our building was getting soaked. This was the result of the delay by the bishop's building board. The carpenters stood around day after day trying to keep dry. The building foreman went to the tavern and got drunk. One night someone broke into the builder's shed and stole a power saw and drill. If the rain ever stops, the building will have to dry before the roof can be built. The good Lord will provide. It will take over six months to build this completely insulated building. While we were building, a herd of elk ran through the town; I guess there were too many hunters in the woods.

The people all agreed that this building was the best thing that we ever did. It unified the parish. There were continuous activities in that hall: religious instruction classes, meetings,

dinners, receptions, bingo and other activities. We bought the best of equipment. Priests who have seen the hall admire it. I heard one priest say, "I wish I had a hall like this in my parish."

While we were building, my secretary, housekeeper, and I went to see the hall before it was finished. The two young painters said to us, "We didn't know that the Catholic church would use such loud colors!" I answered, "I didn't pick the colors." They responded, "Let us know if later you want to change the colors." Then they showed us the colors: off white, light and dark blue, orange and ginger bread. We came back wondering. So I called the doctor in charge and told him what happened. He asked, "Where do the painters live?" I said, "In a little town by the sea." He calmed our fears by saying, "All they have ever seen is the side of a fishing boat. When the building is done, I am sure that the people will like it." This was the perfect answer. The people did like the building. Our building project took about two years. When the carpenters finished the building, they gave the keys to me. We then carpeted the side classrooms and eventually got commercial equipment for the kitchen. In all building today, Murphy's Law prevails, which is: If anything can go wrong it will. And our building project went according to Murphy's Law.: In a small town it is always harder to get competent help. The finished building was perfect, completely equipped and all paid for.

Just before Holy Week, the building was finished. On Good Friday, during Holy Week, a drunk was there for the service. He was very vocal and kept calling out, "Pray for President Carter." Early Holy Saturday morning, I found the church doors standing open. The drunk had come back about 4:00 a.m., broke a window to get into the church and cut his hand. A priest

who was helping me, heard him call out, "Oh God, help me, Oh God, help me!" He wrapped a towel around his cut hand as we found the bloody towel in the back of the church. The ladies cleaned up the mess. I reported this to the police, but they found no one. During the Holy Week and Easter the church was full of people. When Easter was over, I ~~was~~ so tired that I could not sleep.

After Easter, I hired a paving company to blacktop the parking area. The parking area became a sand lot when they graded the ground for the building. Cars would drive on the loose sand and could not get out unless towed. The paving company had too many orders so we had to wait. All summer, cars were towed out of the sand. By the end of the summer the company blacktopped the parking lot. Now we needed sidewalks around the hall. Two men came to put them in, but they slanted them toward the building. They finally corrected this problem and the walks were in. A landscaper came and put in the shrubs and a sprinkling system around all the buildings. This sprinkling system was a help for me, as before this I did all the watering by hand.

Chapter 27

Death of my Mother and Aunt

During all of this building confusion, my mother was back ~~in~~ the hospital. She came home on Monday and I visited her on Tuesday and I went back to the parish on Wednesday. On Thursday, she was rushed back to the hospital and kept calling for me.

I got there 10 minutes after she died. This made me feel guilty as I could have hurried. I had her funeral and buried her next to my father. Then I had her estate to care for. My aunt, who lived with my mother, could no longer live alone so she went to a rest home. I had a brother, a wounded veteran who moved into an apartment. I cleaned out the house and sold it.

Father Earl gave the sermon at my mother's funeral. He concluded with this poem.

"For the simple heart can never be denied. It comes a gift from the heavenly King. It builds a wall of love where it can hide until He spreads apart its gates to bring the selfless servant to His vast domain. Her she can lay aside her noble sword, grown weary from a long and harsh campaign, and take from gentle hands a just reward. For none but she will hear the angel's song or know the sweet perfection of its tone. When she joins her singing to that throng and kneels before the Ruler on His throne, the kingly smile will make all fears depart and the goal of love will crown the simple heart."

My aunt lived for ten months and died on my birthday. I had arranged and paid for her funeral after she went into the rest home. When she died, her body was lost. I called the funeral home to arrange for her funeral, but they didn't have her body. I said, "Please find her body." They found it at another funeral home and it arrived the evening before her funeral but with none of her clothing. So I asked the funeral home to provide. They said, "We will find something." I am sure my aunt will forgive me, being buried in borrowed clothing. After the funeral, I had her estate to settle. I had just about finished my mother's estate.

Chapter 28

Care for People

When I got back to the parish, I found a drunk asleep in the church. I called the police who took him away. There, in the pews, was a half bottle of Rocket Wine. That evening some Sisters came to Mass. After Mass, I told them what happened and I offered them the bottle of wine. I said, "If you drink this wine, you will probably take off like a rocket." No one took the wine.

The parish kept me very busy with the administration of the sacraments and the care of the parish plants. I was sort of a spark plug, as I kept things going. I had a special responsibility of caring for the sick and dying. We had weekly religious instructions for the children and adults. I taught the adult Bible classes.

A young man came to the door and asked for a room for the night. I rented and paid for a room at the old hotel. When he saw the room, he didn't like it. He went to the clerk and demanded that she give him back the money for the room. Such nerve!

A man asked me, "What do you do on the weekdays?" My day began with early morning Mass. Then after a little breakfast I worked with the secretary on the administration of the parish until noon. Occasionally, I had a funeral in the morning or a wedding. In the afternoon, I met in the parish center with the coordinators of religious instruction for the parish. Afterwards, I

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said my prayers, answered the phone and doorbell. Occasionally, go for a cup of coffee. In late afternoon, I visited the families of the parish. However, the unexpected call would come and sometimes change my schedule. In the evening, I gave instructions to people who wished to join the church and gave marriage instruction to couples who wished to marry. I also attended Parish council meetings, or the meetings of other parish organizations and all activities in the parish hall. My day usually ended about 9:00 p.m. After 10:00 p.m. my priest friends would call. I always tried to get to bed by 11:00 p.m. I would say that I had long days.

Someone asked, "How did you help people?" I helped them in all their needs. I gave them spiritual advice, I taught and helped their children, I rejoiced with them in their joys, I consoled them in their sorrows, and sometimes gave them financial aid. I was always there when they needed me. And above all, I gave them God's grace in the sacraments.

The church was located in the downtown area where there were several cocktail lounges. Occasionally, in the middle of the night about 3:00 a.m., some drunk would find the parish doorbell. I learned from experience that in the middle of the night I couldn't do anything for someone who was intoxicated. So I never answered the door that late at night. If the caller was persistent in ringing the bell, I called the police who would come and check the person out. If I was needed, they called me.

I always answered the telephone night and day for if there was an emergency, I was called by phone. One night the doorbell rang about 3:00 a.m., so I called the police who came and got

the guy. One hour later, the police called me as the fellow wanted to see me. He was a 30-year-old youth from Florida. He told me that he got his car stuck on the beach and he went for help. On returning the ocean was all around his car. He needed \$43.00 to tow his new Pacer out. At my rectory, he called his aunt in Florida. She talked to me and she said that she would send me \$100.00 but for him, nothing. The car was totaled and he had no insurance. I put him to work pulling weeds and when the aunt sent the money, I gave it to him. He probably left town without his car as it wouldn't run because the motor was full of sand from the sea. The water and sand from the sea will destroy a car.

Chapter 29

My Priest Classmates

When Fathers Earl and James came to this diocese from the mid-west, they knew no one. So my parents invited them to dinner every Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. For many years, they and I would go to my parents home for dinner on these holidays. We became very close friends. Eventually, we became pastors.

Many years after we were pastors, I met Father James in Chicago to drive with him to New York. Every year on his vacation, Father James drove to Chicago, to the Big Apple, up and down the East coast and through the South. He had been in every state in the union. I met him in Chicago and we had a good dinner at his sister's home. We toured Chicago, but he would not take me to West Chicago for he said, "That is where they shoot the whites." We drove to Cleveland and met his brother, then to Niagara Falls, then on to Albany, New York. On his trips, Father James met many priests from monasteries and we stayed at these monasteries. In Massachusetts, Father drove to the town of Lowell to see an old priest friend who was in a rest home. I had never been in that state before. As we drove along, Father said, "Over that hill is Boston, I have been there many times so we will not stop." I wanted to see everything that I could, but I missed Boston. When we completed the visit with the old priest, it began to rain hard. We headed for New York, and Father kept taking shortcuts and getting lost. He would say, "I have been here many times." We continued to get lost on his shortcuts.

After dark, we arrived in New Haven and toured the campus of Yale. The fog came up and somehow Father James took the wrong expressway and instead of going to N.Y. we were going to Rhode Island. It was late and we hadn't had dinner and I demanded that we stop to eat. In the dark, we saw some lights off to the right. We found that the lights were from a nightclub and we got some food just before closing time at 11:00 p.m. I asked for directions to a motel and the waitress said that if we would follow her on her way home, she would show us a motel. She led us to an old motel where we each got a room.

Father James came to my room and said, "We have got to get out of here. The locks on the doors are not good. Someone may come in and kill us tonight." My response was, "I'm not going, I'm exhausted. If they kill us, so what." We made it through the night and were alive in the morning. Back in New Haven, we had breakfast and got on the right expressway to N.Y. When we arrived at N.Y., Father James drove to Harlem to visit some nuns whom he knew. These nuns had two big guard dogs. I guess that they needed them.

From there, we drove to New Jersey to stay at a monastery. The monks offered the abandoned workmen's house to stay in. We would have to rough it in that house, so I went to a motel where I could get a good shower in the morning. We met the next day and toured N.Y., seeing most of the points of interest. The next night, we went to see a Broadway show. I know that we didn't have reservations. Father James went to the box office window and the girl said to one of the helpers, "Will you give me those tickets reserved for Mr. Kelly?" I could not believe it; we got tickets and saw the play "Fiddler on the Roof." The next day I flew home.

I took several trips with Father Earl. On one of these we drove into Canada. Father had a picture of a good looking motel and he insisted that we stay there. We drove an extra hour at night to find that motel. When we found it we discovered that the picture was taken many years ago as the motel now looked run down. We each got a room and in a little while Father came to my room and asked, "Do you realize that we are the only people in this wing? Doesn't that look suspicious?" I said, "No." He responded, "We must get out of here, as someone may come in and cut our throats." I gave him a determined response, "I need sleep and I will not leave. I must go to bed. If anyone comes in tonight, at least we will get our names in the paper." I went to bed. In the morning when we got up nothing had happened.

Father Earl and I took another trip together. We were driving along the coast and about 11:00 p.m. we were low on gas and all the motels had a "No Vacancy" sign. We went to an all night cafe and asked where we could get gas. The waitress said that the taxi would bring us gas; which they did and we paid dearly for it. We then decided to cross the mountains to a larger town to find a place to stay. In the larger town we found an all night hotel. We arrived at 3:00 a.m., exhausted. We went to the hotel for a room. The clerk said, "All we have is the bridal suite, but it is expensive." We asked, "How much?" He said, "It will cost you \$6.00 a night." We took it. It had 2 twin beds and a bathtub that was seven feet long. Imagine a bridal suite with twin beds. Father Earl snored at night. On that night I went to bed so exhausted that I did not hear anything.

Chapter 30

Caring for my Priest Friends

Father Earl and Father James were my best friends. We met each week in the city on our days off, where we had lunch, and in our younger days, we would play golf.

In the parish that I am now in, there was a small house behind the church that I had remodeled as a guest house for priests. Father Earl often stayed in that house on his visits. He called it the "slave quarters." Jokingly he said, "The master lives in the big house, the slave lives in the little house." When Father James came and heard this, he would not stay in that house. It was a very nice house but he would not stay in it.

When these two priests were pastors they lived about 100 miles apart and about the same distance from me. To keep in contact, we would call each other about one night each week. Father Earl called me one evening and said, "A women called me tonight and was going to commit suicide. I talked to her for one half hour to change her mind. And when I finished, I said, 'Hang in there now.' Then he asked me, 'Did I say the wrong thing?' I knew that he was joking.

