

# Midwest Bits and Pieces

AUGUST 1, 1993

## BROTHER CARL HONORED AT HONORS CERÉMONY

Did you wonder what all the excitement was about on April 2, 1993? Well, there was much to celebrate on that night as La Salle's honor societies initiated its newest members. This event contained much joy for the honored inductees, the moderators, and the friends and family members who attended.

The ceremony itself was a very formal one. All of the moderators and administrators were dressed in their academic robes and caps. The inductees wore semi-formal attire, which meant the boys had suits and the girls wore white.

The introduction had a tremendous emphasis on light, such as seen in the Gospels (You are the light of the world). Everyone in the ceremony walked into the church in a candlelight procession. Each inductee held a candle throughout the introduction which created a beautiful and joyous atmosphere. The ceremony of light continued as one of the officers from each society came up to light the society's candle and told something about their society.

For every society, the Academic Dean presented each moderator who in turn gave a short description of that society's function. After that, the officers came up and assisted the moderator as each inductee was called upon by the secretary. Each individual initiated came forward and then membership was bestowed.

This year is also very special in La Salle's honor societies' history for two reasons. First, a new society was added, the Thespian Society, which is a theater arts society into which the drama club was inducted. Secondly, the number of inductees for all five societies totalled about one hundred twenty which is now the school's record.

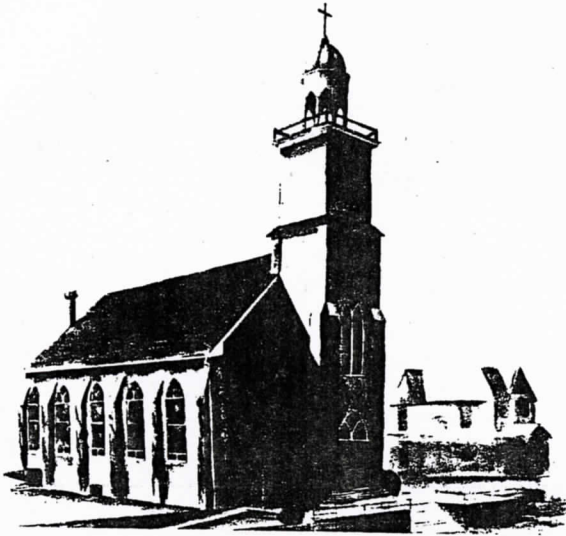
Father Pat presented the 1993 Faculty Ministry Award to Brother Carl Shonk. Brother Carl said "it was quite an honor for me, I think it's an honor for anyone nominated for this award. It's always a privilege to be part of the faculty and administration." He was also given a large beautiful cross as a gift. Sister M. Gabrieline Wagener, I.H.M. gave the main address on challenging youth to prepare themselves to lead the country. Ms. Corky Dozier Littler and the school chorus provided the musical interludes which included "A Whole New World" and the "Ave Maria."

After the ceremony, a reception was held for the new members of all societies, the teachers, family members and friends. (Taken from "The Royal Courier", La Salle High School paper, May, 1993.)

## NEW ARTISTS - NEW ART

Word has been received that Brother Dave Fitzgerald joined five other artists in the San Antonio area for a showing of recent photographic works by the artists. The showing was held at the Planta de Arte Nuclear Gallery in San Antonio, Texas and ran from May 29 until June 13.





**ST. PETER CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
*Montgomery, Indiana*

**1818 - 1993**      **175th Anniversary**

On Sunday, July 4, a Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated by the parish for the 175th anniversary of the founding of St. Peter's. We are part of the history of St. Peter's as these selected notes from Brother Aiden's collection will testify.

"St. Peter's is the oldest parish in either Davies or Martin Co., and was founded about 1818 by Catholics from Kentucky, a church-loving people...Rev. L. P. Lalumiere visited the settlement from Vincennes for a time and afterward became its first resident pastor. He is credited with building a hewed log church, 24' x 30', which as early as 1823 was standing, and a frame one 40' x 60', and which was completed in 1827....The third church was of brick. Part of these bricks were intended for college buildings, but with the removal of Father Sorin to the northern part of the state, these buildings were lost sight of." (Col. C. Blanchard, Vol. I, p. 376.)

