

Everybody Calls Me Father

By Fr. X

[Fr. Robert C. Hilkirt]

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Fourth printing

I

MY NAME is Bob. Although I am only twenty-four, everybody calls me Father, including folks who are twice my age or even three times. This is because I am a priest, and it is my business to be a spiritual father to my people, doing for them the things of God, which include more things than you might think.

I stand five feet, ten inches, which I suppose is a reasonably handsome height, but outside of that my looks are something to make horses shy. St. Thomas Aquinas, who thought up all the right things to say, defined beauty as orderly variety. I must say that I consider my variety very disorderly, and so does everybody else.

My nose would be more suitable for a penguin, and so would my stomach. Even my mother does not love my hair. I remember my brother's hair was silky and golden, and the family thought so much of it that they put a lock in the family Bible. But I guess they figured they got enough of looking at my hair on my head, without coming upon it in the Sermon on the Mount. They didn't even put my hair in Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, which my father got stuck with in some book-of-the-month deal.

Now with Harry Cauley, it's different. He is a very handsome priest indeed and could probably be in the movies. I remember one day when we are still in the seminary, my best friend, Pat O'Malley, has a very dazzling visitor in the person of his breath-taking second cousin, Maiv O'Malley. Miss O'Malley's visit is quite an event, and seeing that I do not have any beauteous visitors of my own, I am standing around this day, talking with her, when along comes Harry Cauley, looking like something in a toothpaste ad.

Immediately Mary O'Malley stops talking with me and gets round-eyed and heaves a sigh which I consider very lugubrious, and says in a stricken voice, "What a shame for such a handsome boy to be studying for the priesthood. How lucky some girl would be to have him "

At the time I do not say anything, because I am a mannerly chap and do not go around scolding beautiful second cousins of my friends, but after Mary O'Malley is gone and I am able to think calmly, I come to the conclusion that her remark is very anti-Christian indeed. What does she want to do, reserve all the good-looking men for worldly affairs, and let God have only potatoes like me?

If so, that would be something for the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to be worrying about, because it would take away one argument which everybody can understand. As long as we can point to fellows like Harry Cauley and say, "Look — there's a chap so handsome that he could have the world at his feet, and he has given it all up for Christ," why, we've got something. Otherwise, people would think that the only boys who become priests are the ones that nobody could love but God and their mothers, and even the latter only with considerable effort. This is not so, as the many Harry' Cauleys go to prove.

To get back to Pat O'Malley — Pat, as I said, is my best friend in the seminary, but he does not become a priest.

Instead, he meets a beautiful girl and falls in love and gets married. All the other seminarians see his point of view, even if they do not emulate him.

As I have explained to innumerable questioners since my ordination, the Church does not believe that priests ought to get married. Christ did not marry, and we are supposed to follow in His footsteps. Also, since Christ allows priests to share in His priesthood, it is a good idea to make some sacrifice to show gratitude. The Church believes that not getting married is quite a notable sacrifice, and I must say that I agree.

Also, the Church figures that if priests had wives, this would make things very complicated, because when they were called to visit the sick, they might have to decline because the Lady of the House would put her foot down, saying, "Do you think I want you coming home and giving the kids smallpox or spinal meningitis or polio, or something?" You could not blame her for that, but it would not be a good idea for the sick person, because he or she might die without getting his or her sins forgiven, and that would be not so good.

The Church further believes that a priest should be a spiritual Father to every one in the parish. They should be able to tell him their most secret thoughts, and even sins. People would not feel like doing this if they had a kind of fear that maybe he would be telling everything to his wife, as husbands normally do. Also, it is a very good thing for a priest not to have all his time taken with a wife and children, because if he doesn't, he can do a great deal of praying and studying and helping the poor, and so on. Catholics, including O'Malley, think the Church is quite right and would be the last ones in the world to want their priests getting married.

That is why, when O'Malley meets his beautiful wife and falls in love, he determines that he will leave the seminary.

The reason I am a priest is because I can never get out of my head the quotation, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his immortal soul?" Even when I am a tousled-haired kid, every time I think about that I begin to feel that I ought to be a priest. This is also St. Ignatius Loyola's favorite quotation, and so I figure I am traveling in pretty fast company. When I am a teen-ager, there are times when I believe that I should not be a priest, and kind of forget the quotation. This mostly comes to pass at dances where the girls are exceedingly beautiful, or when I observe natty fellows dashing around in yellow convertibles. However, after I go home and think it over, I weigh the quotation against the girls and the convertibles, and the quotation wins hands down. That is why I decide to become a priest.

However, I do not find it easy. I am as human as anybody, and I have strenuous objections to giving up all the nice things of the world, particularly, as I have said, beautiful girls and yellow convertibles. However, one day I say to myself that I must stop shillying and shallying. "Give it a trial, go to the seminary." I say to myself, "After all, you don't have to stay." That is how it comes to pass that I find myself in the seminary.

I do not take any honors. In fact, I come very near to failing. For quite some time I apply the technique I had developed in college of boning up on my studies enough to get by. I do this in a hurry, then saunter into the corridor to talk things over with the other fellows. One day when I am elaborating on the Yankees' chances of winning the pennant, the rector comes along behind me, and, without caring whether he gives me a severe shock which might unhinge my reason, he declaims in a very loud voice that sounds as if it is coming from another world. "Go to your room."

I am about to obey, although my legs suddenly feel very spineless, when he proceeds, in the same tone of voice: "If you are detected once more wasting your study hours in the halls, I regret to inform you that we shall probably be forced to conclude that the Catholic Church can manage to muddle through

without you," or words to that effect. "This," he continues, growing more devastating with each word, "is a serious business. You are preparing to guide immortal souls to God. That is a job for a big man and a serious man, and sometimes I am inclined to suspect that you are frivolous and lightheaded."

Well, I must say that I am somewhat taken aback. I had always thought of the old rector as a nice, pious old man who wouldn't disturb a mosquito, even if it was biting him, but now I perceive that when he believes that anybody is playing fast and loose with God, he can be a very overpowering character indeed. I mumble something apologetic and go to my room, where, with the logic which I have learned from my study of St. Thomas Aquinas. I come to the conclusion that if, as the rector says. I am lightheaded. I had better get busy making my head heavier.

Thereafter I seldom if ever waste time in the corridors, except maybe when Notre Dame is playing Army or there is a new Pope being elected, at which times even the rector relaxes. I also decide to do more praying in future, because I am sure the rector will be in favor of that too.

The beginning of my beautiful friendship with O'Malley takes place in a most unusual way. It is the night Father Reardon is laid out in state in the seminary' chapel.

Father Reardon at this time — that is, before he dies — is our history teacher. He is also our instructor in rail-roading, although this is not in the curriculum. Father Reardon had been a locomotive engineer before becoming a priest, and it is common talk around the seminary that you can do better in class by knowing about trains than about the French Revolution. For this and other reasons, he is much beloved, and we pray very hard for him when he departs from this earth. Everybody takes turns staying beside his casket and praying.

It happens this night that Pat O'Malley and I are the watchers from 1 to 2 A.M. It is our first experience of this kind, and we are young enough to feel somewhat uncomfortable with the dead, although normally they are the most peaceable people in the world. Anyhow, we are kneeling there praying and telling God how much we think of Father Reardon and how we hope that he is in Heaven, when all of a sudden he sits up in the casket and utters a sound that can only come from the next world.

Pat howls and is out of the chapel in a wink, and I am right on his heels. An instant later we are pounding on the rector's door, hoping he will open it before Father Reardon arrives. We are yelling, "Monsignor, Monsignor." in frantic fashion. In a moment he opens the door, looking very tousled and alarmed, probably thinking that the seminary is burning to the ground or the Ku Klux Klan is on the loose.

"What's wrong, boys?" he inquires.

"It's Father Reardon," we jabber at him, waving our arms. "He's come back to life."

The rector makes no comment on this, probably feeling that it is a statement calling for a healthy skepticism. He follows us to the chapel, and we stand back to allow him to enter while we peer through the door. Sure enough there is Father Reardon, sitting up in his casket in front of the altar. I decide that the rector is a very brave man, if not downright rash, because without further ado he goes to Father Reardon and feels his pulse. Then he motions to us to enter.

Pat does not respond. He would not have gone into that chapel for the Pope. I, however, step inside and approach, quaking. The rector says, "Call the undertaker."

It seems to me that it would be smarter to call the Bishop or the College of Cardinals or somebody, because this looks like the biggest miracle since the raising of Lazams from the dead. However, I have long since learned that it is wise to do as the rector says, and I do so.

When the undertaker comes, he goes into the chapel without any to-do and unceremoniously pushes Father Reardon back in the casket as he was before. The rector comes out, and we ask him what happened. It is veiy simple. Father Reardon had died sitting propped up in bed. Rigor mortis had set in and he had to be tied down in the coffin. One of the bonds had come loose, and he had sat up. The sound we heard was his lungs filling with air.

Well, it is going through a harrowing experience such as this which makes two hearts beat as one, like Pat O'Malley's and mine.

Another exciting day around the seminary is over a rumor that some of the fellows are going to be sent to Rome for advanced studies. Of course, practically every seminarian wants to go to Rome, as they would like to see the main office, so that the next monring a lot of the boys look like something the cat dragged in because they have been unable to sleep for drinking that maybe they will be selected for the honor. However, I look as fresh as a daisy, because I know that although the Church always has plenty of troubles, she will have to see much blacker days before she will be sending me to Rome. As I say to Pat O'Malley that day, "Pat, sometimes I lie awake over St. Thomas' proofs for the existence of God, but I will never lie awake over going to Rome." So I stay in the seminary' until I am ordained priest. Then I am

appointed an assistant pastor at St. Rose Parish, where I am to help Father Tim Malloy, the pastor; or at least not hold him back any more than I can avoid.