Once in awhile these two priest would visit each other and stay overnight. In the evening they would have a couple of drinks and then begin to argue. They were both stubborn and neither would give an inch. The argument would become heated and my phone would ring about

1:00 a.m. I would hear Father Earl say, "Father James is leaving, he is going to get a motel. He won't stay." I would say, "Let me talk to Father James." Father James would come to the phone and I would say, "You can't leave this time of the night and expect to find a motel." Father James would say, "But the master of the plantation is driving me out." My conversation would go on for about one half hour. Sometimes I won and sometimes I did not. Months later, Father Earl would go to visit Father James and the situation would be repeated. Again they would call me in the wee hours of the morning. My good night's sleep would be ruined.

One night after midnight I received a call from the housekeeper of Father James. She said, "Father, you must help as Father James has barricaded himself in the rectory and has not come out for two days." I lived 100 miles away and it was late at night. I called Father's doctor at his home and after explaining what happened, demanded, "Doctor, you must go and get Father James out." The doctor went and put Father James in the hospital. Later he told me that Father had extremely low blood count. It just proved that priests are human.

Father Earl was coming to visit me and we were to meet at the hotel. Father was not well as he had extreme diabetes. He was weaving down the highway in his car with a police officer following him. I saw this so I went to the hotel to wait for him. When he arrived at the hotel he told me what happened. The police stopped him and asked him to recite the alphabet, which he did backwards and forwards. Then he rattled off the books of the Bible. The policeman was frightened off. Father stayed at my house, drinking too much each day. He needed help so I called the bishop who sent Father away for the cure. Father was mad at me at first but afterwards

we were again the best of friends. A few years later, Father Earl had a triple by-pass. Father James also had trouble with alcohol. The bishop sent him for the cure. After this, these two priests retired.

After they retired, I invited them several times to go with me to the offices of the bishop. Every time they refused as they said, "When we retired, the bishop left a bad taste in our mouths." From this statement, I know that this same bishop gave them a rough time.

I have taken several trips to Hawaii with another very close priest friend. We also made a trip to Mexico.

Chapter 31

Pastors Work

The old motel across from the church was taken down. The wind blew the sand from the vacant land across our property. I bought grass seed and scattered it on the sand hoping that it would grow and stop the blowing sand. It did not rain and the pigeons came and ate the seed. I could not win.

When I came to this parish there were 36 pigeons on the roof of the rectory, making a mess all around. "How do I get rid of pigeons?" I asked myself. I tried to buy a stuffed owl for I knew an owl would do it. I couldn't find a stuffed owl anywhere. So I bought one made of plaster of paris. I put it on the roof and it worked for awhile; then the pigeons started sitting next to it. Along came a stray cat. I showed it how to climb to the roof and it walked along the ridge of the roof. All the pigeons left and never returned.

This parish kept me very busy; it was always one thing after another, and always the unexpected. People always filled the town with their conventions. During the Winter, we would get many drifters who needed a room. One of them was Bob, whom I got a job as a dish washer. Later, he called me one morning at 4:00 a.m. and said "I have a broken arm and someone shot at me." What in the world was he doing? That was the last time I heard from him.

Another young man came to my door and asked for a handout. He looked a little bleary

eyed, probably from some drug. I gave him a little money and he left. He went to the Southern part of my parish and climbed a huge monolith rock by the ocean. It could only be reached at low tide. It is a nesting place for sea birds and is protected by federal law, which forbids anyone from climbing it. This young man climbed to the top, disturbing the nesting birds. These birds, if disturbed, may fly into the rock and kill themselves. The young man could not get down, so the Coast Guard was called to rescue him with their helicopter. The helicopter was too large and would probably blow him off the rock. When a smaller helicopter came and got him down, the police arrested him. They asked him how he planned to get down. He answered, "I planned to go to the ocean side and jump." Clearly, he had poor judgement as that rock was over 200 feet high and under the water were many submerged rocks. If he had jumped, he would have died. And to think my money helped him.

There was an elderly couple that I took communion to each month. The man was full of cancer and his elderly wife took care of him. Occasionally, he went to the hospital for treatment and afterward they took him home. This went on for a several years. He became weaker and very ill. They rushed him to the hospital where the doctors said he was dying. His wife felt that she could no longer care for him. To her surprise, he recovered and the hospital sent him home. It was such a shock to her that she jumped off the bridge into the river and drowned. Events like this put me under constant stress.

Now what would I do with this old man who can't live alone? At his wife's funeral I will see if there are any relatives, and if not I will find someone to care for him.

Chapter 32

My Faithful Servers

I trained boys to be altar boys every year since I became a priest. To build interest and have faithful servers, we took them on trips. Every year between Christmas and New Years, I would take the faithful altar boys to the mountains to ski. I taught many of them to ski. We would stay overnight in motels or condominiums--what a hassle with 12 or more boys! We would eat in cafes where the boys would order more than they could eat--having eyes bigger than their stomachs. On these trips we sometimes had a child that would become car sick and wouldn't tell anyone until it was too late. I would stop my car. The boys would jump out and all stand around gagging, while I cleaned the car--what great fun! Fortunately, we never had any injuries.

Each summer, we took our faithful altar boys tent camping for several days at my high clear mountain lake. We always camped by the lake under the trees. At night we had a campfire. I was putting my Boy Scout experiences into practice. The mountains are wonderful and I really enjoyed them. High up in the mountains at night, we could see billions of stars and we even saw satellites pass through the sky. The boys had a wonderful time.

Once while driving the altar boys to the lake on a dusty narrow road, a little bear cub was running ahead of my car. One of the boys shouted, "Stop the car! I want to catch that baby bear!" I stopped the car but I wouldn't let the boys out. I said, "If anyone grabs that cub the

mother bear will come out of the woods in a flash and pounce on you. Never touch a wild animal." The cub ran off into the woods.

Every year I would train the altar boys for all the ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter. They would do so well. Sometimes, during Holy Week, the schools would have a track meet which meant that I couldn't get servers that I needed. One year I prayed for rain and it came. The rain canceled the track meet and I had boys to serve.

We also took the altar boys ice skating, which they had never done before. The agile ones found it easy to learn, but those who were less agile or overweight found it hard, especially when they fell on the ice.

One of my former altar boys, at the age of 20, had a tumor removed from his brain. A few months later, just before Christmas, he died. When I came to this parish he was a little boy, age 9, and a very good server. He was a very cocky and outspoken boy. He used to tell visiting priests what they were supposed to do in church, which would upset them. They would ask me, "Who is that smart kid?" This boy wore thick glasses and once when we had the boys in the mountains playing in the snow, he lost his glasses while sledding. Someone asked him, "Why don't you take your glasses off while sledding?" His answer was, "The doctor said that I must always keep my glasses on."

During the last few years that I was with this parish, a young Coast Guardsman

volunteered to take over the altar boys. He trained and assigned them to serve. I did this before he came to help. He was a younger man and the boys could better relate to him. He went along on all the camping and ski trips and took care of the boys. He would ski with them and in the summer he would swim with them and he taught them water safety. I could not have gone on these trips without him as I was getting older and I needed his help.

On one of the camping trips, on the way home we stayed over night at a motel. The boys found a defective soft drink machine which gave two cans of pop for 50 cents and often gave back the money. The boys had quite a time with it--free pop. It finally gave out nine dollars in quarters. That was the limit, one doesn't mind something free, but that was too much. I collected the money and turned it in at the office.

On another camping trip in the summer, a bear pushed over a dumpster with a crash near our tents after dark. Two older boys with flashlights ran to the dumpster and out came a big black bear. It scared the kids. For some reason, children are afraid of bears. As a result, my tent filled with boys and their sleeping bags. It added excitement to the trip. Later, the rangers captured the bear and moved it to another area. On our trips we lived dangerously, but fortunately, no one was injured. The Coast Guardsman helped for several years until he was transferred. I sure missed his help.

Chapter 33

Strange Happenings

I went one evening to the old hotel for dinner. A woman came in crying and drinking. She sat down by me. She told me that she lost her husband a year ago and has been drunk ever since. He left her well off financially. Six months ago she met a man in Reno, whom she knew. They talked for several hours and got married. This man had some bills to pay so she gave him fifty thousand dollars and he went off and left her. Tonight she was going to commit suicide. She opened her purse and gave me her loaded pistol so she wouldn't shoot herself. There I was in the hotel restaurant, holding a loaded gun. I talked to her for two hours, then I called a lady to come to help her.

The wind was blowing at 80 miles an hour and the wall of the dining room was moving back and forth. The owner of the hotel came with some boards to prop the wall. When I left, I gave the gun to the clerk. What a night! When I got home the phone rang and there was a strange woman who said, "Father, I need help. I am a witch and I was married to a warlock. We lived in a witches' cauldron. My husband divorced me and put a curse on me and my 32 children. I pray a lot but I can't get rid of the curse." We talked over one half hour and then I told her, "You continue to pray a lot and I will pray a lot and the curse will go away." My advice must have worked as I never heard from her again.

The weekends were so hard on me that I usually said, "I can't have another weekend like

this!" I always did. The job never ended as I was on duty seven days a week and 24 hours a day. I was the only priest in the parish, except in the summer. Even if I got sick, I still had to work. Each year I had a couple of colds and a touch of the flu. My system was so run down that I caught every germ.

Tourists would come in the summer and leave their female cats which would soon have kittens. One day I discovered four kittens so I called the dogcatcher. He was good at catching dogs, but he could never catch cats with his mink cage. So I built my own trap, using 2 X 4's and chicken wire. We would prop it up on one end with a stick with a string attached to it. After putting food in the center, we would wait until the kittens went in to eat. Then we would pull the string and the kittens would be in the cage. The dogcatcher would come to get them. We had to control the kittens or the church would be overrun with cats. One year, the ladies insisted that I keep the kittens. One of them got on the motor of a lady's car. When she started her car, the motor injured the kitten. The male kittens, when half grown, were driven off by the area tomcat. The tomcat would only allow the female kittens to remain.

A prize cat came to the church door. The stray cats wouldn't let it eat and finally drove it off. It was silver in color with blue eyes and a tail like a fox. Later I tried to find it, but it was gone.

Chapter 34

Fun Loving Tourists

At one Saturday evening Mass, a man protested loudly, "You are not allowed to have red on the altar servers." I tried to calm him down by telling him that we could use red, white, or black. He finally got up and left. It is things like this that keep one in turmoil.

In this town, when the fire sirens went off, everyone ran to look; it broke the monotony. The fire engines were going to the old hotel. There was a fire on the upper floor, which set off the sprinklers and water was dripping through the ceilings. The fire department put out the fire which was started by a cook who was fired.

One day I went out for coffee, and while I was gone someone smashed in the front door of the rectory. They got in but when they detected my burglar alarm they made a hasty exit.

The dogcatcher retired and his job was given to a young woman. I went to see her and I asked, "Are you the dogcatcher?" Emphatically she answered, "No, I am the animal control person." I don't think that I made a hit with her. It was beneath the woman's dignity to be called a dogcatcher.

Every 4th of July, thousands of people would come to see the fireworks on the beach. All the driftwood logs on the beach would be on fire. There they would cook their hotdogs and

marshmallows, while waiting to see the fireworks. It created quite a sight. After the fireworks were over, there was a big traffic jam and a wild time in the town that night. Once there was a bottle throwing battle on the main street.

A boat had capsized in the surf and four young men drowned. The Coast Guard helicopter came but was only able to recover the bodies. All summer, visitors swimming in the ocean got in trouble as they treated the ocean like a big lake. They didn't realize that the ocean is very dangerous. It has riptides, undertows, and the unexpected big wave. It surely is no lake. Without the lifeguards, many would drown.

I always took a week off after Labor Day to get away from the tourists. Once I rented a van and went to a mountain lake to fish. I caught a big fish while rowing a boat. My net was too small; it would not go over the head or the tail of the fish. I decided to beach the fish. I held the pole in my right hand and rowed with my left, then I put the pole in my left hand and rowed with my right. I did this all the way across the lake and beached the fish on the shore. It was a beautiful trout.

When I got home, my sister called me and told me that one of her sons who was in the navy, had cancer of the lymph gland. This was a shock to me.