(Sorin to Moreau, 1841) "The little colony reached Vincennes about the middle of October. Here two of the Brothers took charge of a school, and Father Sorin, accompanied by the others, repaired to St. Peter's about 30 miles from Vincennes, where his institution was to open a school, a novitiate, and attend to the spiritual wants of the Catholics widely scattered throughout that part of the country.

"St. Peter's was inconvenient of access. Buried in the Wabash woods, it had a cheerful look. The buildings and the gardens were situated on an elevated Black Oak Ridge. Room enough to pass winter in. Brothers were asked to come at once. Arrived October 14. Sisters of Charity had a school there some years before, but were not able to make a living and had to withdraw. Thirty-five Catholic families, all poor except for five or six. Arrival of Brothers pleased both Catholics and Protestants. Called on neighbors who received them cordially."

"The conduct of the little community was truly edifying; those good Brothers were often in want of everything except food and clothing; but, according to the precept of the Divine Master, everyone appeared to be content. ..During the first two months all had to sleep on the floor and to practice many other acts of mortification of a like nature. Yet all were habitually happy in their lot. Where fervor and devotion reign, a sacrifice is a joy rather than an affliction. Soon two young men from the neighborhood were received into the Novitiate. Some months later two others of a more advanced age came to increase the number of the children of St. Joseph; several others, in the following spring, arrived from Jasper, from New York, and elsewhere. Within a year, nine were admitted to the Novitiate. At the close of the first general retreat, August 21, 1842, eight received the habit. We might look upon it as a miracle of grace for a young American to persevere in the humble and difficult employment as a Brothers of St. Joseph." Sorin, 1841

"Father Moreau has obtained 2,500 francs from Propagation for establishment at St. Peter's. Moreau disposed to send priest next May, two Brothers, and two Sisters, but Moreau must say he decides to keep his foundation dependent on Sainte Croix." Sorin, 1841.

"I must form a regular novitiate with elements who do not understand each other, and frequently I do not understand them myself; for we have now three German Postulants, who do not speak a word of English -- has almost been necessary to make the exercises in three languages at the same time; or have the Holy Ghost renew for us the miracle of Pentecost. Happily, the pious dispositions with which they are animated shows that God, in effect, speaks to their hearts when I can only speak to their ears. Last Sunday we

had the ceremony of taking the Habit. Our little chapel was crowded to excess—never was such a ceremony witnessed in this part of the country." Sorin to Moreau, Dec. 1841

"In May a school was established by Mr. Kennedy, an excellent Catholic, who lived four miles south east of St. Peter's amid a farming population one third Catholic. Brother Gatian taught 25-30 children — boys and girls — one half of whom were Protestants. Several of these were baptized. Children paid in 'nature'. School discontinued in August, although it was going well, with the beginning of Notre Dame. 1841

"Without delay all the natives volunteered to help the projects (building, etc.) according to their means. Estimates were quickly made. By spring, 100,000 bricks, 10,000 feet of lumber, and some 1000 feet of cut stones were available. But soon as the Bishop got wind of the plan he opposed it. He alleged we were too near — only 27 miles — from the college of the Eudists at Vincennes. Besides, he had promised their Superior that he would not permit any other college to be built except at such a distance that it would not interfere with theirs. To the surprise of the community, however, they found that the good bishop was unwilling that they should erect a college. His idea, apparently, was that a mission station and primary schools should be the only establishments conducted by Father Sorin and his Brothers. In great trouble of mind, Father Sorin went to Vincennes to try to win the consent of the Bishop to the cherished enterprise. But the Bishop was unyielding. There was already a Catholic college in Vincennes and he considered this quite as many as could be supported in the vicinity. Undoubtedly, the Bishop was right, considering the sparsely settled country, and the particularly small number of little wealth of the Catholic population. Apparently Father Sorin himself was convinced; for when the Bishop intimated that he held a section of land on the St. Joseph River, near Lake Michigan, which he was willing that the community should have and on which they (he agreed) might build a college, that Sorin at once took to the idea. He returned, therefore, to St. Peter's and laid the proposition before his Brothers. For days the community wrestled with the grave question thus presented. They had become attached to St. Peter's; and the idea of now breaking up after they had spent over a year in preparing this habitation

in the wilderness seemed at first very distasteful. But the longer they considered the matter the more desirable seemed the project. The name of St. Joseph was a powerful attraction. That they should receive a section of land to themselves on the banks of that blessed river, even wilderness, to establish their beloved college and order in the valley of the St. Joseph, already blessed by the labor of sainted missionaries, seemed an indication of the will of heaven. The resolution was therefore, taken that the offer of the Bishop should be accepted, and that a part of the colony depart at once and take possession of their new home." Sorin, 1842.