II

BEFORE GOING to St. Rose's, I go home for a little vacation. On the train I meet Joe Miller — or rather, he meets me. Joe Miller's business is hardware, but he takes on religion as a sideline. No sooner does he see my Roman collar than he gives me the business.

"The trouble with religion," says Joe, after some preliminary remarks about tire weather, "the trouble with religion, young fellow, is that it is too conservative. The Representatives of Religion (he pronounces it with capital Rs) are bothering too much with trifles."

He smooths his vest and lights a big cigar. After he gets it going (he is obviously relieved that I do not want one), he goes on. "I'll tell you, young fellow, there just aren't enough big men in the ministry. There's big possibilities there. Look how we rally people together when we go to war. Look what can be done when there is a little imagination used. Well, sir, I think there is the same possibilities in religion. People ought to be having mass meetings in the big halls for God, just like they do for war. That's the way I would operate."

He takes a few more puffs, and then, just as I am about to inquire whether he has read St. Thomas, he points the cigar at me like a gun and announces, "Maybe some day I will enter the ministry." There is more of the same, but that sums it up.

Well, at the time I do not say anything to Joe Miller, but even then I realize very well that he is wasting his breath, because he is talking to the wrong fellow. I know that I will never be a spellbinder. I know that people will go to sleep in the middle of my best sermons, and that I will never fill any big downtown halls. That kind of thing is wonderful, but I know that I am not the type.

I do not feel exactly happy about it, because I think maybe it would be better if I were a bigger man in every way. But the more I think about it, the more it occurs to me that, after all, God makes big men and He makes little men, and I am willing to concede that He does not need any advice from me. The thing to do, I decide, is to be satisfied with your type and put up with yourself as best you can.

There is one specially good thing about being a little man and knowing it — you are not likely to do things just so that people will say you are a great chap. The little men like me can always take comfort in the fact that they are not tempted to that kind of conceit. And it is always possible that it is even harder to do the little things, because then nobody says that you are quite a fellow indeed.

Anyhow, all I say to Joe Miller is that I am going to try to be a pal to the kids. Of course, he is very disgusted with me.

"I think that the kids need help," I say to him. "and after all, they are the adults of tomorrow. Older people are hard to change, but kids aren't, and you can do a lot of good for them by just being a pal."

Joe looks down Iris nose and says, "Now you see, that is exactly what I mean by trifling. How do you ever expect God to get what's His rights if you are going to go around fussing with kids?"

Well, although we are at odds on this, we have a nice trip. Joe even buys my lunch because he naturally figures a priest will not have any money, especially one like me because, as he says, you've got to have brains to make money. I guess he figures I am hopeless, because he stops trying to inspire me and just jabbars about this and that.

I do not meet Joe again for a long, long time, but I am always expecting to hear of him turning up with something pretty terrific in the line of religion. That is, until one day I am going some place and I look up and see a big sign saying "Shop at Joe Miller's Hardware Store — the Store with a Future." So then I figure that Joe has not yet entered the ministry to put it on its feet, and religion is still in the small time.

When Pat O'Malley gets married to his beautiful wife. I hear that there is quite a shindig. Pat is all decked out in a full dress suit as though he is a Senator or something, and so are his attendants. His wife is wearing a beautiful white dress and her attendants have blue. The altar is all splashed with gorgeous flowers and the rich colors of the Church. To top it all off and to make things just perfect, there is a tenor whose singing is so touching that it makes everybody almost cry.

As I said, I only hear about this because the seminary officials do not think that it is a good idea to have seminarians wandering around to weddings and the like. They think that they are training men for

holy living and they should be making sacrifices. This is all right with me. Anyway, I am glad to hear that Pat has such a nice wedding.

But Pat's celebration is nothing compared with the day I say my first Mass. I send out invitations to let the people know of the big things that are happening to me. The church is packed to see me bring Christ down on earth for the first time in my life. St. Mark, my home church, has never been so beautiful. In fact, when I see it I almost weep because the Church is making so much fuss over me when I am not much at all, as Joe Miller brought out. The organist is giving it everything he's got with both hands and feet, and he even has all the stops out, including the oboe, which I guess kind of got drowned out. He is thundering out "Ecce Sacerdos Magnus" — which means Behold the great priest — as I go up the aisle. My mother is crying. [Actually Father X's stepmother; Iris father remarried after his mother's death.] The choir has a beautiful program which they have been practicing for some time, and they pour out the liturgy of tire Church like a choir of angels. Everything goes just fine, and even I am stopped by the pastor before I can make a couple of embarrassing mistakes. He is standing next to me to see that I do things right.

During the day of the first Mass everybody just seems to be in awe of me. There is an old lady I used to deliver the paper to when I had my paper route, who comes ten miles to get my blessing. I guess that I must have handed down the blessing of Christ on a thousand people that day. My hand is sore for a week from people shaking it so often.

The reason that the Church makes such a commotion over a new priest is because there is no power on earth so powerful against the devil and his legions. Christ doesn't choose to act on earth personally any more, but rather He chooses poor chaps like me to do all kinds of big things for Him. The priest's are the hands that pour supernatural life into people at birth. His are the hands that hold the immaculate Body of Christ at Mass. His are the hands that close the eyes in death. His are the hands that cut the powerful bonds of sin dragging men down into hell. It's like a poem I read once about "The Beautiful Hands of the Priest." No matter how gnarled and old they are, they are beautiful in a spiritual way because they have been anointed to unite God and men. So there I am, ready at last to begin my work for the souls of the people in St. Rose Parish.

III

I FIND OUT on my way to St. Rose Parish that you can enter either from the east or west. I would suggest the east, because that way there is a beautiful lake and gardens and trees. There are beautiful homes, and all is quiet and peaceful. Right in the middle of all this there is a beautiful Protestant church under the direction of the Reverend Ferris, who is one hundred percent man and a very notable character.

Westward, however, it is different, and it will give you the jitters if you are a religious-minded person. There is one store after another with garish neon signs. There are several movie theaters with blazing marquees. And then there are worse places.

For instance, there is Joe Mazolli's tavern. Joe is a very nice guy and loves his wife and kids and goes to church, but he gives fellows too much to drink and says it is none of his business when he sees they are headed for a drunk.

Then there is Dill's drug store with a vulgar display of magazines, not to say obscene. Then there is Fancy Dan's poolroom. I do not have anytiring against pool as such.

In fact, if the seminary had rated us on pool. I would have come out with "summa cum laude." But Fancy Dan's is a deleterious poolroom, because all the wild kids hang out there and plot against the citizenry and how to undermine the government.

The way it all adds up. St. Rose Church is a kind of buffer between this unsavory western section and the beautiful eastern part. It looks as if the Reverend Ferris and his congregation are saying to us Catholics. "Well, if you're so good, let's see you hold the evil back."

And Father Tim Malloy is just the man who can do it, as I will demonstrate in due time.

The first parishioner I meet in St. Rose's is Jimmy Smith, aged thirteen and very well set up. As I swing into the driveway at the church in my new car, which is a gift from the people of my home parish who are proud of my priesthood if not of me, Jimmy is standing around tossing a baseball into the air and catching it when it comes down, and singing at the top of his voice, "O Lord, I am not worthy." I do not know whether he really believes this.

When he sees me he stops abruptly, as if something very intriguing is happening in his life. He spots my Roman collar, touches Iris cap, and gives me the once over while I am hoping he will remember that the catechism says to love your neighbor.

"Hi, Father," he says, "are you the new priest?"

"I am the new priest, and what is your name?" I reply in very snappy fashion.

He tells me, and adds that he has a sister Janet and a father and mother. I tell him that this is very fine, although I do not observe anything unusual about it.

"Do you play baseball, Father?" he goes on. "The last priest we had here did. His name was Father Mellert and he could hit them a mile. The kids were nuts about him."

I admit cautiously that I have been known to be seen with a bat in my hand, but I add that I am not nearly so talented as Father Mellert — who, after all, had once tried out for the Yankees before remembering about what does it profit a man. I say to myself that I hope Jimmy Smith and his friends will not expect God to send them a big leaguer every time.

"Father," says Jimmy at this point, "I will get the gang together and we'll have a game."

"Okay," I say.

Jimmy then escorts me to the door of the parish house, asking whom I would rather have on my team, Joe DiMaggio or Ted Williams, and I reply that I really do not know. This seems to disgust him not a little, and I realize that I will have to stop being lightheaded about baseball if I am going to be of any service to St. Rose Church.

Here I am, in the parish only a few minutes, and already I am finding out about things they overlooked in the seminary; namely, that a good batting eye is a practically indispensable part of the priesthood.

IV

THE HOUSEKEEPER, Nan Higgins, meets us at the door and says in a conspiratorial whisper, "Father Tim is expecting you, Father," and points to his door.

My knees are feeling pretty spineless again as I go toward his room, because I am wondering whether he will take one look at me and start telephoning complaints to the Bishop. After all, it is not like in college, where you choose your roommate. In this case the Bishop does the choosing for you. So I say a little prayer for myself as I open the door and face my first pastor.

I am met first by Father Tim's big airedale, Murph, and had I known it then, this is the most crucial moment, because Murph has more than a little to say about who is accepted around St. Rose's. It is a very lucky thing for me that I smell all right to Murph, because that is at least three-quarters of the battle. I do not know what would have happened if the Bishop had sent a man who was persona non grata to dogs.

Father Tim is standing right beside Murph, but he is not quite so demonstrative, although he is indeed very cordial, for which I am thankful. Father Tim is about six feet two and wears big thick glasses, and his face is creased in a thousand wrinkles which form the expression of one who has worked very much but has laughed and sorrowed even more. It is the face of a man who has shared the sufferings of many and has fought wickedness like a tiger.