One of the auxiliary bishops came to dedicate our new hall after the 11:00 a.m. Sunday Mass. Everything was done. I was glad that the building project was finished. It was an awful

pressure on me, especially since my mother and aunt died during our building. Now I can hand the building over to the people to run.

I went to the city each week, to take care of my mother's and aunt's estates, and to visit my brother and my uncle, who was full of cancer. On my return a lady told me that a report came over the police radio that a white rabbit was eating the new shrubs around the church. It is hard to win!

A seafood restaurant had a black cat hiding in it. The owner had called the dogcatcher but she had no luck. I volunteered to catch the cat after the restaurant closed for the Winter. To catch the cat, I put flour on the floor and the next day there were cat tracks. However, we found no cat. I set my trap, but no cat. I would meow outside and the cat inside would answer. One girl said it was a spook. It became a little spooky. I opened the door and called in another cat from the outside with some food. Then out came this black cat from the motor of the ice making machine. I chased them both outside. The black cat had hidden on the motor of that machine for two months.

Chapter 35

Bingo

Our next project in the parish was to start bingo games in the new hall. We had a bingo expert come to meet with the men. It was all explained, especially about giving big prizes. The men wanted to start small, but the expert convinced them to give big prizes. On the night that we had the first games, I was even worried that we might go broke. We kept our fingers crossed. On that first night, we made \$128.00; from then on the bingo took off and about doubled the parish income. With this extra money we were able to have a very active parish. We helped those in need, put on social events, conducted religious instructions, and bought all the needed equipment. Each year we had a big Halloween party in the hall for all the children and the adults who wished to come. All this was possible from the bingo money.

Along with all these extra events, I carried on the parish work of the administration of the sacraments, Masses, and the care of the sick and dying.

One morning, when I went into the church to say Mass, I could hardly breathe. I smelled roses. Roses are nice flowers, probably some of the most beautiful flowers in the world. They are very delicate and have a fragrant scent. Red roses are probably the most beautiful of all roses. There were red roses everywhere in my parish church, a bouquet on every altar and I even found rose petals in my books. I found the good woman who put them there and asked, "What is going on?" "Oh," she said, "Red is the color of blood, so I am covering the altars with red

roses to make up for the sins of others." I am allergic to roses. At my daily Masses during the week, the scent of roses got stronger as they aged. It took a few weeks to convince her to stop. She was getting the best of me; I was all choked up.

I never thought that a priest would have so many problems like this. My idea of a priest was like those shown in the movie "Going My Way."

My life as a priest has been one terrific ride; filled with all kinds of challenges. Every day I asked God for help.

Chapter 36

Joys of Christmas

Christmas was a wonderful time, especially for our children, with all the parties. Our church was professionally decorated with trees, holly, flowers, and the Christmas crib. One felt the true spirit of Christmas. New Year's followed which was a time for the parents, who would leave their children home, and go out to drink out the old year and bring in the new. And they all seemed to get home before the cold weather came.

Being on the coast, we often had wind storms. It was not unusual to see a part of a roof blowing away, or to find rain leaks in any roof. The rain blew in sheets; you could see it. It did not come down, it came sideways. Mixed with the blowing rain there was sand which covered everything.

Once a year I would go to the city for a physical checkup. The doctors would always find active ulcers, which I just had to put up with. Stress is a big factor in one's health. A lot of this came from building the hall and the death of my mother and aunt. My two priest friends were back East for the treatment of alcoholism. This can strike any priest as we are always on duty taking care of the problems of people.

There are several joys that we priests experience, such as getting sinners back to God, seeing the sparkling eyes of children, especially when they make their first Holy Communion,

helping the dying and those in grief, and seeing the success of your parish.

Now our bingo game was having trouble. The air was blue with smoke and people were complaining. This necessitated that we spent several thousand dollars to put in exhaust fans which corrected the problem.

One Saturday, after the 5:00 p.m. Mass, I got a call from a woman who was in tears. She said that she was troubled with the devil and wanted some Holy Water. I went to see her and anointed her. This made her feel better. When I got back, I had no time for dinner. I managed a cup of coffee and then right over to church to hear confessions.

Every summer and fall I had several weddings. We must give them instructions, fill out all the papers, followed by a rehearsal and the wedding. I was always invited to attend the reception, which I did, but only for a short time as I had a little too much to do.

One Sunday at Mass, a little man with a long beard came and sat in the front pew. He shouted out the "Our Father". During communion he sat and ate his lunch from a brown bag. It was very strange. We got all the cuckoos. A priest who taught in college came to help me during the summer. He laughed about all the strange happenings. I bet that he appreciated his teaching job when he got back to school. One priest had a degree in counseling which he found didn't help with the beggars at the door. I just saw a statement in the paper which read, "Support your local witch doctor." Sure fits with our times.

People ask, "How does a priest handle the onslaught of women?" There are some women that are over friendly. However, it takes two to tango. Priests are taught that they must keep an invisible wall between themselves and the laypersons and never cross it. We are to be very friendly, kind, and understanding, but familiarity breeds contempt. A married priest would have very little time for his wife and family because the work of the parish would come first. A marriage like that would never last. The priest is married to Christ and His Church.

Chapter 37

Death of my Brother and Uncle

A little less than two years after I buried my aunt, I received a call from the morgue that my brother had died suddenly. His body lay in his apartment four days before someone found him. My brother fought in the infantry against the Japanese, in the South Pacific in the Second World war. He was wounded and both of his legs were filled with shrapnel. He came home "shell shocked" from which he never recovered. He received a pension from the army. I took care of his funeral and estate and I had to clean out his apartment. The smell of death was overwhelming. It is an odor that gets in your sinuses and seems to stay. The day after my brother's funeral I had a funeral in the parish and a meeting that evening with the extraordinary ministers (the laypeople that help distribute communion).

My uncle, Will, who often laughed about me and my little flock, called and said that he was full of cancer and could no longer live alone. In early life he had polio, so he walked with a cane. He was a very successful C.P.A. and made a lot of money which he spent traveling. He always lived alone and so was a very independent man. He was an accomplished piano player who took lessons for years from a student of Franz Liszt.

Franz Liszt was a famous Hungarian pianist, composer, and teacher of music who made many tours throughout Europe in the 1800s as a concert pianist.

My uncle always had a Steinway grand piano in his apartment. Every night after work, he would play classical music for hours. My uncle was a perfectionist and any mistake would frustrate him. About the age of 75, he had a little arthritis in his hands so, he sold his piano and gave up his music. Now at the age of 87, he wanted to go to a rest-home. It took time for me to find a suitable place. During which time, a visiting nurse exclaimed, "What cruel people they must be letting this poor man live alone." Finally I got my uncle in a home run by nuns. There were two grand pianos in the recreation room, which I hoped that my uncle would play to entertain the old people. He refused as he said that the pianos were too tinny. He was a very temperamental man, like many musicians. At first, all went well at the rest home. Since my uncle was an independent man, I knew that he would never be satisfied.

Each week when I visited him, he complained bitterly about the food with no salt and all the pain that he was having. I had no other place to put him. Particularly, he did not get along with the head nurse. I think that she mistreated him. Since my uncle complained so much about pain, I went to see the woman doctor who was taking care of the rest home. I asked, "What are you giving my uncle for pain?" She said, "Morphine." I responded, "It is not doing the job. Why don't you give him heroin?" She said, "He would form an addiction to it." I answered, "So what? My uncle is full of cancer and is dying." She did not heed my advice as my uncle continued to complain of awful pain. Exactly one year after he went there he was rushed, screaming in terrible pain, to the hospital where he died on arrival. He was 88 years old. My only regret was that I couldn't find a place for him where his pain from cancer would have been controlled.

I arranged for his funeral before he died. Previous to his death, I went to see his grave. The cemetery office told me that the headstone was on his grave. I could not find the grave. I went to the office and was shown on a map the location of his grave. ~~Even~~ Even with this help I could not find it. So a man from the office went with me and we discovered that the headstone was lost. The man in the office said, "We will get another headstone." I had my uncle's funeral, cleaned out his things from the rest home, and later, settled his estate. Since I buried relatives in such a short time, Father Earl called me "Burying Sam."

When I got back to the parish, I heard that a 39-year-old man, while surfing, was bitten by a great white shark. His companions got him in and rushed him to the hospital where they saved his life. I have always said the ocean is dangerous. After the man recovered, the newspaper interviewed him and asked, "Will you surf again?" He answered, "Yes." I don't think anyone in their right mind would go out on a surfboard after almost being killed. We had "Jaws" in our midst. One should never trust the ocean or you could be like Jonah...in the whale.

A man from the parish came to me with the idea of making a two mile long hotdog. He wanted to get into the record book. He planned to put the hotdogs in pipe and cook them with a blowtorch. I was to get a bishop to come to bless it. When I saw the plumber and mentioned this man's idea to him, he stated, "At the price of pipe, no way!"

The city morgue called me to come and anoint the bodies of four nuns who were just

d in 1920

and

ary

--Minnesota
n 1950

/ Masses at Siletz, Toledo,
2 months

asses at Home, Vernonia, North
. yrs

Masses at Sublimity, Stayton,
city, 1 1/2 yrs

4 months

Home for Girls 1 month

ption 3 1/2 yrs

Lady of Sorrows 3 yrs

stor at Oakridge and Dexter 6 1/2 yrs

astor at Vervoort 4 months

Pastor at Seaside and Arch Cape 19 yrs

I retired in 1985

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brought in. Their car slid on the ice and they were killed. It gave me a strange feeling to anoint four nuns on the marble slabs. We hold on to life by just a thin thread.

I heard of another accident about a 16-year-old girl, a non-swimmer who was swept out to sea. The Coast Guard helicopter searched for over an hour but with no success. A few hours later the girl was found sitting on the beach. All I could say was, "She needed a swift kick!"

Chapter 38

My Surgery and the Parrot

I had surgery for prostate trouble. In the hospital, as I was recovering, a young nurse's aide came into my room. Without saying a word and she began to search through the closet, then rushed out of the room. I wondered what was wrong, am I under suspicion? I jumped out of bed, put on my bathrobe, and went into the hall. Then I saw the young aide, with her purse over her shoulder, rushing down the hall, she was getting out of there. I called the head nurse to see what was wrong. She said, "Father, we didn't want to worry people, but we had a bomb scare."

When I was ready to leave the hospital, the doctor told me that I could not drive. A nurse was going on vacation, so she generously offered me her home to stay in. She said that it was behind the hospital. This would be fine as I could walk to the hospital for meals. When I left the hospital, I drove to her home and found it was about three miles behind the hospital. There was no food there so I had to drive twice a day to a restaurant. There was a parrot in the bedroom next to mine. It didn't like me and I am allergic to feathers. It would squawk and squawk. I wondered if I should feed it. On the second day I went into the room to feed it and it jumped off the perch onto the floor. Can a parrot get back on its perch? That parrot was my undoing, so I called the nurse's daughter and told her that I was going to a hotel. From this hotel, I ran my parish by phone. After recuperating, I went back to the parish and found a stack of mail two feet high waiting for me.

After one of my operations, I recalled an old priest who had surgery. A day later, the doctor came to see the old priest who was in bed. The doctor, pointing to a chair said, "Father, when I come in tomorrow I want to see you sitting in that chair." The old priest responded, "Doctor, when you come in tomorrow you may want to see me sitting ~~in~~ that chair, but you won't find me there."

Chapter 39

Events in the Parish

One evening a very scrupulous man came to my door. I talked with him for one hour. After I got in bed, the doorbell rang. I knew it was the same man, so I didn't get up to answer it. At 6:00 a.m., the doorbell rang and there he was. I told him to come back at 9:00 a.m., which he did and we talked for some time. He left and later returned and said, "My wife and I, who are visitors, are going back home." I thought, "Thank God!" This man should go back to the priest in his parish, for a scrupulous person must accept the counseling of one priest.

One of the workers had a drinking problem. He would get drunk and come to bother people at the bingo games. I noticed this for some time. Finally, I got the courage to call and tell his wife. She began to cry. For some reason, members of her family thought that no one knew. Then I told this man either stop drinking or lose your job; I have told your wife and she was crying. A doctor took the man to the AA meetings and he stopped drinking. It was a real success story. The AA does an excellent job.