### JOSEPH CHVALA RECEIVES GRANT

Brother Joseph Chvala received a grant to participate in a summer institute at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. The institute ran from June 30 to July 27. The grant covered transportation, room and board, materials needed, etc. For those who wished, six hours of graduate credit could be earned through Georgetown University.



March 1, 1993 marked the fiftieth year Holy Cross has been in Chile. It was on March 1, 1943, that Frs. William Havey, Alfred Send and Joseph Doherty arrived to begin the mission. The occas-

ion is being celebrated by a family picnic to be held November 7th on the grounds of St. George's College and a Thanksgiving Mass presided over by Msgr. Carlos Oviedo, C. OM, Archbishop of Santiago. Brother Donald Kuchenmeister is part of the Chile mission personnel."

#### BROTHER RICHARD GILMAN

A letter from the University of Dayton, School of Education, Office of Graduate Studies and Research, stated:

"Brother Richard Gilman, C.S.C. CONGRATULATIONS! It is our pleasure to inform you that our advisory committee has completed its evaluation of your comprehensive examination, and has positively assessed your performance. We are proud of you and your efforts and hope that you are able to take great joy from this accomplishment. (Signed) Joseph F. Rogus, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and Research; William R. Drury, Chairperson, Department of Educational Administration."

Richard, we add our congratulations!

### REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE AND FUTURE OF THE BROTHERS OF HOLY CROSS

Br. Eligius Ruscik, CSC

What I am about to say is, I think, general knowledge and something that is more or less accepted by most of us, but something which is not much discussed publicly.

It is this: Are we going to bounce back or are we going to die out? I personally believe that we are, even now, going through the death throes and that it is only a matter of time before we — as an American Province — expire.

But that statement shouldn't startle or surprise us because this dying and rising phenomenon is occurring around us all the time: grass dries up and dies and is reborn with recurring rains; leaves of fall fall and die only to come back again in the spring; flowers bloom and wither and die spreading seeds of new life even as they die.

I think that we as Brothers of Holy Cross were brought into existence at a particular time in

history to do a particular job. I now believe that we have finished that work. I believe that our mission has been completed. I believe that our work as educators in God's vineyard has now become obsolete and that the only way that we, as a group of religious Brothers, can prolong our life and be of further service to the people of God is by going out into the highways and byways and finding new work in another corner of God's vineyard. And unless we do that, unless we change to accommodate the changing times, we will die.

We are already exiting. But as a group of religious men in the service of the Church we have, I think, done a good job. We have had our share of successes. We have stood in the limelight on the stage of life and have taken our bows. We have received a goodly share of applause and have gone back for numerous curtain calls. But we have also had our share of embarrassing moments when we forgot our lines and were booed off the stage. But, as I said before, we are now taking our final bows. We are exiting. I hope we can do it gracefully.

And how do I feel about this turn of events? I feel at peace, at ease. I am not sad, cynical, bitter or depressed. I think the Brothers of Holy Cross will reappear in some form or other and that God's work will continue to be done by us or by someone who looks like us. Even today, we are being replaced with good replacements in India and Bangladesh and Chile, in Uganda, Ghana and Liberia.

Therefore, I continue to believe in God and in Holy Cross even as I go about preparing to take my final bows. But before I go, I want my last line to be: "I am proud to have been a Holy Cross Brother!"

However, I think we have to be realistic about our present predicament. Is there a further need for us in the Church of the future? What do we, as Brothers of Holy Cross, have to offer that differs from what the people in the world have to offer?

We are for the most part, professional teachers. Is that what makes us unique? Then we had better scramble our eggs and move on because lay people are doing just as good a job as we are.