Even at this time I am well aware that Father Tim Malloy has done big tilings for righteousness. He is a kind of self-appointed one-man vigilance committee for the whole diocese, as I have been told. He is exceedingly tolerant of human beings and exceedingly intolerant of evil, and many is the man refrains from doing wrong because he fears the wrath of Father Tim. In front of all this priest, I feel very small as I stand there looking at him.

His past rushes before my eyes as in the case of a drowning person, which I suppose is what I am feeling like at the moment. The time Father Tim celebrates forty years as a priest, there is a big celebration put on by his friends. The main tribute is paid by one of Iris former classmates who I guess admires William Jennings Bryan, because he orates the way he did. This classmate stands up and says, pointing at Father Tim, "Here is a real man of God, a man who has grown up with the city'. For forty years he has been besieged by its evils and sordidness, but he has dashed them back defeated.

"His house," says the speaker, warming if not actually exploding to his topic, "his house is the most awe-inspiring building in this city, because from it come the pronouncements of the Most High as they came from Mount Sinai of old."

Father Tim says later that he is veiy much embarrassed because his classmate lays it on so heavy, but eveiybody is quite glad that he makes such an eloquent speech, because they say that Father Tim deserves it, as indeed he does.

When he joins Murph in greeting me on my first day in the parish, he has a newspaper in his hand which he has been devouring. The first thing he says to me is, "Priests ought to know what's going on. All this theology isn't a bit of good in a theology book unless you apply it to real living." Then he shakes hands with me, and I feel as if I have caught hold of a grizzly bear in top form after a long smmner of good vitamin-rich eating.

I learn later that Father Tim does not even miss the movie page, although he only goes to the movies about once in two years and always genuflects from force of habit before entering his seat, which makes him exceedingly furious with himself. "I look at the movie page," he explains, "and also at the comic page, to make sure that things aren't getting too wicked for my boys and girls."

As he shakes — or rather, mashes — my hand, his eyes are lighted up, and I realize that he is a real man of God and has a heart as big as himself. "Father," he says, and I feel very funny being called that by this old warrior of God, "there is nothing I admire more than a new priest. I am proud of you for giving your young life to the service of the great Master. Will you please give me your blessing?"

He has a hard time getting down on his knees on account of the rheumatism, but he makes it, and bows his head while I touch it with my consecrated hands and say in Latin, "May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, descend upon you and forever remain.

Then I kneel and ask for his blessing, and I can't think of anything that will give me a better start. Maybe it is because I am somewhat flustered that I do not give him a hand in getting back on his feet, and this is very fortunate, because later I learn that Father Tim does not like any implied suggestions that he is no longer in shape to run the hundred yards in ten seconds.

After we talk about everything under the sun, he sitting stroking Murphy and I puffing at my pipe, he mentions to me, "I suppose you want to know what is expected of you. Well, Father, if you take care of the sick and the kids, you will never have any trouble with me. I know the kids will worship you. They worshipped me when I was young."

He looks a little bit wistful and goes on, "I guess they still like me, but not the same as they will like you, because you can be a pal to them. They'll think they sort of won you over. You can do a lot of good for them.

"And the sick — they have the toughest life on earth. You don't know this but I do. I've been sick, and it gets pretty awful looking at four walls all day. You can stop in for a minute and make the whole day brighter for a sick person.

"Try to keep your ideals, Father. I know they are high now. Every boy that comes out of the seminary thinks he can conquer the world for Christ. But the battle with evil is a tough one. Often you will wonder what is the use. But we have to keep on trying.

"You'll do a lot of talking with people. You'll be giving instructions and sermons, and advising folks. Now you do not have to be a great orator. In fact, for the run-of-the-mill day-to-day work, maybe it is just as well if you aren't. People like to feel at home with their parish priests. The main thing they want is sincerity. Give them that — give them the best of yourself, and you will do a great deal of good. Now I must say my Office, Father. Your room is next to mine. God bless you."

This is one thing about being a priest — conversations never bog down and get dull, because always one or the other suddenly remembers that he has not yet finished saying his Office. The Office is an hour of reading from the Psalms and similar great prayers. Priests say it eveiy day, and it is very good for the soul, even if somewhat hard on the eyes at times. Still, you get to know it almost by heart, which makes it easier as the years pass.

While I am unpacking in my room, I think back on what people have told me about Father Tim. They always say never to ask him about his new church unless he brings up the subject himself, because he is veiy touchy about it, and no wonder. The one thing Father Tim wants to do before he dies is to build a beautiful church to the honor and gloiy of God; but something is always interfering. In 1929 he is all ready to start, with plans drawn and eveiything, when along comes the Depression and he has to use a great deal of money to help the poor.

In fact, the way I hear it, not only does nobody in St. Rose Parish go hungiy, but they are not even embarrassed. Father Tim will not stand for soup lines or anything like that, and he practically blows his top when anybody suggests investigating the poor. He says his people have always been good folks, by and large, hard-working and thrifty enough, and why should he start to suspect them of making a poor mouth

just because things have gone haywire? He says it is an insult to go into a man's home and make him tell all his personal affairs as if he were a suspicious character instead of a good American citizen, and besides, a decent God-fearing Catholic. He says it is very poor charity to scrape a man's soul raw to help his body. Christ, says Father Tim, would never humiliate anybody, and neither will he.

So what he does is quietly pay the rent and the grocery bills of the people who need help, and does not ask them to move to a cheaper house or anything like that, or to take their children out of school and put them to work. That way, nobody in St. Rose Parish knows who is hit by the Depression, and who isn't, unless they notice that the man of the house is not going to work. Of course Father Tim's method is fairly expensive, but his answer to that is that Christ can send him all the money in Fort Knox if He wants to, and he is quite sure Christ will be more likely to send some if it is spent in a Christ-like manner than if it is not. This is quite logical if I understand my St. Thomas Aquinas. Anyhow, it works for Father Tim, because he rides through the Depression all right, and no harm done except to the building fund from which he has been forced to borrow; and when the Depression is over, he repays it very handily.

But what with one thing and another, it takes quite a while; and when he is ready again to start building, the international situation is becoming somewhat touchy, to say the least. At this juncture, the Dean of the district, who is a very wise man and considerably calmer in temperament than Father Tim, advises him to wait, because it may very well happen that Uncle Sam will slap controls on everything and the church will be left standing half-finished or even only one-quarter. It turns out in due time that this is very smart counsel. But Father Tim, being unable to peer into the future, is somewhat taken aback at the moment and is heard wondering whether he is expected to live as long as Methuselah to get his church built. Very soon, however, he recovers his poise and aplomb, because he knows that he is a hard man to circumvent. "I am a hard man to circumvent," he observes to one of his cronies, "and I have a scheme." When invited to reveal the secret, he looks mysterious and changes the subject. However, at the time I arrive at St. Rose, I observe certain things, and after putting two and two together according to St. Thomas, I believe I perceive the shape of the scheme.

TO GET BACK to Jimmy Smith and the baseball game: when I go outside after my talk with Father Tim, Jimmy says to me, "Father, you play shortstop because you have a pretty good arm." I obey without informing him that this is a promotion for me because in the seminary they always put me in right field. This is because most of the balls are hit to left field.

Jimmy and his friends, I discover quickly, are very charitable and filled with Christian dispositions, because they do not berate me when I make eight errors, but instead say, "Tough, Father. Good try." This is not true, but it is very helpful to my inferiority complex.

Even at bat I look like a notable failure. I miss the ball entirely a number of times, and twice I fly out to the infield. Maybe it is my imagination, but I can almost hear the boys asking themselves what kind of assistant pastor the Bishop has palmed off on them.

About that time I must have said a prayer, because I lambaste one and perceive immediately that it is surely a home run, because it is going to go over the small fence in left field. As I am rounding second I hear a scandalous racket, with bangings and thumpings and shoutings. It turns out that my home run has knocked over a garbage can in a very beautiful back yard, and a large and annoyed man is hopping over the fence to have a few words with me.

"Say, you big fathead," he observes in what I consider an un-Christian and inhospitable tone. Then he says something about a case of arrested development, which I take as a reference to my playing with the kids. He also proposes very warmly that I go pick up all the garbage if I don't want my head punched, or words to that effect. At this point he looks at my face, gulps and says, "Father Bob!" He is none other than Pat O'Malley, my seminary pal with the beautiful second cousin, the fellow who is with me the time Father Reardon sits up in the coffin.

After Pat O'Malley has determined that after all he does not desire to punch my head for upsetting his garbage can, nothing will do but that I climb over the fence with him and meet his wife and kids.

I make my excuses to Jimmy Smith and the team, and we approach the O'Malley domicile. I am somewhat alarmed when Pat escorts me in through the kitchen because I am told on good authority that some women do not wish to receive their guests there.

However, it turns out that Mrs. O'Malley does not mind, and anyhow the living room, as I learn later, is so occupied with toys and dogs and children that it is as much as your life is worth to set foot in it.

After the usual pleasantries, Pat wants to know do I crave a glass of beer. I reply that I will take coffee. He looks distressed. Mrs. O'Malley pours me a cup anyhow, and Pat opens a beer for himself, and we retire to the dining room to decide what can be done about a world in which people have never stopped acting like Adam and Eve.

Naturally I ask Pat what he is doing, and am not at all surprised to be told that he is a newspaperman. He always did have much to say, if not too much, and possessed veiy definite opinions on everything. However, he informs me in a confidential tone that he is not exactly deliriously happy about his job.

"I am working for a big newspaper," he says, "and I am in continual rebellion. Now I do not want to give you the idea that the big newspapers are hopelessly wicked."

"They aren't?" I inquire, raising my eyebrows humorously in pretended astonishment.

He does not even notice my witticism. "No," he says solemnly. "I imagine they look pretty good compared with newspapers in some other countries — although I will admit that I cannot read their languages. Anyhow, American newspapers have some very fine virtues."