We live in a world of fads where people want to be slim and trim; others are exercising to excess. Beneath all this there is some notion, maybe in the subconscious that from these fads one will never face death. A woman came to see me to tell me about a lady friend that who got tired of people's remarks about her weight. She tried many diets but with no success. Finally she ate only lettuce and sauerkraut juice. She lost many pounds and became so weak that her

husband rushed her to a hospital where she died of malnutrition. This woman also told me about another woman who ate bananas only. "She didn't lose any weight," this woman said, "But you should see her climb trees." I knew that she was joking. To get through our world it is good to look at the funny things in life.

Often, in the middle of the night, the hospital called me on emergencies. I recall this one night when a man's heart had stopped. When I arrived, he was in the emergency room, where the doctors were trying to start his heart. I had to anoint him with Holy Oils. The doctors were using electric shocks. So I timed my anointing between the electric shocks. Fortunately, at that late hour with only one eye open, I never got a shock!

We installed new pews and carpeting in the church and I had a sacristy built. The sun never set on my job. The administration of any church keeps the priest busy.

One evening at the bingo game, a little child set off the fire alarm. The fire engines came. Meanwhile, at the bingo game, they never missed calling a number. The firemen turned off the alarm. There wasn't a pause in calling the games. At one of the games, a woman won \$1000.00. She thought that she won only \$100.00. When she realized how much she won, she had a heart attack. At least she had the money to pay for the medical treatment.

One night, I received a call from the police who said that they had two young Catholic men from Quebec who needed a place to stay. They brought them over and I let them sleep in

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their sleeping bags on my enclosed front porch. They were very neat and clean boys. In the morning, I took them out for breakfast. They spoke only French, but at the restaurant they learned a few words of English. After breakfast, they packed and left for San Francisco from where they were to take a bus home. Later, they sent me a "Thank-You" note from Quebec.

Chapter 40

Trips in the Mountains

I was quite busy with all the emergency sick calls. Early one ~~morning~~, I received a call from a woman who found her husband dead in bed. I rushed down and anointed him and consoled her. His funeral came a few days later and, naturally, was on my day off.

I made occasional trips to the mountains to get away. One of my hobbies was fishing in the mountains, unless it rained, then I ran back to the parish and all its confusion where my life was a big rush, one thing after another. On one of my mountain trips I bought a large oil painting with a beautiful frame that I found in a restaurant. It was a scene of a creek surrounded by snow with a few pine trees. I liked it because it gave me a feeling of peace and quiet and it had a beautiful frame. I called it "Peace and Quiet." When I got home and showed this painting to Father Earl, who was not an outdoorsman, he called it "Desolation."

We live in a world of meetings; meetings where people talk "ad infinitum." Clubs meet for three hours or more. It would wear me out just sitting and listening. I had too much to do to just sit in long meetings, which accomplished very little. People seem to love meetings.

Every week I had lunch in the city with some priest friends, including Fathers James and Earl. I was usually late for these lunches. In the parish I was never late. It was the custom to have a rosary at the funeral home the night before a funeral. I always entered the funeral home

thirty seconds before I was to begin the rosary. Everything started on time. I was Mr. Punctuality. The people knew this so they were always on time.

Chapter 41

Care of the Church

A large delivery truck drove through our parking lot and tore down the overhead electric wires. We were without lights for four hours. When the wires went down our police alarm went off and the police soon arrived. The electric company came and repaired the wires. The unexpected always happened. I had a new furnace put in the church. On Saturday before Mass, I turned it on and it filled the church with blue smoke. All the people were coughing. Why in the world didn't the workmen turn it on after they put it in to check it out?

I used to have a second collection to help pay the bills. Someone sent me a little verse: The object of my affection is a second Sunday collection. Tourists are not always generous as they spend their money at other places, so the second collection did help, even though it was mostly quarters.

I heard that a woman was moving bags and boxes along the highway. She had three garbage bags and two large boxes. She would move one about five feet and then move the others one by one, until she would get them all together. She would repeat this process. People stopped and offered her a ride but she would refuse. I called the police who told me she was moving to the big city. I told them, "That is 100 miles away." They responded, "Not the way she is going. It will be 400 miles." There are many strange people in our world. If this woman made it, she should go in the book of records.

I had a missionary come to give a mission for a week for the people. I took a few days off. When I returned he said, "Between each talk, all I did was answer the phone and doorbell." As soon as I got in the house, the phone began to ring. There were times that I would like to throw the phone out. My doctor told me to take a nap every day. I ~~never~~ made it because of the phone and the doorbell.

The church was so old that all the stained glass windows were buckling. I contacted some glass glaziers to find someone who could repair the window. They directed me to a glass company who could do the work. The glazers took out all the windows and rebuilt them. These stained glass windows were enjoyed by the people. One year, in a violent wind storm, the stained glass window over the altar blew into the church. Miraculously, it did not break anything in the church. It flew past a statue, but did not touch it. Fortunately, a man in the parish had taken a picture of this stained glass window. The window was rebuilt from this picture. After it was installed, a woman came to me and said that the clouds in the window were too purple. I had to admit that they were more blue in the original window. However, I felt that we were lucky to replace the window.

Another rabbit appeared at the rectory. Father Earl named it "Petie Bunny." He fed it romaine lettuce as it, as he said, "was a Roman Catholic rabbit." The last time anyone saw this rabbit, it was running down the main street. Father then said, "It was probably a Scottish rabbit as is was 'kilt.'"

My parish council decided to have the attic of the rectory insulated. A company sent two men to blow in insulation. They used many bags of insulation. When they finished they gave me the bill and left. I went upstairs and opened the door to the attic and found that the insulation was four feet deep. That was a little too much, so I called the company and they sent the men back to take out the excess insulation. I probably paid for all of it.

Chapter 42

Congregational Singing

We needed an organist at the parish church as we had started congregation singing on Sundays. Through the generosity of some of the people, we bought a new organ and hoisted it into the choir loft. I couldn't find anyone to play the organ. Later an elderly lady from the city moved to the parish to play the organ. We had no one to lead the singing.

There was a man in jail who taught singing. While he was there, the Catholic chaplain converted him. This chaplain wrote to an eccentric man in my parish and asked him to write and encourage this man in the practice of the faith. During his writing he learned that this man taught singing. He insisted that when this man was free, he should move to the parish and lead the congregation in singing. When the man was released, he bought a house in the parish. The eccentric man brought him to the rectory and introduced him to me. The man told me that he had been in trouble with the law. He promised the chaplain that he would receive the sacraments frequently. He then volunteered to lead the singing every Sunday. We had no one else so we accepted his offer. He came faithfully every Sunday, led the singing, received communion, and occasionally, helped with the readings in church. He did this for over two years and was so faithful that he was signed up to help with communion, which he did with the other lay ministers for a year when it was his turn.

No one objected to any of his jobs. No one in this area knew his past life. This man was

leading a decent life. He also had a job teaching singing in the local college.

The eccentric man who invited this man to come to the parish became jealous of him. So he came to see me and said, "You can't have that man on the altar as he has a bad reputation." I answered, "I have no evidence of this. This man goes to communion every Sunday. I will take care of this and if I find anything, I will phase him out quietly." The eccentric man asked, "What will I tell my children?" I said, "Nothing, your youngest child is 26 years old." He left in a huff and he and his wife started a gossip campaign to ruin the man. When I heard of it, I called the chaplain who converted the man and asked what should I do? He said, "I think that the man who leads the singing is sensible, call him in and ask him to step out of the limelight." I called him in and told him what was happening. He became very upset and said, "I am a Catholic, I have changed my life and hoped to start over. Now my good name is ruined in this area. I have been a good and faithful Catholic. Someone should have defended me." He got mad and moved out of the parish and probably left the Catholic church. This man was a good reader and an excellent leader of the congregational singing. Our world has forgotten the command, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." I should have made the eccentric man lead the singing since he got rid of the leader.

The eccentric man, who caused the trouble, wrote to the bishop (using a pencil) blaming me for the whole situation. The bishop should have called me to explain the letter, but he didn't. I was not the cause of this problem, but I was caught in the middle.

Now we had no leader of singing. The old organist played and sang alone in her high pitched voice, sending chills up and down my spine.

We needed help, so Father Earl, who was a good singer, came to lead the singing at the Easter Vigil. We agreed that at the Vigil Mass the people would sing, "Christ is Risen Today." The organist began the introduction and Father and the people began to sing. Then the organist changed the tune. After Mass, she said, "Christ did not rise on Saturday evening, He rose on Easter Sunday morning." The poor woman was hopeless. She tried but she was just a little too old, probably getting senile.

Chapter 43

How Not to go to Europe on the First Trip

Our Perfect Plan

Father Earl and I decided to go on our first trip to Europe. We had dreamt of this for years, after 35 years of work. After looking through many tour books, and not finding any tour that would take us where we wanted to go, namely to Rome and to Lourdes, we decided to go on our own, being quite independent souls. There is always a willing travel agent to line up a trip and add a little here and there to your excursion. And our agent did just that. We told the agent that we wanted to pay for the whole trip before we left. We were ready and filled with expectations. The agent called and we hurried to the office. The planned itinerary was presented to us and it sounded good.

We were to fly out of Seattle, across the pole to London, then to Cologne, up the Rhine river by boat to Zurich, on to Rome by plane. We would stay at the Columbia Hotel, each with a private room with bath. Then by train to Lourdes, France. There was a pause here to tell us that we could each save \$100.00 if we would go second class on the train. Father Earl wanted to save money so we decided to go second class on the train during the day and first class at night in a private compartment. We didn't know at that time, but this was to be a mistake. The agent went on, "In Lourdes, you will take a taxi to the Hotel de la Grotte. After the stay in Lourdes, you will take the train, second class, to Toulouse. Take a taxi to the airport, then by plane to Gatwick airport in England. Then by train to London, staying in the Grosvenor Hotel

for one night and then by plane to the U.S.A." And further advice, "When you arrive at an airport or depot always take the bus downtown and then a taxi. Guard your passports so they won't be stolen, as they are necessary to get back home. Also take a light suitcase and not too much clothing as things can be washed easily over there." We each paid over \$2000.00 and got our tickets. This was in November, we weren't leaving until April.

During our waiting, we got our physical check-up and copies of our prescriptions to take along. Father Earl, a few years before, had a triple by-pass and extreme diabetes, and as a result, he walked with a cane. The doctors found that I had a double hernia and so I had surgery six weeks before we left. The doctor gave me an OK to go, but I am sure he thought that we were going on a guided tour where our luggage would be handled for us. We each secured \$20.00 in German marks as we would spend the first night in Cologne, Germany. The schedule was planned so that we always had ample time to make plane and train connections. On this whole trip, Murphy's Law prevailed. If anything could go wrong, it would. It would, and it did. We were ready to go.

Chapter 44

The Beginning of Our Trip

The departure day arrived--to the airport we went, each with our suitcase and a suitbag. We decided not to check our luggage for we might lose it and if Father Earl lost his insulin he would be in serious trouble. We boarded the plane and waited and waited; it was 40 minutes late in taking off. Now we had the last minute rush in Seattle. Fortunately, a friend who knew the airport met us and guided us through. I have never figured out that airport. It has a kind of subway that goes to the different gates. I never knew if it was going right or left. Our friend saved us and led us through the check-in and secured a wheelchair for Father Earl. We put our suitcases on the back and we hurried to the gate. The handicapped board the plane first. So we got on ahead of the crowd and we sat in the rear of the 747 in the middle seats. We placed our suitcases at our feet.

We were not very comfortable as the plane was full of people, crowded in like sardines. Where we sat the air did not circulate enough and it was too warm. Away we went into the dark of night. No, we did not see the North Pole; it was too dark. The stewardess served us something to eat and afterwards Father Earl took a pill and slept. I was awake all night as I can't sleep on a plane and I watched so no one took our money. To say the least it was a long night.