Our uniqueness must be elsewhere. But where? I don't know. However, I do know that we are Holy Cross Brothers and that we are anchored to the foot of the cross. Our motto is: Spes Unica! But we also have these waving banners: Vita! Dulcedo! Spes! Beautiful inspiring words. If only we could live by these ideas.

If we lived our logo truthfully, practically and, yet realistically, perhaps, then, we would have the answer to the purpose of our existence. As it is, we are groping about painfully trying to find our way through the dark labyrinth of uncertainty.

Deep personal holiness will, I think, be one of the outstanding features of the new religious in the new Church.

In the past, we were trained to be a something, instead of a someone. If all the Congregation wants and expects of us is that we become professional teachers (or professional whatever) then it is better we stay out in the world. We will, I think, be happier. Up to now, we have been full-time teachers and only part-time religious. I think we will have to achieve a better balance in this area.

People can't see any difference in us. We are just ordinary teachers, ordinary people doing ordinary jobs. Our spiritual inner life has been neglected. We have become dwarfed religious, spiritual pygmies — instead of being the spiritual giants people expect us to be.

When Christ called the apostles to follow Him, they left their nets (their way of doing things) behind in order to follow Christ and do things His way. Many of us today (even after 50 or 60 years in the religious life) are still dragging our nets behind us. We don't want to let go even though we have labored all night and caught nothing. Perhaps the time has come for us to throw our nets on the other side of the boat.

It is evident that we have to do something — something we are not doing today. But what is that something? I don't know, but it's out there staring us in the face, and if we keep looking long enough and intently enough, we will eventually see the thread which Christ left behind for us — and, if we pick up that thread and follow it we will find our way out of the confusing and bewildering labyrinth in which we find ourselves today, just as

Theseus found his way out of the Minotaur's labyrinth by following the thread which Ariadne gave him.

We will not attract others to the religious life just by being career men. We must also become men of spiritual depth.

Mother Theresa has no degrees, no Ph.D's, but she knows her ABC's. And, evidently, that is enough because she is probably the most powerful fulcrum in the Church today.



### **THE VOCATION CRISIS DESPERATION OR INSPIRATION? Br. Philip Armstrong, C.S.C.**

For years vocation promoters have been wracking their imagination trying to arrive at some logical and understandable reason for the worrisome lack of response today among young people to what we presume to be the still relevant validity of God's call to vowed religious life.

It is not my purpose here to restate at length or dissect the multiple causes of the current vocation phenomenon. Most of these are certainly real. At the root of the problem we find a legion of sociocultural factors impacting on potential candidates, and there is no longer a nurturing environment to affirm the response to a call to religious life. Few young people today are drawn to investigate, let alone join, a religious community. They find fulfillment in giving of themselves and forming varieties of community in contexts different from the traditional modes of religious life, and in ways allowing a less permanent type of involvement and offering the

potential for a periodic evolution of their life direction.

Responsible religious have tried to analyze this set of factors. Some assert that young men and women today are virtually incapable of any form of extended fidelity at all, so the perpetual commitment required of the vowed life is not likely to attract them. Therefore, society and the young themselves are to be faulted for the paucity of vocations.

Other religious berate themselves as the primary cause of the problem and cite complacency as the reason. The majority engaged in the traditional apostolates connected with education or parochial ministry believe they, along with their clientele, have climbed the ladder of socioeconomic success toward greater affluence onto a new rung of achievement and equality and have lost touch with the apostolic thrust toward the disadvantaged they ought to exert as a congregation. These religious periodically try to legislate renewed fidelity to their congregation's original charism as they discern its applicability today, but many are admittedly incapable of an about face. As they age, as their numbers decline, as they turn over to the laity elements of ministry traditionally served by themselves, they sink gradually into apathy and assume they can make no further impact on the world. Some even concede that not only they personally but their congregation are doomed to die sooner rather than later, and denial is not only ineffective but foolish.

Arguably some faults lie on both sides, and the harsh consequence is that given such an unwelcoming and even hostile ambient, what young person looking into vowed commitment would bestow upon it anything more than a cursory glance? I agree with religious who consider themselves part of the problem, but for a different reason. We may not exert a direct influence on the societal elements blamed for the poor vocational environment, but there are factors over which we do have some control, and it is not just complacency but another more substantive issue to which this article will turn its attention.