"I hadn't noticed," I tell him, still Hying to brighten up the conversation with a wisecrack or two.

He doesn't even seem to hear me. "I think they try pretty hard," he says, "to get the troth about most things, and by and large they are fair. Also, they usually like to fight for the underdog. But they have some serious faults due to the fact that their philosophy is not sound at some points."

"They should read St. Thomas Aquinas," I tell him, and this time I am not joking.

The name of the all-time champion philosopher captured his attention, and he nods. "Yes," he says, "they should, although I will admit that I am no Thomistic scholar myself." Then he goes on. "One of the things wrong with the papers is that they are too quick to criticize labor movements, and too anxious to defend big industries and corporations. They are not properly balanced on that point."

"To put it mildly," I remark mildly.

"Also," he continues, "they are veiy loose in the matter of purity and modesty, as anybody can see by looking at the pictures they are always printing from Hollywood and such places. They print stuff which excites the lower instincts, and then drey get into a lather when these instincts break loose in some revolting crime. Know what I mean. Father?" He looks at me.

I assure him that I know what he means, and he goes on. "It is like advertising poison candy, and then condemning the children who eat it and get veiy sick. This would be horrible hypocrisy if the men who boss these new spapers realized what they are doing, but I do not think they do."

"They should read the Ten Commandments," I inform him.

He points a long finger at me. "You said it!" he exclaims. "Their morality has holes in it. They condemn robbery and burglary and murder because they understand that such things are dangerous crimes against society."

"And against God," I observe.

O'Malley shrugs. "I'm afraid they don't think about God veiy much. Anyhow, they condemn some sins, and condone others. They do not fly into a rage over the oppression of the poor. And they are especially off-base in the matter of marriage.

"They will denounce a man who is a traitor to his country, because they believe in patriotism and loyalty' in that field. But they take it as a joke when a man is a traitor to his wife and children, because they do not believe in the patriotism that makes a man loyal to the flag of his own home."

"Pat," I says, "that is very well put. You should be writing the editorials."

He looks at me to see if I am kidding him. When he realizes I am not, he grins sheepishly. But in a minute he goes on. "They condemn a soldier who quits under fire, although maybe the poor chap was frightened out of his wits; but they glamorize the rich man or woman who welshes out of loving his or her own wife or husband and children."

O'Malley inches forward in his chair. "For instance, the other day I hand in a story about the fool excuses for which courts break up homes. One social butterfly gets a divorce because her husband dozes on the couch after dinner. Another notable doll is allowed to rob her children of their father because he was an all-American guard, and when he had a few drinks once, he demonstrated his football tactics in the living room and busted a coffee table which his mother-in-law' had given them.

“There were many other similar examples in my story, and they showed how preposterous divorce is, and how it is making a joke out of our courts of justice and out of marriage, which is the foundation of America. If I do say so myself, it is a good story.”

O'Malley pauses for breath, but I do not say anything. I do not want to disturb his train of thought — although I know that it is very hard to do that.

“I hand the story to the city editor,” says O'Malley, “and he gets a lot of chuckles out of it, but he says it is dynamite and had better not be printed. Then he says, 'By the way, Pat, we are conducting a survey to see whether a fellow ought to try to kiss a girl on the first date. How about lining up interviews with prominent citizens on that?’”

O'Malley looks at me, and I look back at him, and we both look pretty weary. “Well, Father,” he says, “that is the situation, and I feel pretty low about it. I am wondering how I am going to explain to God what I did with the talents He gave me.” And he spreads out his hands.

After this, Pat goes out to the kitchen for another bottle of beer. I call to him that I've had enough coffee.

When he returns, I tell him, “Say, I hear on the grapevine that the Catholic paper here in town will be needing a good newspaperman.”

The Holy Spirit, who inspires good thoughts, must have had something to do with this, because sure enough Pat gets the job and today he even writes a column just like Father Gillis, and sometimes it is even longer.

The funny part of it is that I understand in due time that Pat makes the paper so successful that he even makes a good living in addition to keeping his conscience clear and being as a result very happy. This naturally brings to mind what Our Lord said about seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these other things will be added. It is really true.

Pat is one of those chaps who do not care too much about money. I guess he never forgot all the talks in the seminary about lay not up treasures on this earth where rust corrupteth and the moth creep in. He always gets very violent about people who kowtow to certain men merely because they are rich, even if they are ignorant and foul-minded and ought to be kept out of decent people's living rooms. “I think I will write a column about this,” he says to me, and I think that it is a good idea because the derogatory adjectives will certainly flow out of him on this subject.

VI

SOMETIMES WHEN I pray I tell God how wonderful He is, sometimes I thank Him for what He does, sometimes I beg pardon for what I do, and sometimes I ask for what I need. It says in the catechism that we should pray like this.

When I first come to St. Rose's, I pray mostly the last way, trusting that God will not mind because I need a great many things. I need to please Father Tim Malloy, and I need help to avoid doing a great many dumb things, which I am partial to. But especially I ask God at this time to make me a good teacher of religion, because this is very important and I can just see the children getting bored stiff with my fumbling explanations of the great doctrines of Christ.

Of course I had studied a good bit of theology, but telling youngsters about it is something else again; and the first time Father Tim takes me into the school and introduces me, I can't think of anything more inspiring to say than, “I am glad to be here and I hope that I will be a good priest for you.” It seems to me afterwards that any dummy could have said that, whether he knew any theology or not.

The next time I enter the school to start instructions, I take my place at the desk with somewhat more than a modicum of fear and trembling, and I am wondering whether I cannot contrive to be a little bit less stupid.

I have in mind that I will start off with a rousing good story, maybe about Father Damien who gave up everything and went over to Molokai to take care of the lepers, and in the end got leprosy himself and started Iris famous sermon with the words “My dear fellow-lepers.” This, I figure, will show the boys and girls the beauty and wonder of goodness.

But what actually happens is, I get scared and forget what I am going to say, and the first thing you know I am starting with Adam and Eve and coming forward (or is it backward?) to the present time, covering practically the whole of Christian history and not a little of the doctrine in one lesson. I guess I

spout practically every thing I know in one forty-five-minute talk. In fact, I cover the history of the Jews, with all its implications, in ten minutes, which I am inclined to suspect is perhaps the all-time record.

The next time, I am not quite so scared, but I am still jittery enough to go over the Adam and Eve routine for the second time; and in the course of this I venture a joke by mentioning that all the trouble in the world is because of a woman. Right then I learn that what grown-ups call humor is not what makes youngsters laugh. My sally falls flat on its face, and it seems to me there is considerable boredom in the atmosphere, so I stop and look at them and ask, "Isn't this interesting to you?"

A boy in the back row gets up and says, "Well, Father, we all know that Eve is going to eat the fruit and get Adam to do likewise, so it is not very exciting. It is like seeing the same movie over and over."

With this, I begin to ask questions, hoping to liven the situation. "Can babies go to heaven if they are not baptized?" I inquire of Jimmy Smith, the boy who tried me out for his baseball team.

"No, Father," he says, "because of original sin, which took away the supernatural from us. They go to a place of natural happiness."

He must have been astonished and in fact delirious at his own erudition, because he suddenly waves his hands frantically above his head and slaps the girl in front of him so hard that she nearly flies into the inkwell.

I begin to have a faint suspicion that discipline is getting away from me. Also, I think to myself that I wish I had paid more attention to our education courses in the seminary.

Anyhow, I say in my severest voice, "Jimmy, this will not do. Come to see me after school." At which point I get myself out of the jam by turning the class back to the Sister in charge and walking out of the room with what dignity I can muster.

I go immediately to my room for some deep thinking, because I realize that I am facing a major crisis. While I am reviewing in my mind the various theories of discipline, my mind goes back to Sister Basil. Years ago, when I am in grade school, she is the seventh grade teacher, and all her pupils have two ambitions. One is to graduate. The other is to have Sister Basil for a teacher.

I suppose Sister Basil is maybe too easy-going sometimes because she is very kind-hearted and loves youngsters. But there isn't a boy or girl who won't do anything for her. She even makes something of Joe Longo.

Joe isn't a bad guy, I guess, but all the teachers at that time say he will probably be a terrible flop in life, and the rest of the children, looking into the future, see him hanging around some railroad yard, a hobo. The trouble with Joe is he plays hookey.

In the winter he comes to school, but in spring it is another story. Joe is a fanatic about circuses and baseball games and similar shindigs, and he always says he is going to be a fireman anyhow and he can't see how arithmetic and such stuff has anything to do with that.

Finally Sister Antoinette, who is the principal, decides that something must be done because Joe is bad for school morale, and she calls him to the office and says, "Joe, I'm very sorry' but we can't keep you any longer. You will have to go to some other school. That is final."

Joe Longo is not a little busted up at this, as he knows that Mrs. Longo definitely will not see his point of view, and will communicate her sentiments to Mr. Longo's strong right arm, with disastrous consequences to her son. Joe is so concerned about this that he contrives the strategy of going to see Sister Basil about it.

"Joe," says Sister Basil, "I will do my best for you, but you must promise that you will never skip school again."

Joe says he won't.

But Sister Basil knows human nature, and she knows that the circus lusteth against the school, and that Joe Longo, being a weak descendant of Adam and Eve, will need some good morale-building to get him past future temptations.

So what does she do but take Joe to the fire engine house, where he has always wanted to go but doesn't because they can't have places like that cluttered up with kids. She takes him there and says to the Fire Captain, "Captain, will you show Joe Longo around? He wants to be a fireman when he grows up."

Well of course the Fire Captain would slide down the pole head first if Sister Basil asks him, so he shows Joe around, through the gymnasium and reading room everything, and allows him to slide down the pole put on a fireman's hat and sit at the rear steering-wheel of a big ladder truck. Joe's eyes are sticking out of his head like a bullfrog's, and shining like a girl's in love.