In the morning, we enjoyed a continental breakfast. As we were going for a landing at Heathrow Airport in London, the pilot gave us the time in London and we set our watches. We

landed mid-morning, at terminal No. 1. Our schedule stated that we were to go to another terminal, I believe it was No. 2. We tried to avoid all stairs as Father Earl could not walk well. But all we did was go up and down stairs throughout all of Europe. And this terminal was no exception. We got directions and had to walk through the whole terminal, passed several good looking coffee shops. We finally arrived in the alley where we boarded an old jitney bus, which took us to the other terminal. From here at 6:30 p.m., the plane would take off for Cologne. This terminal was a real mistake. First it was too small and second, it was to be remodeled in the future. Our suitcases were thoroughly checked when we entered. The terminal was full of people and there were not enough benches for everyone to sit on. We spent most of the time looking for a seat. We were there all day. I inquired why there were so many people there. A man told me that they were on a tour from Ireland to Rome and grounded there as the baggage handlers were on strike in Rome. We hoped to put our luggage in lockers, but there are no lockers in Europe because of the danger of people putting bombs in them. As a result, we had to carry everything with us. Father Earl walked with a cane so I had to carry his heavy suitcase, filled with fruit for his diabetes, and my small suitcase.

There was only one sandwich bar to get food from. At 1:00 p.m., we got a sandwich and coffee, and seated ourselves at a little table, exhausted. The sandwich had no taste and the coffee was not good. We were there for the whole afternoon. I inquired as to which concourse and gate the plane to Cologne would use. The answer I received was that they didn't know until half an hour before the flight--probably worrying about bombs. So we spent the whole day milling around in that terminal and it was boring. At 6:05 p.m., the call came for concourse B, gate 20.

I don't know why, but we always got the last gate in every airport. Father Earl's legs were aching so I carried his suitcase and mine. His weighted a ton, made out of leather, and in it he had apples, oranges, and bananas for his diabetes. I took the two suitcases and rushed 20 feet and set them down, and caught my breath waiting for Father to catch up. ~~I did~~ this all the way down the concourse to the last gate. We boarded the plane and we left. The Lufthansa airline gave us a wonderful dinner, the best we had on any airplane.

At night, we flew over Cologne and saw the beautiful medieval cathedral, which looked silver from the air. When we landed, the pilot came in too steep and the wheels bumped hard and everyone sat up. The pilot then came over the speaker with a joke in German and everyone laughed except us; we didn't find it funny. Arriving at the terminal, we went through customs and went immediately outside to find the bus. There were two levels, so we went downstairs and waited 30 minutes for the bus. Finally, a woman who could speak English, told us to go upstairs. When we did we soon got the bus. I got on first and paid with my German money. Father Earl tried to pay with American currency and the driver said, "Nein, Nein." So I paid his fare. It was late when we arrived in town, and we took a taxi which took us to the hotel, right by the town square. Father Earl tried again to pay with American money and the driver shouted, "Nein, Nein," so I paid him. Afterwards, I asked Father Earl, "Where is your German money?" He answered, "In the bottom of my suitcase." His trouble was that he looked at the overall picture and paid little attention to the details.

After we registered, we went to our rooms, and we both conked out from weariness. My

room was very clean with a twin bed, on which was a sheet, pillow and on the bottom was a comforter folded up. I got on that bed, pulled the comforter over me and I slept like a log. At the head of the bed was a radio and the heating pipes were on the wall. In the morning when I woke up, I hurried to find Father who said that he always got up at 6:00 a.m. When I found him, we went to the restaurant on the second floor. Every hotel had its restaurant on the second floor which they called the first floor. In the restaurant, the food was cafeteria style---you helped yourself. There were glasses of juice, a warmer with eggs--the white ones, soft boiled; the colored one, hard. And there were those delicious bread rolls with a hard crust and soft centers. On the table was fresh unsalted butter and homemade marmalade. We had seconds on the rolls which were out of this world, they were so good. It was the best bread we found in all of Europe.

After breakfast, we went across the town square to the cathedral built of stone. It was a magnificent ornate building with gargoyles on the outside. We went in and were taken by its size. On the altar were the reliquaries which contain the remains of the Three Wise Men brought to Cologne by the Crusaders. Around the altar were sarcophagi. On the top of each was a likeness of the person buried inside. The first one was a knight in full armor with a dog at his feet. The others were bishops with their miters on, probably former bishops of Cologne. Most of the statues of bishops were on their backs. Some had their heads propped up by their fist resting on their elbows. Father Earl and I were trying to figure out why they did this. Probably, the ones with their heads propped up always watched over their people or maybe they did nothing in life. So they buried them in such a way to imply they could not rest in peace. The

cathedral was beautiful and worth seeing.

Then we went to a bank and changed our money into German marks. While crossing the town square, we noticed some very neat shops. One was a coffee shop. We went in for coffee which was very good, but it cost \$1.50 per cup. While having coffee, Father Earl told me about the night clerk he met in the hotel who could speak English. After coffee we made our way back to the hotel to check out, agreeing to meet in the lobby. When I came down I was thinking how clean this hotel was. Cologne was so clean. A crew of people dressed in orange coveralls came early in the morning and swept the streets and sidewalks. When I got to the lobby, I noticed that Father Earl was having an argument with the German clerk. She was a big woman and rather rough looking. I put my baggage by Father's and stood there and listened. I didn't want to get into an argument. Father was speaking in English and she, in German. The argument was heating. I heard her say in broken English, "Eighty here und Eighty thar von hundred sixty dallar." I thought, "My God! We have to pay \$160.00 to get out of here." So I stepped up by Father and said, "Call the manager." And she said, "Manager auf." I said to Father, "Get the man who speaks English." It all boiled down that we each had to pay \$20.00 more to get out of the hotel. Afterwards, Father said, "She was one of the Rhine maidens, Brunheilda, from one of the operas." However, she did call us a taxi.

Chapter 45

Missing the Boat

The taxi took us to the dock and we boarded the boat that was to take us up the Rhine river. It was a good sort of a ferry. We put our baggage in our staterooms and went back up on deck. The girl at the desk collected our passports, to put them in the safe so we would not lose them. The time now was 10:45 a.m., the boat was to leave at 12:30 p.m. The produce men were bringing aboard the produce with hand trucks. Father Earl said, "We have lots of time, I would like to go uptown so I can get some fruit." I agreed and we walked about three blocks to the main street. There we found a nice looking restaurant. We decided to have something to eat. We looked at the menu and chose Eir Mit Speck, which is eggs and bacon. The young waitress ignored us. Maybe she didn't like our collars. We waited and waited. Finally, a woman at the table next to us noticed our problem and called the waitress over and gave her a tongue lashing in German and called her a fraulein, which made her mad. She reluctantly took our order and brought our food. After we ate, we went to pay her. There was no cash register. She had an old fashion grandfather purse in which she put the money and made change. The waitress was all right after we left her a tip. We walked down the main street and found a fruit stand and Father got his fruit. Slowly we walked back to the boat. I got there a little ahead of Father Earl. I looked, the boat was gone. I called to Father, "The boat is gone, it is going around the bend up the river!"

Father looked and just stood there holding his bag of fruit, leaning on his cane. He was

a talkative man, but then he was silent. There went his insulin, and our passports. We felt like men without a country. I decided to take over. There was a pilothouse on the dock and I rushed over there. The clerk there spoke a little English and told us to go across the street to the office. We hurried to the office, and wouldn't you know it, the man there ~~couldn't~~ speak a word of English. He looked at us like we were crazy. I suppose we were excited. Who wouldn't be after you missed the boat? It is at times like this that people wave their arms in the air in frustration. As if by magic, along came a good woman who could speak English and German. She explained our problem to the clerk and told him to call a taxi. About 20 minutes later the taxi had not arrived. Fortunately, the woman returned and had the clerk call and find out what happened to the taxi. The word came that he couldn't find the place. Ten minutes later, the taxi arrived. We chased the boat up the river. While chasing the boat, anguish and anxiety filled our minds. All the thoughts: what if we don't catch it? Where will we find our ambassador, probably not in the local phone book. All this caused us to sit on the edge of the seat. If we don't catch it, all we have left is this taxi. Why doesn't he go faster? These thoughts ran through our heads. Thirty four German marks later, we caught the boat. It was something like a rescue at sea at a temporary landing. Everyone on deck looked at us. We got aboard, feeling very foolish.

Someone must have been taking care of us; this was really a trying experience. It is not so shocking in your own country, but in a foreign land, it is devastating. I know that it had psychological effects on Father Earl, so we spent more time in airports waiting as we got there hours ahead of departure time. We missed the boat because we did not know that the continent of Europe is one hour ahead of England, where we set our watches.

Chapter 46

The Boat

When we boarded the boat, we were each given a room in the bottom of the boat, with a porthole. The water of the river came up to the porthole. I guess we were traveling second class.

Aboard this German boat, regimentation ruled. They served breakfast at 0800 hours, lunch at 1200 hours, tea time at 1400 hours, and dinner at 1700 hours. The waiter assigned each of us a seat in the dining room and you always sat there. The waiters served everyone meat at the same time, then a potato, then a vegetable and whatever else, with the coffee last. That coffee was a killer diller--it was terrible. It was so bad that we asked for cream. The waiter gave us a pitcher of cream which was canned milk. Canned milk in coffee just coats your teeth. We couldn't drink the coffee.

The Germans are hard working people. They built fitted rock walls all the length of the Rhine river. On the left side were villages, all the houses were two to four stories high; in the hills behind them were castles. There were several of these colorful villages. On the right side, probably the South, the fast trains ran. Further up the river were people camping in tents and trailers.

We went through several locks and saw many barges. At night after dark our boat

anchored near the shore. One night we went ashore and had coffee in a cafe. We had to hurry as it was near their closing time.

On the second day, the boat stopped at Strasbourg, France. ~~We~~ exchanged our money to French francs and a bus took us into the city. It was a famous old university town, noted for some famous psychologists. The bus stopped in the town square and we had an hour tour. Father Earl and I went through the dark medieval cathedral. Even the outside was black, probably from pollution. We heard that they planned to renovate it. A Frenchman came by with his four-year-old boy. The boy clearly had to go to the bathroom, so the boy took down his pants and had a bowel movement right in the storm drain. I called Father Earl's attention to this and he looked disgusted. None of this city was very clean. We looked around in a few book shops and got a cup of coffee at a sweet shop. Afterwards, we headed back to the boat. The weather was rather cold and windy so we spent little time outside on the deck.

At Basel, our boat ride was over. The girl at the desk told us to put our luggage on the main deck by the office. The clerk called out your name, gave you your passport, you picked up your luggage and went ashore. There was a bus waiting for us up a steep set of steps. They had a moving belt to take up the luggage but we had to walk up the steps. Father complained, "Wouldn't you know it, why isn't there some way to take us up?" We got aboard the bus and off we went through the countryside, noticing that in Switzerland, every church tower has a clock on it. We were driven to the Sheraton hotel where we registered and went to our rooms. In each room there was a refrigerator filled with all kinds of drinks. I am sure that it was all counted

before the guest entered the room and would be counted again before you checked out. You would pay for what you used. The hotel is on the edge of Zurich and there was a woods behind it. So I went for walks in the woods to say that I was in a European forest. That evening, we went to the restaurant and on the menu found a hamburger. It sounded like home, so I ordered it. It didn't taste like an American hamburger, as the cook got carried away with the spices, which took away the meat flavor. A fried dill pickle came with it. It wasn't good so I ate other things and kind of passed around the hamburger. After dinner, we watched television. It was all in German and not very interesting.

In the morning we got together for breakfast which was similar to what we had in Cologne, but not as good. Father Earl insisted that we must leave as soon as possible for the airport, still remembering the missed boat. We checked out, and the hotel provided a bus to take us to the airport. And naturally, we got the last gate in the place. We walked and walked, carrying our luggage and finally came to gate 25. Everyone around us were Arabs, each carrying a bag filled with cartons of American cigarettes. The sign overhead read, "Istanbul." I said to Father, "We must be at the wrong gate. You watch the bags and I'll find someone who speaks English." I went back to the British airline and they told me that we were at the right gate, the first plane goes to Istanbul, the second plane to Rome. Eventually, the Arabs left, and we boarded the next plane and were on our way to Rome. We flew across the Alps. I sat in the plane, exhausted.