Unquestionably the vocation situation today is in crisis, that is, at a crucial *turning point*. But it is hardly at a point of no return.

## ASSUMPTIONS

I believe there are three assumptions under which religious must operate today if they expect to resuscitate their hope of attracting new members. The first is that **God continues to inspire young people to sanctify themselves and give their lives in service to others through vowed commitment in community.** Whatever the problems associated with attracting vocations to the religious life in recent years, the evidence confirms that the Spirit still collaborates in a person's discernment of such a life style as potentially worthwhile and personally fulfilling.

The second assumption flows from the first: **there in fact is a future for religious life.** None of the several significant books on religious life written in the last ten years has denied the validity of the perceived call to greater intimacy with the Lord in religion. The question is not *whether* religious life will survive, but *under what form* it will survive. What do vowed commitment and community mean today? What do we believe they will mean in the twenty-first century? What do we discern as our role in facilitating the transition?

The third assumption is that **there is a future for my religious community.** Why should I believe this? Some smaller congregations are simply disappearing by attrition. A few already have merged with others or have closed down operation. Historically this is not a new phenomenon. It could be happening again. What then would prompt me to assert with any degree of confidence that my community is assured of being alive and apostolically engaged thirty to fifty years from now? The answer is simple: life, not death, will prevail in my community because Christian community is founded on life, is centered about the perpetuation and extension of the living Christ. If not exactly as it is now, my congregation will nevertheless continue to generate life in the future, perhaps even more effectively.

## WHY THESE ASSUMPTIONS?

I propose these assumptions for two reasons: first, whatever appearances there are to the contrary, I still believe the assumptions to be valid; and secondly, the proper nature of inspired celibate generativity is to throw one's entire energy and enthusiasm into the creation of life, not into dissolution and death. Our experience is

always life-oriented. Even those religious who have witnessed the demise of certain valued institutional apostolates have often been heartened by the vision of a larger plan for new life through a positive reorganization and focusing of the mission of the congregation.

We come to this earth to do more than die, though death is everyone's ultimate act of fidelity to God's call. We come, as Jesus did, to live and to give life, to give it abundantly. It is the essence of despair to deny hope for life through religious commitment. If responsibility can be assessed as contributing to the lack of appeal in religious communities today, perhaps it is around the axis of hope and despair that the crux of the problem lies.

### ARE WE DESPAIRING?

Despair, however illogical for religious, is already exerting on some its enervating and demoralizing effects. We experience a social context vastly different from that in which we were brought up. We see inviolable values discarded with impunity; the ecosystem manipulated and exploited; life treated with cavalier indifference; loyalty, dedication and commitment of any kind mocked as impossible; the institutional Church questioned from every side, even ignored as irrelevant. We identify few credible exemplars. The forces of Godlessness seem to dominate over honest efforts at renewal and ongoing fidelity to religious values.

It would be easy to despair, and I suggest that some religious have succumbed to its deleterious influence more than they care to admit. They hold—and not entirely without reason—that the religious life has been infiltrated beyond redemption by the very forces against which they have sincerely tried to be counterwitnesses. Now, aging and declining in effective numbers, believing they have done their utmost, they seek a safe haven in which to ride out the storm, die securely and peacefully, and not be concerned about what happens to either their community or the religious life now in the tempestuous present or in the wholly uncharted future beyond their years.

In this case apathy is frankly more diabolical than outright antipathy. Some form of productive response is essential. As long as a healthy tension exists between the ideal and the real, as

long as there are religious with enough hope to face the challenges, then creative thinking and dialogue—even if radically diverse in outlook—are not only possible but do occur. Positive steps, small and tentative though they may be, are being taken toward fashioning the future. When religious panic and inertia paralyzes them, nothing happens. Growth of both the individual and the group ceases, and disintegration sets in by default. Such a situation exists now in some provinces of some congregations. We religious are responsible to some extent for the dearth of vocations.

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

In my opinion the answer to this situation is **conversion**. Were we convinced, and I mean truly convinced, that our ongoing personal conversion is effective beyond the apparently limited influence of our individual lives, then I am certain we would be able to counter the impact of the symptomatic negativity stifling us today.