Then when Joe is positively saturated with ecstasy because the Fire Captain gives him an old badge to keep. Sister Basil says to the Captain, "Captain, do you need any arithmetic, like fractions and decimals and percentages, to be a good fireman? And what about spelling and things like that?"

"Sister." says the Fire Captain, "a fireman can't know too much arithmetic and fractions and things. We have to figure out how strong a rope must be to pull down a burning wall, and how much pressure a hose will stand, and how high we can make a stream of water go with our pumpers, and a thousand things like that. As a matter of fact." says the Fire Captain, looking right at Joe Longo, "we won't take a man into the fire department unless he is good at arithmetic. And as for spelling —" The Fire Captain takes a deep breath, looks very impressive, and says. "Well, how would you like to have the Mayor or somebody reading your report of a big fire if you had misspelled all the words?"

That does it. of course. Sister Basil thanks the Fire Captain, sends Joe Longo home, and goes her way. The next day she goes to see Sister Antoinette and says she will personally guarantee that Joe Longo will now behave like anything. And just to make sure that *lus morale* stays high, she lets it be known among certain pupils what she has promised Sister Antoinette.

These certain pupils are very husky characters, and they get Joe Longo aside and say to him, "Now look here. Joe. we don't want you jocking school any more, because if you do it will make Sister Basil look very bad and that is something we will not stand for."

What with one tiring and another, Joe Longo never misses a day of school again, and even shows up in the classroom once with a temperature of 101 degrees, and his marks in arithmetic and spelling and similar subjects betray a remarkable improvement.

Joe is a fireman now and often goes back to the old school with his wife and kids to see Sister Basil. So do a lot of other fellows. I go back to see her myself, although of course not with a wife and kids. Whenever I do. Sister Basil says to me. "Father, you can do a lot for children by just putting yourself out for them. The trouble with the world is that parents will not sacrifice themselves for their children. They will give them everything but themselves, which is the most important tiring. Try to be a companion to the children, Father."

I remember once, when I am an altar boy, Sister Basil gives me a little gold cross for my lapel. I figure it must be worth about five dollars or even ten. I have since learned that you can get them for fifteen cents. She says. "You wear this and maybe some day you will be saying Mass instead of serving it, and then you will give me your blessing."

Now I do not say that this is why I become a priest, because living alone and keeping the vows is something to be considered, but I know the little gold cross has something to do with it and I am always very glad to give Sister Basil my blessing, asking God to watch very kindly over her.

VII

WHEN YOUNG Jimmy Smith knocks at my door and comes into my room to face the music. I am thinking about Sister Basil's method. Also. I am turning over in my mind the philosophy of various saints on this subject, for instance St. Francis de Sales, who says that you catch more flies with honey than vinegar, and St. John Bosco, who reforms thousands of Dead End Kids many years ago by being their pal and doing magic tricks and walking the tightrope for their entertainment, the admission price being that they would say the Rosary with him.

I realize that I am not St. Francis de Sales or St. John Bosco, but Jimmy looks as repentant as St. Peter after he has denied tire Lord, and I decide that I will do my best for him. "Sit down, Jimmy," I tell him. "Now look at me, not at the floor, even though I admit I am not very handsome." This makes him smile, although he very quickly straightens out his face. But he continues to look at me. which is a good sign.

"Jimmy," I tell him. "I am not angry with you. I want to help you because I think you are a great guy. I think you can make a great man of yourself. You know. Jimmy, we older men have been through all the years of being boys, and we have learned certain tilings that you will have to learn too. Now you can learn them the smart way or the dumb way.

"The smart way is to learn them from the people who have already learned them. That saves you all the trouble. The dumb way is to leam them by trial and error. So, for instance, if you are cutting down a

tree, you can get a woodsman to show you how to keep it from falling the wrong way. Or you can just try it blind and take a chance on getting your leg broken. Do you see what I mean?"

Jimmy nods vigorously.

"Okay," I tell him. "Now one of the things that everybody has to learn is that the world is full of laws and these laws are not there to annoy us but to help us. For instance, there is a law that when water is boiled and made into steam it expands.

"If you know that law and obey it and make it work for you, you can run trains with steam. But if you say nuts to the law and do not take it into account, you will boil some water in a closed container and there will be an explosion and you will be scalded. The thing to do is to know the law and obey it and make it work for you."

By this time Jimmy is all attention, and he tells me about a toy steam engine which his Daddy buys for him one Christmas, and how they make it go and it even whistles like a factory. I see he has got the idea, but I decide to make it even a little more impressive, so I take a jackknife from my pocket and open it.

"Now take this jackknife," I tell him. "It is very sharp." I tear off a piece of newspaper and show him how the blade will cut it almost like a razor. He looks at it with his eyes bugging out and says, "Gee!" I go on. "You see, the law is that a sharp blade will cut things. Smart boys obey that law and use the blade for whittling. Dumb boys disobey, and cut themselves.

"Or take the traffic laws, Jimmy. If there weren't any, and no policemen to make people obey them, there would be wrecks all over everywhere, wouldn't there?"

Jimmy and I both agree that there would be blood miring in the streets and quite a mess.

Then I say to him. "Well, the laws of God and the Church are given to us for our happiness, so that we will not be exploding things and scalding our souls, or getting into all kinds of spiritual wrecks. The smart people obey the Laws.

"You see, Jimmy, everything must have laws. That includes the school. You remember we were talking about original sin in class. Well, one of the effects of that is that people want to break laws because they are not spiritually strong as they ought to be. They have a kind of spiritual disease that makes their wills weak and their minds somewhat darkened. They must learn the laws and make themselves obey to get back the strength they have lost.

"We have got to develop character the way we develop muscles. It takes practice and determination. We have to do good things over and over until it becomes a habit and gets to be easy. If you don't obey now, you will never amount to anything. Criminals were not always criminals. They started by doing little bad things in school, and got worse and worse. Now, Jimmy, I want you to start practicing to be a great and good man."

"Yes, Father," says Jimmy so repentantly that I begin to wonder how he could ever have done anything disobedient in the first place. I hand him a medal of the Blessed Virgin, just as Sister Basil would have done, and he opens his eyes wide and says, "Gee, Father, thanks. I'll be better from now on." Then I hold out the knife and ask whether he would like to have it because it is a regulation Boy Scout knife. He babbles something incoherent, takes it, and backs out of the room thanking me.

I escort him to the door of the rectory, and as he steps outside, his mob is waiting for him, and all and sundry' chorus. "Good afternoon, Father," as if butter will not melt in their mouths, and I look at them and decide that they look like an escaped choir of angels roughing it on the earth. They look so lovable that I say to myself that I will give Blessed Virgin medals to all of them, and I close the door thinking that Sister Basil would be quite proud of me if not positively downright edified. I say to myself. "Well, that's one problem solved."

I stop at the window to look at Jimmy and his mob going along the driveway toward the ball field. Jimmy is practicing his curves. As he passes the school he throws one which does not take the English, and it sails off as if endowed with a fallen human nature of its own. Suddenly there is a great crash of glass. I close my eyes, shudder, open them, and see a vast ragged hole where one of the school windows has been. The next thing I know, one of the Sisters emerges and Jimmy' is going into the school ear first to serve a sentence at cleaning blackboards and dusting erasers and doing other salutary labor. Well, as someone has said, you do not make a saint in a day, and anyhow even a saint might pitch a wild ball if the English does not take, at least any saint except John Bosco, who was a champion athlete.

V III

ABOUT THIS TIME I begin to perceive the shape of the scheme which Father Tim Malloy is cooking up to get his new church built at the earliest possible moment consistent with the desire of the U.S. Government to get prepared for whatever may be coming in the way of international situations.

One day an enormous truck backs up to the basement entrance of St. Rose Church, and a platoon of large perspiring men dismount and begin to trundle bells of all shapes and sizes through the door. I sidle up to Father Tim, who is standing there with the airedale dog, Murph, both of them looking like the cat which has spilled the milk. I do not say anything, but just stand there in the role of a sidewalk superintendent.

Presently Father Tim looks at me quizzically and remarks, for my ears alone, "I am a hard man to circumvent." I nod wisely and wait. "The new church," he proceeds after a pause, "will need a carillon." I give consent by my silence. "I was rummaging around the other day," he goes on after a longer pause, "and I discover a carillon for sale at a bargain price. I did not wish to miss the opportunity to save money for the people of St. Rose's." I nod again, ven thoughtfully, and begin to fill my pipe.

There is a long silence while the men pull and tug at the heavier bells. Finally Father Tim says quietly, "There is no sense in running up storage bills, so I am having them put the bells in the basement." I light my pipe and scratch Murph philosophically behind the ears. "Just yesterday," says Father Tim after another silence, "I heard about an organ on the market that is a give-away. The organist and I will be looking it over tomorrow."

I continue to scratch Murph's ear with one hand, holding my pipe in the other and eloquently making no comment. Father Tim walks to the truck and delivers some valuable suggestions to the moving men, who accept them with proper reverence for his priestly dignity, although they do not put them into practice because they are well aware that the Sacrament of Holy Orders does not confer experience in moving heavy objects. Presently Father Tim resumes his place at my side and rests Iris hand on my shoulder.

"Did you know," he asks me, "that I placed an order for stone a long time ago, before I learned that the construction of the new church would be delayed by the blunderings of international statesmanship?" I waggle my head negatively and raise my eyebrows in an elaborate expression of surprise mingled with sympathy and admiration. Father Tim goes on. "A week ago I was informed by the stone contractor that at any time he may find it necessary to require me to go through with the agreement. If I do not do so, the contract will expire and the stone will cost twice as much if not three times."