Chapter 47

Rome and St. Peters

After landing, we got on the buses which drove us to the terminal. There were three men at gates checking passports and about 300 people waiting to go through. We decided to step aside and wait for the crowd to thin out. It never did, so we got in line and worked our way through. Crossing the terminal, we found the ticket window for the bus. We waited in line and when we got to the window, he would not take American money. Father stayed by the baggage and I went across the terminal and exchanged my money for Italian lire. No country in Europe will take another country's money. Each time you exchange your money, they make a profit.

We boarded the bus, put our suitcases on the overhead rack and got the last seats in the back of the bus. The people filled the bus beyond its capacity. During the ride, our suitcases kept falling off and hitting us in the head. People standing were falling on us as the bus jerked along. The ride seemed like it would never end. Somewhere in downtown Rome, we got a taxi which took us to our hotel. The taxis are very small and hard to get in and out of.

Our hotel, The Columbia, looked like a monastery, but we registered and expected two private rooms with baths. The clerk told us in broken English that he only had one room with a bath and the other had the bath down the hall. I thought, "Who in the world wants to walk down the hall to the bath, especially in a strange country?" This was ridiculous as we reserved the rooms six months ago. I told him that if we didn't have rooms with baths tomorrow, we

would move someplace else. The next day, we had private rooms with baths. We registered and went up to our rooms in a little elevator that would only hold three people. The only advantage of this hotel was that it was just one block from the Vatican. My room was adequate with a good bed. There was no shower curtain for the shower. The shower head came right out of the bathroom wall and the water ran across the floor. The floor was dry by the afternoon.

Rome is a fabulous city, old and all made of stone and marble. In Rome there are great works of art almost everywhere you look. The Italian people are very friendly, even to us who can speak very little of their language. There was so much to see.

In the morning, we had breakfast in the hotel restaurant on the second floor. Father Earl asked people where they were from. There were two black ladies sitting at the table next to us. Father never asked them where they were from, I guess he figured that he could not speak their African language. So I said to Father Earl, "Why don't you ask them where they are from?" And with that, one of the black ladies said, "We are from Africa, we have been here many time." We felt so foolish. However, we had a nice conversation with them. One never knows whom you will meet. People of Europe learn several languages; they need them.

That day we went to St. Peters. It must be a mile across the piazza, the square, and up so many steps and through the giant doors. Once inside, we stood in awe. It is so immense and there was so much to see that the human eye cannot grasp it all. The inside is all marble with gold inlay. It is the largest church in the world and is longer than two football fields and wider

than the length of one. The ceiling must be 200 feet high and the dome is 325 feet high.

We covered it all, even went into the crypt and saw the burial place of some of the recent Popes. One should have a book on St. Peters to understand all the works of art. When we first entered we saw the Pieta--the slumped body of Christ on the lap of the Virgin. Our eyes caught Bernini's Baldachin of bronze and gold standing 110 feet high over the high altar. Behind that was the chair of Peter, also of bronze and gold, held up by sculptures of four of the early Fathers of the Church, backed by a stained glass window of rays of light. In the window is a dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit. The chair is the focal point of the church. We walked so much that Father Earl's legs were aching. When we left St. Peters, we found a coffee bar with small tables and chair outside on the sidewalk. The only coffee which we enjoyed was cappuccino--coffee with cream beaten into it. We drank this throughout Italy and France. One could buy a cup of cappuccino for half price inside the coffee bar, but there were no tables or chairs. If you took it to a table outside, the waiter would roar like Mt. Vesuvius. He had to make his money too, probably he owned the tables and chairs. If one wished to have coffee at a table, just sit down and the waiter will take your order. You will pay more, but you are sitting down.

Chapter 48

So Much to See

Our hotel was on the street leading to the Vatican called Via Conciliazione. All the cars in Rome were small, like the Ford Escort. They came up that street, three abreast at about 50 miles per hour. They paid no attention to crosswalks. If one wants to cross you just weave your way through the cars which never slow down. Father Earl mentioned this to one of the priests we met. He responded, "Don't worry Father, they won't hit you, but they may hit your cane." Early the next morning, we went to St. Peters to say Mass. Entering the sacristy, a seminarian greeted us and asked which language we wished to use. We said, "English." Up came an Italian altar boy with an English missal and he led us to the sets of vestments. When we were ready, this boy led us into the church to one of the many altars. He put the missal and cruets on the altar and left. After Mass, we carried the chalice back to the sacristy. Father and I said Mass that day together. I came over another morning and said Mass in the crypt, which is the burial place of many of the later Popes.

Since Father Earl could not climb, I took the elevator to the roof and climbed to the top of the dome. The dome has an inside and outside wall and between these walls are 356 steps to the top. On top of the dome is the cupola with a walkway at its base. From there one can see the grounds of the Vatican and much of Rome.

We contacted a priest who teaches in Rome. He said that he would call us at the hotel

the next morning at 11:30 a.m. Early that morning, we walked around the Vatican wall to the Sistine Chapel and the museums. Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel. The paintings are frescoes made by working paint pigment into wet and sticky plaster. This was a hard task as the plaster dries very fast. The frescoes begin on the back end of the ceiling first, of the peaceful earth that God created. In the next is a serene Adam and God reaching down and almost touching the finger of Adam as He breathes life into him. In the next, God creates Eve. In all the paintings after, there is turbulence. This turbulence is particularly seen in the fresco of the "Last Judgement" on the wall behind the chapel altar.

In the museums were paintings and art objects everywhere, priceless things. Gifts from Kings and Czars collected through the centuries are placed in the museums. We could not see it all. We had to hurry as the priest was calling that morning. Father Earl could not walk very fast with his cane. When we got out it was late. There was a horse and buggy by the door, so I hired it to get us back to St. Peters square. It cost me \$20.00. I think that the driver knew that we were in a hurry and took us. However, we got back in time to get the phone call. Father would come the next morning with a car to take us around Rome.

That afternoon, we went through the diggings under St. Peters. When they buried Pope Pius XI, the workers cut into the floor of the crypt and found a room below of the pagan cemetery. It was always known that Constantine the Great built St. Peters over a pagan cemetery. Having found the room, the workers dug from one side under St. Peters. For 1500 lire we took this tour through the diggings. We went with five other people and a guide. the

tunnel zigged and zagged through the sandstone, eventually leading into a large room with a small room connected to it. In the larger room was buried the master and his family and in the smaller room his slaves. In the rooms we saw broken pagan sarcophagi. Then we went back in the tunnel and proceeded to other rooms. There were electric lights hanging on the wall. The thought came to me, "What would happen if they went out? Would these people panic?" I wouldn't want the two little elderly ladies in front of us to turn and trample us to death.

Funnier things than that had happened on this trip. How would that guide lead us out in total darkness under the ground? He didn't have a flashlight and there were no phones. We followed him anyway, from room to room. Father Earl thought that the guide had too much vino. Finally, the guide pointed to the ceiling and said, "See those two bricks, there was the trophy. Everyone wanted to be buried by the trophy. When Bernini built the Baldachino over the main altar, he centered it over the trophy." It took us a while to figure out what he was saying. It turned out that the trophy was the burial place of St. Peter. We passed in front of the glassed tomb of St. Peter. Our tour ended and we found ourselves in the crypt. We made our way out to the street and had dinner at a Mom and Pop restaurant. We found these restaurants in almost every block. On the table there were always two bottles of wine. Mom's feelings were hurt if you didn't drink any wine. You might be having dinner and they would let their dog and cat in. You learned to think nothing of it. The food was usually good and they put up with your lack of Italian.

The bank of the Holy Spirit was across from our hotel. We went there to exchange our

money into Italian lire. You felt sort of rich with 400,000 lire. The bank closed at 1:30 p.m., even if there were people waiting. Almost everyone in Italy takes a siesta. The taxi drivers sleep in their cabs and they won't move.

One evening, we had an invitation for dinner at the Church of the Gesù. We got a taxi and the driver turned on the meter and asked, "Where?" We responded, "The Church of the Jesu." He asked, "What address?" We didn't know. So he got out of the taxi and talked for awhile to another driver. The huge church is 300 years old and is located across the street from the union hall. I am sure he knew where it was, he was just running up the bill for the rich Americans.

Another evening we took a taxi to a famous restaurant, "Alfredo." The driver got us down there at 6:10 p.m. and the place was dark. So he said, "They must be closed, I will take you to another." He drove us around and brought us back to the same one at 6:30 p.m. and said, "This one is open." He knew all the time that they didn't open until 6:30 p.m. What saps we were! The Italian people always eat late and so the big restaurants don't open until evening. In this restaurant, on the walls were pictures of famous people who had eaten there. There was President Kennedy, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, and many others. Two men came with violins and played your requests by your table. Father Earl had them play, "Cor Abandoni in San Francisco." They spoke only Italian but they understood this in Latin. We ordered the fettuccine, for which Alfredo's is famous; it was only spaghetti with butter.

The priest came the next morning with a car and drove us to St. Paul's outside the wall,

past the catacombs, up the alpine hill, past the Castle Gondofolo, the Pope's summer residence. We stopped to have lunch at a small village built high on a bluff. The restaurant was right on the edge and if there was ever an earthquake, could topple into the lake far down below. We rushed back to Rome for the Papal audience. There we had chairs to sit on which were of no use to us for when the Pope came in everyone stood on the chairs. We stood on the very spot where the Pope was shot two weeks later.

on time with his diabetes. So I climbed over all these people to get to the dining car to find out when it would close. As I pushed my way through, I kept saying, "Excusee, Excusee." I found that the diner was closing at 7:00 p.m. I worked my way back and said to Father Earl, "It is now 6:30 p.m. and we must go and eat." He worried about our luggage. I said, "Forget the luggage, if someone steals it, so what." So we went to eat. Afterwards, we made our way back to our seats and I said to Earl, "It is getting dark and we must move to first class which is in front of the dining car." We never did see a conductor to get any information. Earl objected, but I insisted. We took our luggage and we had a real workout getting passed all those people. When we got to the first class car we had to stand for an hour. A woman in a compartment spoke English and she informed the conductor that we were to transfer to first class. She informed us that when the train stops we were to get off and board the car that says sleeping car. The train stopped and we got off. To our surprise, the dining car and all the cars behind it were gone. They probably went to Spain. We were sure lucky we moved to first class. A car that said "Sleeping Car" came and we boarded it. The conductor led us to a compartment with two beds and in a short time we were asleep. My! All this to save \$100.00. In the morning, I was up first and dressed when Father Earl got up. I packed my baggage and was ready. Father Earl went to the rest room. I sat down and looked out the window when suddenly I saw a sign which read "Lourdes". My God, we are here! With that the conductor was at the door saying, "Pronto, Pronto!" I told him Father was in the toilet. He rushed down and knocked on the door, while I carried the luggage off the train placing it on the platform. The conductor came back excitedly as he couldn't get Father Earl out. So I ran up and pounded on the door and shouted, "We are in Lourdes and the train is leaving!" With that, Father came out--we got off the train and off it went.

years before, took the plunge into the cold spring, and got double pneumonia. They flew him to the hospital in Boston.

In the evening, we could hear singing in the Grotto, but it was too cold outside so we went to bed. The next day we went to the Grotto and watched the procession with the Blessed Sacrament among the sick. That evening, we said Mass in the parish church with a priest from Ireland.

Chapter 50

Going Home

Sunday morning we were leaving by train to Toulouse, France, where we would board a plan for London. There were two trains that would get us there in time for the flight, one at 7:30 a.m., the other at 10:30 a.m. Guess which one we took? We left the hotel, without breakfast, arriving at the depot before 7:00 a.m. We found the door of the depot locked. Did you ever go to a depot and try to get any information before it is open? The French people were not very tolerant of people who don't learn their language; after all it was the diplomatic language of the world. There we were, freezing out on a cold and windy train platform. We didn't even know whether the train was to go to the right or left. About 7:30 a.m., some people joined us. One train went by going to the left and another to the right. It wasn't until 7:45 a.m. that a train came along going right and that was the one which we boarded for a three hour ride to Toulouse.