Let me explain. All are called by baptism to conversion. Not to be open to it is objectively sinful. Beyond our baptism we religious are bound by our vows to an even more demanding metanoia, the unceasing reformation of our hearts through a continuous renewal of our life. What is more, as a province, as a congregation, we are summoned to conversion. The fruits of our individual efforts should be evident in the corporate legislative decisions taken in our councils and chapters, decisions which accurately mirror through the symbols of words the prime motivating convictions of their authors.

Constant readiness to welcome God's challenge permits a regeneration of hope, of a sense of excitement over the future and over my part in the fashioning of it. It prepares me to take risks which threaten the relative stability and security I may believe I ought to have earned at this stage of my life. I have grown complacent and comfortable with a certain place, a certain life style, a certain type of ministry, a fixed attitude toward my life direction. Am I prepared to sacrifice or suffer the loss of any or all of these? In other words, am I ready for death? I pose this ultimate question because death is my acceptance of the final challenge to let go willingly of even the most basic and essential elements of human existence, and there are

along the way many little deaths habitually exacted of me which, if allowed to, help shape my readiness.

One of our brothers now deceased was considered something of an expert on the topic of retirement in an era when for religious that subject was not thought to be a particularly relevant one. He recognized that eventually an aging religious would want and perhaps need to give up active full time involvement in his or her professional field. At whatever age and in whatever circumstances, one would never reach a point at which involvement as a religious could be laid to rest. One's identity as a giver, one who serves, one whose religious profession is a lifelong pledge of availability to others would remain intact. The demand would always be there to minister in some way despite limitations. In other words, the religious would be challenged throughout life to a constant reassessment of his or her situation and to a renewed application of positive objectives to its continuing effectiveness. The challenge to conversion would be persistent and exacting. An affirmative reaction and response would assure ongoing growth and development.

The same is true of a religious congregation. In its councils and chapters at every level, its assemblies, its less formal gatherings, it would find its members readily open to that variety of gifts among themselves essential to creative planning and the implementation of decisions, including those requiring risk and the possibility of diminishment, even failure.

Both individual and corporate conversion, then, embody a visible and tangible witness. Conversion is a sign of life in the present and, more importantly, for the future. Discernible openness to conversion not only invites new members to help perpetuate the stance of listening to God's Spirit, but almost demands that they join in actively and excitedly pursuing the community's mission. The viability of hope evident in the membership illustrates that there is indeed a future for mission in this province, in this congregation, in this way of life, and those who participate will be an integral part of that exhilarating journey.

## CONCLUSION

The events and circumstances we experience

today should work to the advantage of the religious life in the future. We must be determined that a response can be made to the challenging multitude of negative factors, whatever their impact. We may have little or no direct control over some of them, but we as individuals recognize we have contributed to the problem—probably unwittingly—to a greater or lesser degree. Through our openness to ongoing conversion the means are at hand to help define an effective response to it.

A song popular many years ago entitled *Che Sara, Sara* expressed a truism: *The future's not ours to see*. But today surely is, and we possess the capacity to influence the present moment. How we perceive the present, how we envision the future, how we marshal the forces at hand to do battle will determine the extent to which we in fact can fashion the reality of the religious life in the early twenty-first century. Marshaling the forces includes encouraging newcomers to join us in the task. Once we become continuously engaged in conversion toward ongoing life in ministry, whatever may be our individual and corporate limitations; and once we are all rid of our desperation and inspired by the hope that our congregation indeed has a role to play in the future of the Church's mission, we will be able to exemplify that optimism in such a way as to draw others to the conviction they can do no less than come with us in the ongoing search for effective relevance. They will be drawn by our enthusiasm because they will be inspired by the same Spirit who fills us with an overwhelmingly encouraging sense of devotion to God's plan on earth, the optimistic future of which we continue to implement and influence as long as we live. Wracking the imagination is nonproductive; it is time to wrack the spirit.



**GOD PUT ME ON EARTH  
TO ACCOMPLISH A  
CERTAIN NUMBER OF  
THINGS. RIGHT NOW  
I AM SO FAR BEHIND,  
I WILL NEVER DIE!**