I indulge in a philosophical pull at my pipe and say "Himn" with a vast significance. Father Tim nods as if I have made a very profound observation. "As you say," he says, although I have said nothing of the kind, "I am a hard man to circumvent." He stands watching the movers for quite some time, and presently adds, "Besides, I am getting old and I do not wish to be wheeled around in a wheel chair when we have the ceremonies dedicating the new church."

He lets it go at that and changes the subject, realizing that even someone as dull as I am will now be able to see the outlines of his scheme. It is his subtle way of complimenting me by letting me know that I am considered a trustworthy and close-mouthed character, who can be trusted with the state secrets of the parish. I do not know it at the time, but he is even then preparing to let me in on an even deeper conspiracy, namely the one in which the sculptor is going to include in Iris carved panels in the new church a representation of hell in which certain recognizable characters will be incarcerated.

After we stand there a while longer, Father Tim looks at me again from under his bushy eyebrows and insinuates that I have something on my mind. "You have something on your mind, Father," he proposes.

"That is correct, Father," I rejoin. "It is the problem of teaching the kids. In the seminary I was very partial to the tract on supernatural grace. Today I try my hand on it with the boys and girls. I tell them how wonderful God is, how He made everything out of nothing, the sun and moon and stars and earth, and yet He loves us so much that He made us to be His own children. I tell them how He loves us just the way our own fathers do, only infinitely more. Well, right in the middle of it, when I am thinking that I am going great guns, one of the boys is shooting down imaginary airplanes out of the sky, and when I ask him what I am talking about, he says the seven capital sins are pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. Well, I am just wondering what is the use."

Father Tim chuckles and gives my shoulder a squeeze and a shake which I figure will leave me pretty well crippled for quite some time, if indeed I ever recover. "Bob. Bob," he says. "I am surprised at you. Do you expect people to be turning handsprings over religion in a few lessons? It is very slow work, trying to turn folks to God. How many times I have delivered veiy good sermons on the Holy Eucharist and had eveiybody telling me what a good job I did — but the next Sunday there was not one more person at the Communion railing than before.

"We must not expect to be more successful than Christ. He preached for three years, and when He died even body deserted except His Mother. You must be prepared for bitter disappointments. Lots of times you will be at the bedside of a dying person, and you will talk and pray, trying to get them to turn to God, and they will turn their back on you and die unrepentant as far as you can see. Even, body has free will, and you cannot ram religion down their throat like a pill."

I puff at my pipe for a minute. Then I say, "Well, Father Tim, it is nice of you to ty to let me off easy like this, and tell me it is not my fault. But the people who deserted Our Lord were not baptized. They did not have the Sacraments. And they did not wish to be crucified. It is a different case with these kids in St. Rose School. There is something wrong with the way I am teaching religion, or they would be more interested. I wish you would just forget about my feelings and tell me right out why I am failing."

Father Tim squeezes my shoulder again, and I know by his expression that he is pleased with me. "Then I'll tell you," he says. "You talk too much. I know, because for years I did the same. Almost all teachers do likewise. What you should do is to make your class more like a round-table. You should draw the youngsters into it more. Ask them unexpected questions. Get them to discussing the catechism points. See if they can tell you how to apply the lessons to their own lives."

Father Tim chuckles. Then he looks grave. "For instance," he says, "you can ask, 'Why did God make you?' And every kid will get up and rattle off, 'God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life, and to be happy forever with Him in the next.' But suppose you suddenly ask the youngsters what it means to know God, or to love Him. Suppose you ask them what being happy with Him forever means. Suppose you say to them suddenly, 'Boys and girls, do you know that you will live as long as God lives?'"

When Father Tim says that last thing. I suddenly feel a jolt in my mind. I interrupt him. "Say, Father," I exclaim, "nobody ever put it to me like that. That's something to make you sit up and think!"

And after a minute, I repeat his remark: "I will live as long as God lives." I shake my head. "That," I tell him, "brings it home, doesn't it?"

Father Tim grins. "Bob," he says, "I didn't think of putting it that way myself until I had prayed and meditated for twenty years. That is one thing we must do — pray and think about tire truths of religion. And another tiring we've got to do is put ourselves in the place of the children. See things from their side. They are full of energy, and they want lots of action. They want speed and movement. We've got to make our teaching lively. We've got to become as little children. We've got to realize that just saying a thing — just learning it by heart from the catechism — doesn't mean that we really know it. I'll tell you what you do — you figure out ways of getting the youngsters to throw themselves into the tiring, to blurt out in their own words what they get out of the lessons, and what it all means to them in their games and in their life with their fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers. Become one of them, Father Bob, become one of them!"

I tell him that I will certainly try. Then he gives me something to make me feel better. "Anyhow," he says, "you can't be doing too badly. The other day, Mr. Johnson said he thinks your sermons are very good."

This perks me up somewhat, because Mr. Johnson is a somebody. He drags down about twenty thousand a year for pleading cases as a lawyer. He represents some very big interests and is able to swing the King's English with considerable class. He can also pull out all the stops with his beautiful voice. So I think to myself that if he says my sermons are not bad, maybe they are o.k. Anyhow, I decide that I will leave no stone unturned in my effort to find ways of reaching the hearts of my people, especially the youngsters. With that, I leave Father Tim and Murph to their sidewalk superintending, while I go into the church to say some prayers for inspiration.

I CAN SEE what Father Malloy is up to. He is going to clutter up all available space in the old church, the rectory and the grounds with organs, bells, statues, stone and sundry appurtenances, in the hope that finally Uncle Samuel and the Bishop will throw up their hands and say he might as well fit everything together into a new church as have it lying around helter-skelter and maybe getting ruined by rain and frost and careless janitors.

Thais scheme takes up considerable of his time, but not so much that he does not keep a weather eye on the parish. In fact, about this time he decides that it will be a good idea if I make the rounds of all homes, taking a census, finding out who is a Catholic and who isn't, and which children are maybe not baptized or are otherwise losing out on the most important part of life, which consists in always being ready to die with a clear conscience.

I find the census very educational. I visit Jews and Catholics and Protestants, and almost all of them are very nice to me. Of course there is one woman who informs me that she does not want a whole pack of Christian inhibitions ganged up in her subconscious and therefore she has sacked the whole idea of religion. It seems to me, after talking with her, that a few Christian inhibitions would be just what the doctor ordered for her, but I figure it will do no good saying so, so I say nothing.

Another character who has been reading too many books or something tells me that some professor of sociology holds that the Pope is trying to get elected President of the United States, and I tell her that this is pretty silly and that she would be much smarter asking a priest or any Catholic about the Church than going to some half-baked book written by somebody who thinks Aquinas and Suarez played right and left end for Notre Dame.

Everyone is very courteous except one. This is a lady who, when she opens the door and sees me, lets out a scream and tells me to get right off her porch before she calls her husband. I guess she is afraid I will sprinkle some holy water on the place, which would blow the main fuse, put the washing machine on the fritz and bring back her mother-in-law from the dead. I get off the porch in a great hurry because I am afraid the husband will come jumping out with a six-shooter, and then Father Tim Malloy will be forced to take the census himself.

This kind of character, however, is the exception. I find that most of the people, including those who are not Catholics, are very cordial and are pulling for religion even if they do not devote too much energy to it themselves. They tell me that the world needs religion, and that it needs Christ's love, and that if men do not soon learn to love one another, it is all up with the world. Some of them even say that they do some praying when nobody is looking, asking God to help the Church make people love one another.

Some of the Catholic homes, I discover, have nothing Catholic about them. They have pictures of sunsets and statuary of some French doll pouring a slug of absinthe for her man, and maybe a piece of china, which they consider quite a nobby thing, showing a damsel holding a bunch of balloons. This is called the balloon girl. I am quite relieved when I come to Jimmy Smith's house, because in the front room they have a beautiful Madonna with the Christ Child in her arms, and I say to myself that this painting can give cards and spades to the balloon woman. I like to see Quist in the front room, showing that people are proud of him, not stuck away in the hall off the master bedroom on the way to the third floor.

Even at first sight, I perceive that Mrs. Smith is a very beautiful woman, but I am even more convinced of it when she informs me that she wishes to invite me to dinner. This is good news because it indicates that Jimmy has told his family I am a good Joe. Therefore my teaching of religion has certainly borne some fruit. "Our Jimmy thinks a great deal of you," Mrs. Smith tells me, and this makes me very happy.

Mrs. Smith is so beautiful that I can hardly believe that she has a daughter already out of college. "We were only blessed with two children," she says somewhat sadly, and this makes me think of all the women who go into nervous prostration and general jitters when they think of a third child coming into their homes. "We wanted a large family," she goes on, "but we know God has His own reasons."

I don't know if Mrs. Smith is a topflight bridge player. But if she isn't it is o.k. with me, because the Smith home is always open to her children's friends, and I perceive that she is working very hard at being a good mother. Her carpets are a little bit threadbare, but she says that when the kids are grown up she will fix up the house. Right now, she says, it is better to let them put their feet up and crawl over the furniture. The kids all consider Mrs. Smith a regular guy because there is always something to eat at her house and you can dance whenever you please.

Mrs. Smith has a lot of faith. After dinner at night everybody gets down on their knees in the Smith house and says the family Rosary together. All through it, young people come galloping in to see Jimmy and Janet, and they just join in when they arrive. Father Tim says the reason Mrs. Smith is so

beautiful is that she trusts God and does not worry. He says that worry is what makes people older than anything else. Mrs. Smith, he tells me, lives each day for itself and does not try to take over God's work of running the universe. She says her prayers to her Father in heaven and is sure He will take care of her.

Now this is really remarkable, because Mrs. Smith has plenty to worry about, since she is married to Mr. Smith.