We sat in a compartment and a short time later a French farmer and his wife came into our compartment. He talked to his wife, in French, for the whole time. All she would say was, "Oui." We got awful tired of listening to him. About half way through the trip he brought out some bread and a can. With his hunting knife he cut the top off the can. It contained greasy looking meat. He made a sandwich for his wife and himself. He never stopped talking even while he was eating.

The train arrived and we walked through a tunnel to get to the station. In the tunnel there

were some lockers in which we put our luggage and then went upstairs to the restaurant. It was 11:00 a.m. and we needed food. The waitress didn't want to wait on us. Finally, she brought us some rolls and we got a little coffee. We paid and went to the tunnel to find the lockers, which we could not find for sometime. From the station, we took a taxi and went to the airport where we lingered all afternoon, waiting for the late afternoon flight to London.

We got a little to eat before we boarded the British airline. We sat in the back of the plane and a group of businessmen sat in the front. After the plane took off, the stewardesses were selling French perfume. It was dark outside when the plane landed at Gatwick Airport in England. A gust of wind caught the tail and there was an awful creaking sound. We all sat up and the men in front looked back at us like we prayed the plane in. We were thinking, "My God! After all of this, we will never get home!" From the airport, we took a 45 minute ride on a train to get to Victoria Station. Through that station was an awful long walk; I would have paid \$50.00 to have someone carry my suitcase. When we got out we waited in line in the rain to get a taxi. When we gave the taxi driver the name of the hotel, he pointed to it next to the train station. We walked the last block to the hotel in the rain.

We went to our rooms and agreed to meet in half an hour for coffee. In the lobby, we thought better than to go to the formal dining room for coffee. At the other end of the lobby was a bar. When we tried to enter, a waiter came out, and seeing we were priests, took us to a big room and seated us at a table and took our order. Across the room was a large fireplace and seated by it was an old man who looked like a retired British Army officer. The waiter brought

the coffee and I gave him a 20 pound note and he said, "That will do," and left the room. I jumped up and caught him in the hall and told him to bring the change back. I really felt that \$40.00 was too much for two cups of coffee. In the morning after breakfast, we left by taxi for Heathrow Airport, arriving about 11:00 a.m. In this airport there were carts to put your luggage on and to push around. These were a big help. Father Earl's plane was to leave at 2:00 p.m. and to Chicago; mine was to leave at 4:00 p.m. and fly to Seattle, where I would make a connection for a flight home.

We had lunch together at the best looking coffee shop. The plates were greasy but we got a little to eat. Afterwards, we went to catch our airplanes. Later, the airport made an announcement that because of a sudden baggage handlers strike, all the planes were grounded. So I wandered around the airport all day. Nothing is as boring as having no place to go and nothing to do in an airport. The strike somehow ended at 7:00 p.m. that evening. My plane took off for Seattle. I learned that in a 747, the best seats are in the back on either side. I got one of these seats and had a much better trip home. On the way back, I began to realize that carrying two suitcases, Father Earl's and mine, through five countries did not help my double hernia surgery. The plane arrived in Seattle after dark, missing my connection home. I stood there, exhausted. All I wanted to do was sleep. I located a motel, called a taxi and I was ready to start life anew rather than move. After a good night's sleep and a good breakfast, I boarded a plane to take me home. I have named this trip: "How not to go to Europe on your first trip."

It is too late now, but Father and I should have had a gold chain across our chests on our

European trip. The natives would have taken this as part of the monsignor's trappings and given us all sorts of service.

Chapter 51

Back in the Parish

After my European trip, I went back to the parish and its daily routine. I had several couples to get ready for marriage. They could not come in at the same time for marriage instructions so I had to instruct them individually. Summer was here and the tourists had returned. During the summer I had several funerals--five in one week.

I visited weekly all my sick relatives for ten years and saw them gradually grow weaker. It is such a helpless feeling as you can do nothing to help them. And finally, one by one, I buried them. Since I buried four of my relatives in five years, Father Earl called me "Burying Sam."

I developed an everlasting aching, like a toothache, in my groin. I went to the city to see the surgeon who performed my double hernia. He said that I had hydroseals. He could give me no reason for it. All he could say was, "Wait, it may go away." Six months later I went to see my urologist who also said, "Wait, it may go away." However, it never did. I had this aching for two years. Six months later, I had the urologist operate to try to correct the problem. After the surgery, I still ached. A year later, a friend of mine told me that he had a single hernia operation. Afterward, he had continuous aching. He made the doctor do the operation over and he got rid of the aching. Now I realized that my trouble was from the double hernia. When I carried those suitcases through five countries in Europe, I must have torn something loose. The surgeon wouldn't tell me as he was probably afraid that I might sue him. My doctor now

discovered that my gall bladder was full of gallstones and had to come out. I told the surgeon to take out my gallbladder and if I was still alive, to do the double hernia over, which he did. I got rid of the aching in the groin, but I got staphylococcus infection which I will always have. Years later, two doctors told me that since I had the double hernias with ~~no~~ pain for forty years, I should not have had surgery.

I did the parish work during all this aching. The people in this parish have been very kind to me. Each year, they had a party on my birthday. They have been very cooperative and we have worked well together. We had so many volunteers to cover every need that the work of the parish became easier.

The other day I saw a heavy-set woman fall in the street. I felt sorry for her, until I saw that she had on roller skates. A study of a tourist town will reveal all kinds of humanity--the normal and the strange. People, when they get away from home, let their hair down and do strange things. A visiting lawyer, who left his wife home, came with a very young girl friend. They had been drinking for days. The last time anyone saw them, they walked arm in arm, down the beach into the ocean.

A youth, a recent high school graduate, received a new sports car from his grateful father. He and a friend drove it into the ocean on the way to China. The two boys were sitting on top of the car playing their guitars, when the police took them to jail. The boy's father was so mad that he wouldn't bail his son out of jail. Just a daily event in the town. A woman, who worked

for the town for many years, was dying of cancer. She called me and wanted to take instructions in the Catholic faith. I gave her instructions in her home; she was very grateful. I baptized and confirmed her and gave her the last rites of the church. This filled her with tremendous peace and calm. At her funeral, many of the townspeople attended.

I just heard that a very wealthy woman, who lived in the parish for years, then went to live with her grandchildren, had died and left her big home to the church. I had taken her communion for years and we even took her grocery shopping. I made several phone calls to confirm this, but I found that she left the church nothing. I thought, "It is harder for a rich man to go to heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle."

One of the problems for a pastor is administration, the care of the parish, which is done mostly on the weekdays. There is the constant up-keep of the buildings and the paying of the bills. There is a variety of people and you become a peacemaker. The pastor must also lead the people to Christ. One of the men asked me, "Father, why don't you go golfing?" My answer was, "If I find a little time, I just like to sit down."

Saturdays usually began with religion classes, or a funeral or wedding, followed in the afternoon by afternoon and evening confessions and evening Mass. Sunday mornings, I had two Masses, followed by a baptism or coffee hour, or a meeting, with a religious class in the evening. And occasionally, an emergency call for someone dying in the hospital. It was a busy weekend.

The daughter of our painter, who had taken care of our painting for years, died suddenly. It was a shock as she was only 40 years old. She hadn't felt well, but she was helping her father with the painting. One never knows when death will come.

There was a man who came to the early Mass on Sunday and brought his dog and tied it to a railing. He did this for years. One Sunday, he did not come, but his dog got out and came to church alone and stood by the railing. After Mass, we called the owner to come to get his dog. It was a dead give-away that the man had missed Mass.

Chapter 52

Death of my Priest Friends

My close friend, Father James, found that he had cancer. The doctor treated him with radiation and hypothermia, which did not help. Later he was in the hospital for chemotherapy. From this treatment he formed a blood clot on his brain and had surgery. Another clot formed on the other side of his brain. I was the executor of his estate. The day he died, I had an appointment to take a stress test in the hospital. When I arrived the nurse sent me to check in with the computer. The nurse attached all the wires to me and said that the doctor would be one half hour late. I had her take off some of the wires so I could get a cup of coffee. When I returned, she said that the doctor would be one hour late. So I told her to take off all the gadgets and to tell the doctor that I didn't have time to wait, I am already on a treadmill. I left to take care of Father James' apartment and find his will. Father had two funerals, one here and the other in the East. We buried him beside his parents. After the funeral, I helped clean out his apartment. I sent the necessary papers to the judge to legalize my appointment as executor. There was no reply, so I called and a woman in the court said that the judge was in the hospital and all others who could sign were on vacation. Eventually, the judge signed the papers and it took me six months to complete the estate.

Just before I finished this estate, Father Earl's sister died in the mid-West, he went and buried his sister and on the way back he had an attack. They rushed him to the hospital but he was dead on arrival. So in a short time in 1982 I lost my two best friends and classmates.

I heard a rumor that the car barn in the town was haunted with a ghost. Tires fell off the racks, bus keys were mixed up and some heard strange noises. The rumor said that the ghost went home with the manager. This was just good conversation for the town.

A short time later, a young mother came to see me. She said, "We have a poltergeist in our house." I never take things like this seriously. She said, "Four adults and two children live in the house. We hear noises and things move around." I gave her some Holy Water and the prayer to St. Michael. I told her to go home and use the Holy Water and read the prayer which read:

"St. Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him we humbly pray; and you, Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God cast into hell Satan and all evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls."

This young mother went home with the prayer and the Holy Water. It must have taken care of their problem or they moved. I never heard from her again.

Our new organ developed a cracking sound. The repair man came and found that the trouble was caused by a mouse in the organ. Now the women are afraid to go up to the choir loft. This recalled to my mind a strange thing that happened while I worked at the orphanage. A boy brought a chipmunk to the study hall. A Sister with a long habit was the prefect. The

chipmunk got out of the boys pocket and ran right up the Sister's leg. She was jumping around trying to get that animal off her leg. Afterward, since she was a good sport, she laughed about it.

Chapter 53

Ordinary Events

When I got back to the parish from one of the altar boy's trips, I had five baptisms on Sunday and several funerals during the week. While going through all this, I broke a wisdom tooth. I probably talked too much. My dentist sent me to an oral surgeon who broke the tooth. It took him 45 minutes to hammer it out. Since he did not get all of it, I had a toothache for a month. I got the local dentist to pack the socket every evening. There is nothing as bad as a toothache.

One evening after dark, a Coast Guard helicopter kept going back and forth over the surf searching for the body of a man. A woman called the police and said, "I was walking along the beach with my husband. We had a fight and he walked into the ocean and disappeared." She stood on the beach while the search went on, but the Coast Guard didn't find a body. So the police took her home and there was her husband watching TV. She was so mad she could have killed him. During the search, I even went to watch. In a town like this the unexpected always happened.

I had a niece and her husband move into this area. She borrowed four hundred dollars to buy a pregnant cow to start a herd of cattle. The last that I heard, she sold the cow and the calf and moved. There went my money. Years later, she paid me back--I was almost in a state of shock.

Chapter 54

Studying People

One evening, I was in the church waiting for people to come to confession. I was sitting in the confessional. Someone came in and I opened the slide and heard, "If you don't take down that statue outside I will burn the church." I came out and there was a big man. Remembering my days as a school teacher, I lead him to the door and ordered, "Get out and don't you ever come back." He meekly left and never came back. Afterwards I thought, "He was a big man, he could have hit me over the head." Someone must be protecting me!

This town is a convention center. Large numbers of people came to the meetings of these conventions. I think that meetings are contagious. My parish caught this contagion of meetings which kept me so occupied. People must like meetings for they can sit for hours and seem to enjoy themselves. Maybe it is a form of escape, getting away from their husbands or wives, or from their noisy children. A cup of coffee or tea kept them happy and they talked on and on. It is a burden for the priest. I don't mind an hour long meeting but when they go three hours or longer, I found this ridiculous. The priest has too many things to do to spend much time in meetings. When I was in college, I heard a joke which went like this, "One who thinks by the inch and speaks by the yard, should be kicked by the foot."

In this parish I always had everything in order. It took so much of my time that my personal things such as my health, sometimes suffered. The parish came first, I came second.