It is one of those things. Mr. Smith is a very noble character when he is being himself. He is kind and loving, and would do anything for you if you were in a jam. Perhaps there is nothing remarkable about this because he knows how it feels to be in jams, he being in them at practically all times. The trouble with Mr. Smith is he is seldom himself because he drinks, which would perhaps be all right if he did not do so as industriously as an ant building an anthill. Mr. Smith really works at being a souse. He has virtually dedicated his life to inebriation.

I do not however mean that it is deliberate. On the contrary, it is inadvertent, unpremeditated, and in fact the bane of his existence. The thing about Mr. Smith is that he cannot take it or let it alone. One snort and he is off to the races. He has taken and broken the pledge so often that Father Tim Malloy will no longer give it to him on any consideration, and he shops around to other pastors who are not aware of his record and are very happy to oblige because they imagine they are helping at the re-creation of Tom Smith. It is no wonder they are fooled, because Mr. Smith's remorse, at times when he is emerging from a toot, is really something to see.

Not being a bad fellow at all but simply a weakling with a rubber spine and a rubber hose for a throat, Mr. Smith is of course loved indomitably and uncalculatingly by Mrs. Smith, who puts up with her matrimonial martyrdom and goes on relentlessly praying for him. Mrs. Smith figures she married him for better or worse, and even if it did turn out somewhat the worse for wear, that does not give her any excuse for welshing, particularly in view of the fact that in other respects her husband is an excellent Joe.

It is Father Tim's estimate, and I concede it to be correct, that Tom Smith cannot stop drinking because he will not get it into his head that the tiring is a disease with him and that he will never be able to stop with one or two. but with the first shot is like a man stepping on a ski-jump and starting down. "The only moderation for men like Tom Smith," says Father Malloy, "is teetotalism."

It is very sad on the occasion when Janet receives the Sacrament of Confirmation. She is happy to think about being a soldier of Christ after the Bishop gives her that slight blow on the cheek to signify that she must be ready to suffer anything for her Savior. She comes out of church thinking how wonderful it would be to be a martyr for Christ and go straight to heaven.

At the Smith home, everybody is exceedingly happy for Janet, but the trouble is that her father is also happy and goes out to purchase more ice cream, and presently staggers home singing "Happy Days Are Here Again" and not realizing that this is highly ironic if not downright tragic.

Janet tells me later that she could not help crying. "I went to my room and cried my eyes out," she said. "Then I happened to think about the Bishop's little slap on my cheek, and how I should be prepared to suffer for Christ, and I made up my mind I would not let my father's weakness defeat me. but I would pray like anything for him. especially because in all other respects he is a wonderful man."

About this time, Mrs. Smith decides that it will be a good idea if I will have a talk with Mr. Smith. I suppose she is grabbing at any straw, which I am likewise. I am sure it will not do any good, but I agree to try. "Tom," I say to him, "you are making a mess of your life. You are hurting your family very much." I add some other remarks which I do not now remember and which are undoubtedly not exactly brilliant. I do not think much of them and neither does Mr. Smith, because he goes out and gets tanked as usual, and I suppose has a couple on me while he is at it. I foresee this outcome when he says to me, "Father, you are right, and I promise that I will stop drinking too much." There were two words too many in that sentence; namely, the words "too" and "much." Tom Smith will never stop until he realizes that even one is too many. This is very modern psychology, of course; it is also very ancient theology. It is called avoiding the occasion of sin.

TOM SMITH'S daughter Janet is a tall girl with dark hair and black eyes. When people look at her they always look again to make sure it is true, because there is so much beauty in her. Her eyes are always dancing and she is very vivacious, always doing something. She figures that time is something

precious which God gave to us and can never be regained, once lost. She is always bubbling and happy because the sun shines in her soul. Janet is a social worker, as I will relate.

When Janet is in high school, she and her best friend Jeannie McMullen are fascinated by the social service department of Charity Hospital. One day they see people going in and out without even knocking, so they follow suit. Inside there are poor people who are being helped by kind-looking folks. Both Janet and Jeannie, far from being disgusted with the dirt and poverty of the poor people, feel a great pity and love for them, and wish to do something to help.

They are standing around when a nun all dressed in white comes to them and inquires what she can do for them. Janet tells her they would like to do something for somebody instead of having something done for them, and the next thing you know they have obtained permission from their parents and are going to the hospital after school hours, delivering mail, helping the nurses and sisters, and the like. They do quite a bit of good, even though their mothers tell them to be home in time for dinner.

When Christmas is coming, people start adopting a poor family for the holiday, and Jeannie and Janet do likewise. They have much fun shopping for the luxuries which this family otherwise would not have, with the result that Christmas would be just another day. They get a Christmas tree and a turkey with all trimmings, including cranberries, and Mrs. Smith bakes a pie. There is also a present for each child in the family. The family's name is Serrin, and Mr. and Mrs. Serrin both say that this is the nicest thing that has ever happened to them. It is, of course, natural that Janet and Jeannie also discover that it is their happiest Christmas in history. The little Serrin girl, Mary, tells them that every night she takes her doll to bed with her and says a prayer for those who gave it to her. Then Johnny Serrin makes them laugh by saying that since he has a baseball he has many friends which he never realized were his friends. He lets everybody play with it, although not in the street, because this would wear the cover off.

This experience makes Janet wish to devote her life to helping the poor. She is very angry about the conditions under which she sees some of them living, especially in the slums, where they are crammed in worse than animals in a cage. It seems to her that the thing to do is to tear down all the buildings and start anew, but the thing has been going on so long that there is a great inertia, and it is too big a job for the city right now.

Janet is especially indignant about Big Jim O'Donnell, who is a big shot and whose mission in life is to spend the money his dad left. He always gets an important job on the committees which raise money for charities because if he didn't he would not contribute. They always allow him to make a speech in which he calls upon everybody to "make our city the pride of the nation." After this, because of the great strain of the speech on his health, he goes to Florida and lays a thousand across the board on some broken-down nag.

The nag comes in fourth or fifth, but this does not matter to Big Jim O'Donnell because he has never been hungry and never goes nearer the poor than the banquet at the end of the charity drive. While in Florida, or for that matter anywhere, he throws big parties at which thousands of dollars change hands and champagne is splashed around like water, all of which arouses suspicions in the poor people that maybe democracy and the American way are not so hot as advertised. Big Jim never fails to observe in loquacious moments that labor unions are the curse of the nation, and that before they came along, everything was o.k. Everybody understands that he means things were o.k. for him and not for some other people, so nobody pays much attention. "You can't," says Jim O'Donnell with a flourish, "do anything for these poor people. Give them a new house and in a month they will make a wreck of it. They do not have the brains or initiative for good living."

All this bums Janet up, because she has met not a few poor people in person who, in her estimation, could do as well if not better than Big Jim O'Donnell if they likewise were staked to a few million dollars as a start in life. In this discussion I find myself on the side of Janet Smith, and I encourage her in her work for the poor and her determination to take their part against the O'Donnell school of philosophy. All this, of course, is before Jack Thornton appears on the scene, with results which are both beautiful and heartbreaking, and also both inspiring and tragic, as will be disclosed later.

In order to relate the story of Janet Smith and Jack Thornton, it is necessary to tell about the case of Janet's friend Jeannie McMullen and Jeannie's friend Bill Prendergast. Bill is a pretty good-looking boy, but at the time I get to know him, he is always going around looking for somebody to assure him that he is not a total loss. Bill has an inferiority complex and is always getting down in the dumps and asking himself what is the use of going on living.

Bill takes a fancy to me because I will listen to his glooming. I keep telling him that God is his Father and is very much interested in him and does not want him to be blue, which really ought to be

enough to cheer anybody up, but does not always work with Bill Prendergast, even though I tell him repeatedly that he has a lot on the ball and will find life not half bad if he will only give it a whirl.

The trouble with Bill is that Iris mother never resigned herself to letting him grow up. He was in short pants longer than anybody else in St. Rose School, and when he walked into the classrooms, he thought everybody was laughing at him whether they were or not. Also, he was always called into the house before any of the other kids, because his mother said that he was frail. He had to take pills for every illness ever heard of and for some that have not yet been discovered by the medical men.

One day when Bill is snapping out of it and is beginning to get along with the gang and maybe start to grow up normally, his mother sees him wrestling with another kid, and naturally he is on the bottom. Instead of going about her business, she comes shrieking out of the house with a broom with which she proceeds to belabor the other boy, who promptly departs. Mrs. Prendergast then serves notice that she doesn't want those boys around her house again.

This is all right with the boys, who proceed to take her at her word, on the theory that she is a bit queer. Even Bill sometimes is tempted to think this, but puts the idea out of his head because it is disloyal, and anyhow his mother devotes considerable time daily to telling him how much she has done for him. Taking it all and all, I can see that Bill Prendergast is starting life with two if not three strikes against him. and I will not give you a nickel for his chances to amount to something. It is a great contrast to Janet and Jimmy Smith, who have been brought up to face life and will take care of themselves in any situation.

It is not that Bill Prendergast is a moron. Quite the contrary, he is well above average in school, but he is a perfect cinch for a nervous breakdown or worse, and the apron strings are always securely fastened to him. By the time of which I now write, he is old enough to be out of college, but I have serious doubts that he can tie his own shoestrings.

The situation comes to a head when Bill visits me with the announcement that he is going to be a Trappist hennit. I keep a straight face and ask why. "Well," he says. "I don't eat much, and neither do the Trappists. I like God and want to save my soul. Also, the Trappists do not talk, which is right up my alley because I do not like people. They make me nervous, and I would rather sit at home and read than to be forced to make conversation and be around folks."