I often canceled doctor or dental appointments, or even my day off for the parish. All parishes are alike but a tourist area is harder as the priest is taking care of his year-around parishioners and all those visitors who fill the church on Sundays and Holy Days. I think that all visitors called to find the time of Masses, keeping me very busy with phone calls.

People are really funny. My life is one of studying people. They come with all types of personalities. I have found that children are the jewels of the parents; sometimes they are a little tarnished. They also are the windows of the home. The greatest abuse of children is when their parents have no time for them. Parents should pray for their children. God can help and change them, for He can do all things if we just trust Him.

Chapter 55

The Lord Works in Strange Ways

Early one Sunday morning, I received an emergency call that an elderly woman had just died. I got out of bed and rushed to her home. The police and ambulance crew were waiting outside. I went in to anoint the woman who was lying on a couch. Her two daughters, ages about 60 were there; one sitting next to the body. I had a hard time getting to the body to anoint it. They began to harass me, probably fallen away Catholics. It was awful. I anointed the body and got out. I understood why the emergency crew stayed outside. I had quit smoking, after that I went to an all night cafe for coffee and began to smoke. Then I went back to the church for the Sunday Masses.

There were many sick people in my parish, which kept me busy taking communion to them weekly. One by one I watched them grow older and die. So I was always having funerals, sandwiched in between the daily routine of the parish.

In my yearly medical check-ups the doctors informed me that I had a stress factor. Even their pills didn't work. I believe that I wore out the doctors getting advice and medicine to keep up with the work.

Each year, I tried to attend the priest's retreat, to improve my spiritual life and to get away from the grind of the parish. We also had monthly meetings of the priests and laity from the

surrounding parishes. It was hard for me to attend as they met on Sunday afternoon. My Sunday schedule was filled. Some of my laity would attend and represent the parish. Most meetings are a lot of talk, resulting in the appointment of committees. It has been said that a camel is the result of a committee trying to make a horse. My motto is: Lets get it ~~done~~. I am a doer and not one who likes to form committees.

With all the visitors that invaded this area, I lived in a circus, without animals, but with people doing the performing. Many good people and generous people have helped me. A few I hired, but most of them were volunteers. In no way can I thank them enough. We worked together to teach the faith for the glory of God. Through the years, we helped thousands of people spiritually and materially. Often, through trials and difficulties comes much good. The Lord works in strange ways.

The priest after working for years with marriages, families, and divorces, realizes that it is a blessing for him not to be married. There is wisdom in the words of St. Paul that the priest is married to Christ and His church. Parish priests often live a lonely life. They are overworked, and sometimes unappreciated and taken for granted. People tend to forget that they are human. They live in the place in which they work and are always available.

Chapter 56

My Last Year

My last year in this parish was more hectic as I didn't get time off after Labor Day to rest. I had two priests to help on Labor Day weekend. One left to visit his sister, leaving the other priest with five Masses. I had to stay and help. There was a wedding on the Saturday after Labor Day, and the mother of the bride insisted that I stay and take the wedding. There went my rest. In October, I hired a priest from London to take my place. I worried that he didn't know the American way and might do something wrong. And the bishop would blame me the pastor. I went away only one week to visit my cousin, when I returned the priest left.

On my trip I caught a terrible cold and cough. I decided to stay down and keep warm to get rid of my cold as that is the only way to cure it. The next evening my janitor had bleeding ulcers. His wife rushed him to the hospital. The hospital called me. I went out into the cold of night to the hospital to anoint him in the intensive care unit. I had six night calls like this in a month. Two doctors gave me antibiotics which did nothing to cure my cold and cough. Pills do not work unless one rests. It took me four months to get over that cold. I carried on all the parish work during this time. After New Years, I went to my doctor and he decided that I had a disease of the lung and should retire.

Our little children in the second grade, each year, make their First Holy Communion. It was always a big event, with breakfast afterwards for the children and their relatives. A man

took pictures of the children. The religion teacher put them permanently on display. The children are so cute and innocent at that age.

One morning, I found an urn of cremated ashes on my dining room table. I put them on the secretary's desk and asked, "Where did they come from? Call the funeral home and find out about them." The funeral home had delivered them to the wrong church. They came and got him or her. What a gruesome thing, to get up in the morning and find an urn of cremated ashes. Never are urns of ashes delivered to a Catholic church.

Another hungry stray cat arrived at my door so I called the lady animal control person. We caught it and she took it to the police station. I don't know what happened but that night the cat was back at my door.

The next day the old cat outside had kittens. At 6:00 p.m. all the lights in the whole area went out. The town was in total darkness. The electricity was not restored until the next day about noon. When the lights went out, I got a flashlight and candles and went across the street to help the seafood restaurant with lights as it was full of people. It was quite a thing, dinner by candlelight. When the electricity came on, it blew out my refrigerator. The unexpected always happened in this area.

To get away from it all, I made plans to go to the mountains skiing, but two funerals cancelled my trip.

Chapter 57

My Doctor Tells Me to Retire

The Vatican council decreed that every parish must have a Pastoral council. I had a parish council for years, so I changed it to a Pastoral council. The lay men and women are elected to this council. There were monthly meetings. At these meetings they would talk on and on. People love to talk but never come to any conclusions. The council is to advise the pastor and help in the spiritual and material needs of the parish. I suggested many needs, but all the council would do was talk for hours and table my suggestions. It will take years for them to learn how a parish operates. Priests in the past decided what had to be done and it was done. In the future, when the people learn how a parish works, the council will be a valuable help, but now it is a burden for the priest. However, the Vatican council did the right thing in bringing forth the laity into their rightful position.

Just before Lent, the bishop came on Sunday evening for confirmation. I told him that my doctor told me to retire and that he had sent a letter to that effect. At the hotel by the ocean, I had dinner for him so he could watch the fishing boats. A big reception followed the ceremonies which the bishop attended. Afterward, I offered him two relics that I wanted him to take to his office. The early Christians would gather relics of the Apostles and martyrs; maybe a piece of bone or some blood, which they honored. I had a relic of St. James the major Apostle and one of St. John of the cross. The bishop looked at me as if I was some imbecile and said, "I don't believe in things that old." I responded, "I have the papers from the Vatican

authenticating them." He took the relics, said nothing and drove home. The next morning all my workers and myself found ourselves exhausted.

In the season of Lent, I did my penance by having Lenten devotions since I didn't feel well they became a real chore. My health during the year was such that I hoped to get through Christmas, then to get through Easter and then, to the summer. I believe that the good Lord speaks to us through events. From what was happening to me, I knew that I had to take some time off or retire. I really did not want to retire, but I had to get away from the stress created by this bishop.

Now I am getting older and my health is poor from all the things that I have gone through. My doctor again recommends that I retire. The priest, who many years ago predicted that I would wear myself out before I was old, was so right. My life had many joys--and some sadness by the way some people treated me. I always put myself out for others. I was there when they needed me and I prayed for them. Also, I feel good that in the many years that I was in this parish, no Catholic died without the last rites of the church. Over all the years I have converted so many people, and reconciled many people to God. In this parish I developed a real active community. My life was as varied as the human personalities that I met.

The Catholic Church is an organism that possess Divine Life as it is the Body of Christ, who is its head. The Holy Spirit is its soul and its protector in teaching Divine Truth. As such, the church is perfect. Christ is the bridegroom, the church is His bride. Christ established the

church to bring people to God. However, it also has a human element which consists of the Pope, bishops, priests, and the laymen and women and their free wills. Any defects or shortcomings in the church are found in this human element. Christ did not establish the church for saints but for sinners. In my life story I have been dealing mostly with the human element of the church, namely people.

Even though I was retiring, I continued with the parish work until summer. I went to the hall one evening to visit the bingo game and noticed that the air was blue with smoke. None of the men working there noticed it. It took a while to convince them. I was the one that kept everything running smoothly. A few days later the electricians came and put in new electric motors for the fans. After we had that fixed, the furnace at the mission church went out.

The last month that I was there, which was June, I had four emergency calls to the hospital and four funerals. To top it off, the dentist put gold crowns on two of my teeth and they both leaked, so later I had them redone. During that month, I was not only busy with parish work but I had to pack my things. I took Communion to all the sick and said, "Good-bye." The parish had a going away party for me. I left the parish with \$100,000.00 in its account. I was in this parish for 19 years.

My health was poor from the pressure and stress. My home was gone when I buried most of my relatives. I had only one sister left, and she lived some distance away. Very few people realize what a priest goes through.

The new pastor came and I left. I was glad to get away from the pressure. A few months later, I heard there was trouble in the parish. The priest was threatening to tear down the rectory and the church, which the people loved. He was building here, he was building there. He had dreams of grandeur. This created anxiety for me. Some of the people wanted me to help which I could not do as I was not the pastor. This priest was dividing the people with his wild ideas. Finally, he created so much turmoil for himself that he left the parish.

I had spent half of my life as a priest building this parish into a very active community. In a very short time, the priest who succeeded me tore it apart. As a result, the people were in a state of confusion.

To be successful in a parish, the priest must be a man of prayer, a diplomat, have good common sense, and often be a peacemaker to preserve the unity of the parish. Our Lord's prayer at the last supper was for perfect unity for his followers.

Chapter 58

Retirement--To Get Away From the Stress

The bishop ignored the doctor's order for me to retire, so he put me on a six month sick leave. He told me that I was to go to a parish in a depressed area in a little town where the rectory, as he said, "Was unlivable." The rectory was a shack and it didn't even have clothes closets; it was unlivable. When my six months were up, I went out and looked at this parish. I could not move into that rectory, so I contacted the young personnel director. He told me to go out and rent an apartment and survey the situation. I searched all over that town to find an apartment and finally I reserved one. When I got back to the city, I called the personnel director and told him that I had rented an apartment. He said, "You can't do that without the permission of the people." As pastor, I didn't need the permission of the people. He was toying with me, so I told him to keep the place.

Several months later, this bishop was made to take early retirement because of his bad administration. A new bishop came to the diocese. Sometime later, I was downtown where I met a young couple with their first baby; the thought came to me: Sheep without a shepherd. A thought also came to me that maybe I could work a year or two more, if my health holds up, to help others. I decided to apply for another parish.

Shortly after that, beginning in January, a strange thing began to happen. For two months, several times a day I would hear my mother's voice, and in her German way she would

say, "Retire and let them sit." I thought that my imagination was running away with me, this can't happen. This went on for two months. While my mother was alive, if I had a problem, she would always give me the correct advice. Now she had been dead for eleven years and was in heaven. The hearing of her words I attributed to my imagination.

In the spring, I applied for another parish. I had seniority. The personnel board gave the parish to a younger priest.

Then I began to recall my mother's words and took them seriously. In the spiritual world, many things happen beyond the comprehension of man. We know that God lets people in heaven know what their families are doing on the earth. Certainly parents in heaven are very much interested in the well-being of their children. So I believe that God allowed my mother to give me advice. In a way, this ties in with what happened during the Second World War. My brother was fighting in the South Pacific. My mother, at home, heard the sound of a beebee hit the front window. There was no mark of a beebee on the glass and no one outside with a gun. A week later she learned that my brother was wounded at the same time that she heard the sound against the window. No one can explain this, but similar cases have been recorded. Maybe this was the work of the angels. The spiritual world is far greater than our material world.

I had been on sick leave for sometime. Now, almost forty years since my ordination I followed my mother's advice and retired. When I get to heaven I will get all the answers.

I made it through all these trials because I was faithful to my daily Mass and all my priestly daily prayers. Without God's help, I would never had made it.

There is a shortage of priests in the United States. The lack of concern shown for priests in this country, by the bishops office and some laypeople, will bring about a greater shortage in the future. Since Vatican Council, about 20 years ago, there has been a considerable exodus of priests. I believe that the Archbishop Sheen, who gave talks frequently on TV, was right, when just before his death, he said that some day in the future priests from Africa will come over and reconvert North America.

The seminaries in Africa are full of students while in this country there are very few students for the priesthood.

Even with all the heartaches that I have had, I am grateful and thankful to Almighty God for choosing me to be a priest.

This is my life as a priest.