I say to myself that there is more to this than meets the eye. so I inquire how it comes about that Bill decides to be a Trappist and live in a hut and get up at 2 A.M. to chant the praises of God, not to mention working in the fields and praying long hours for people who neglect this little matter and thus play fast and loose with their immortal souls. It seems to me that to be a Trappist you have got to be all man and a yard wide, and I cannot quite see Bill Prendergast as Trappist timber, because if anybody is in the big leagues it is none other than they. So I ask him where he gets this idea, and he elucidates as follows.

"Well. Father, it is like this. I never do much talking with Jeannie McMullen because I am afraid of girls and everybody, but I always consider her the world's most beautiful girl. I like the way she walks, the way she talks, the way she smiles. In fact, I am in a dither about her. So yesterday I decide that I am going over to have a talk with her.

"I have figured it out all in advance. I have done much reading on labor relations and sundry subjects, and I know that Jeannie is interested in helping the downtrodden. I figure I will tell her how tilings could be straightened out, and this will make me a somebody in her eyes, and one tiling will lead to another, and maybe she will begin to have ideas about getting married some day. "Well, as you know, Jeannie lives on the third floor. Twice I walk up two floors and then down again, determined to lead a life having nothing to do with women. The third time I use all my will power and make it to the third floor. I knock at the door and stand there waiting, reviewing all I know about labor relations and sociology and kindred matters.

"Just then Jeannie comes to the door, and I step back into what I consider is a vocation to be a Trappist, because the McMullens are great milk drinkers and the milkman has left the bottles on the landing, and down the steps go six or eight milk bottles, complete with milk, banging and crashing and splashing. People in the other apartments rush out to investigate the catastrophe, and I stand there mumbling. 'Hello, Jeannie, I'm sorry.'

"Jeannie says, 'Hello, Bill,' and leans over the railing and says she is sorry too. We go downstairs to clean up the mess and I do not get a chance to talk about labor relations in the least. All I say is that it is a nice day and I am still sorry, except that finally I pluck up courage to ask Jeannie whether she will go to a show with me Friday, and she replies, "I'm awfully sorry, Bill, but I've got a date. Maybe some other time."

Such is Bill's stoic. What he does not know is that Jeannie is almost as embarrassed around him as he is around her, because she likes him very much and has told the same to Janet Smith and other girl friends. Not being in on this secret, Bill is sure that she considers him a clumsy ox and will not be caught dead in the same county with him, and that is why he decides that the only thing left to do is to become a Trappist and forget about Jeannie.

I ask him what he had in mind for his future before he plumped for the Trappists. He replied, "I wanted to be a writer on a newspaper or something, but I never got up nerve to ask for a job."

Now of course I consider the Trappists the primary people of the world, and nothing would suit me better than to throw a lot of vocations their way, but this is different. Without the slightest fear of making a mistake, I say, "Bill, you'd better not be a Trappist just yet. I think that God wants you to try to get to know your fellow men much more than He wants you to be a Trappist. There are a couple of people I want you to meet."

In saying this, I have in mind Pat O'Malley and Jack Thornton. I am going to have Bill meet O'Malley because O'Malley is a newspaperman and Bill wants to be a writer. I am going to have him meet Jack Thornton because I am partial to Jack Thornton.

XI

AS I SAY, Jack Thornton stands way up there in my humble estimation, but he is not one of our parishioners. The way that I know him is that he is a second cousin of mine. He is not merely an ordinary second cousin such as you might pick up in most any old family.

Quite the contrary. Jack Thornton is a tall handsome chap with black wavy hair. He was president of his class in college and was eminent for his performance at tackle. He was also valedictorian, and has now risen, as predicted in the class prophecy, to be a lawyer of considerable accomplishment and even more promise.

God has been very good to Jack Thornton, and the important thing is that Jack knows it. He is very humble and does not go around bowing down and worshipping himself as a self-made man. He knows Who made him, all right.

I remember reading somewhere that it is the genes that make us what we are. I take this with a grain of salt because I am also aware that there is such a thing as putting your nose to the grindstone and being on the square with your fellow men. However, I will admit that Jack Thornton was endowed by his Creator with some very notable genes, far superior to those possessed by the rest of us in the family, because while he is a hard worker, he also has some very talented curves on the mental ball.

Anyhow, Jack takes to me because I am a priest and he has once given thought to the same vocation, although on second thought he did not think he was the man for it. Still, he is very interested in priests, especially if they are his second cousin. Also, he pals around considerably with Pat O'Malley, who pals around with me, and among the three of us we have taken the world apart and put it together into a Utopia not infrequently.

It is therefore quite natural that when I am conspiring with myself to do something for Bill Prendergast, who wants to run away from himself in the Trappists, my thoughts turn to the O'Malley and the Thornton, who between them will make Prendergast into a somebody if anybody can.

I call up Jack on the phone and tell him I've got a problem on which he can help. He replies that he is at my beck and call. This makes me feel better, because I know that Jack will not befriend Bill in order to psycho-analyze him or to get material for a book or to see how the other half lives.

He will be Bill's pal because it is the decent and Christian thing to do.

I find that I do not have to telephone O'Malley, because that night he comes wandering into my room, and upon listening to my outline of the situation, assures me that he will be exceedingly overjoyed to do anything possible to assist.

As it turns out, it is very easy to get the three of them together. I am told later that Bill opens up after a couple of understanding beers, and Jack and O'Malley listen attentively.

In due time, O'Malley and Thornton agree out loud that it would do no harm if more people just sat around sometimes like Prendergast, figuring things out and doing some worthwhile reading. They even add that it wouldn't have been a bad idea if they themselves had done something of the kind.

In fact, O'Malley is so enthused over Prendergast that he announces that it will be a cinch to get him a job on the newspaper, because he has considerably more on the ball than a lot of newspapermen he could name.

The upshot of it is that Bill gets a job helping to cover City Hall. It is a position that will never make him rich, but he discovers that he is respected if not revered by everyone.

The local politicians, he learns, are quite concerned that the Daily News does not get down on them, and they figure that it is a good idea not to get any of its reporters down on them. Bill being precisely that, they cater to him. And anyhow they find that they like him. Even the Mayor goes out of his way to make him feel important, because he shrewdly observes that Bill is not too sure of himself. He tosses a couple of good scoops Bill's way, and Bill begins to get his chin up off Iris' chest.

The pay-off comes when Bill, in his spare time, writes a story entitled "Lost and Found," about a chap that had an inferiority complex. He sells it, to his amazement and almost horror, to one of the big magazines, and it goes over, because after all there are few people who do not feel inferior about something.

That does it. Bill is cured of his inferiority complex. He realizes that, although he is not something to get the stands cheering in a football game, still he has received a pretty good head from his Creator and also a notable imagination, and that a fellow can go places without being all muscles and the terror of all the bullies in the neighborhood.

It is for this reason that Bill, when I run into him on the street one day, says to me, "Father, I do not believe that I belong with the Trappists. I was just trying to run away from my distrust in myself. I am now having a lot of fun writing."

Bill does not stay very long in City Hall, although he tells me it is the world's most cushy job, sitting around talking to politicians and taking a ride with the Mayor now and then. Before very long he is made a feature writer on the paper and becomes quite the one around St. Rose Parish, because while the parish has had its notable drunks and lawyers and similar characters, it has never had a writer of renown.

Of course it turns out that Bill very soon goes to the McMullens' again to ask Jeannie for another date, and this time he is very careful not to kick the milk bottles down the steps, although he need not have worried, because Jeannie has given orders to the family that they are never again to be left where he could get tripped up in them, because she is hoping that some day he will come back.

The result is that Bill becomes her steady boy friend and they are walking around arm in arm with their eyes shining like marbles, and it looks very good for another fine wedding at St. Rose's one of these fine days. Frequently they are accompanied by Jack Thornton, because at that time he does not have a girl friend, and Bill and Jeannie are very happy to have him around; first because he had most to do with the curing of Bill's inferiority complex and second because he is a very likeable guy.

This works out very beautifully, because it is at Jeannie's house that Jack meets Janet Smith. For a long time it looks like a dud, because while Janet knows that she thinks a lot of Jack, Jack is unconscious of his affection for Janet and takes her merely for granted. How this is possible when a girl is as gorgeous as Janet Smith I cannot fathom, and I do not believe St. Thomas Aquinas even went into this question. So I am stumped.

XII

TALKING ABOUT Janet and Jeannie makes me think of Pope Pius XI. Why this is so will appear in a moment. I am awfully grateful to the eleventh Pius for thinking and writing so much about Catholic Action, the purpose of which is to get all Catholics, and not only the priests, to spread Christ's truth. It looks to me as though Catholic Action is going to be the salvation of the world in these tough times, and I am glad the Church did not have to wait for me to think it up.

Pius XI is the Pope who said that the great tragedy of the nineteenth century was the separation of the Church and the working man. Then he sat down and wrote an encyclical on Capital and Labor which made you really sit up and take notice. He took the part of all the little fellows in the world who were being pushed into the ground by the big capitalists, and he said that every fellow, no matter who, has a right to a living wage, and to his own property, and to provide for the future and raise a decent family, and all like that.

I had a Protestant friend who said to me that Pius XI certainly had plenty on the ball. This was somewhat slangy language, but he didn't mean any disrespect. On the contrary, he was very complimentary. Well, after Pius XI died, Pius XII stepped right in and went on promoting Catholic Action to save the human race from the disasters of atheism and secularism and such like.

The idea of Catholic Action is the "Apostleship of the Laity." There are not enough priests to know everybody and talk to everybody about making the world Christian. The priest needs the lay people to help him. They should give a little of their time in spreading Christ's kingdom of justice and love. You aren't just supposed to sit around the house and get holy, or even sit around a church and get holy. You are supposed to put on your walking shoes and spread Christ in the market place and in the shop; in fact everywhere.

Catholic Action, as I figure it out, isn't any special way of spreading the Good News of Christianity. You can kind of take your choice, but you are supposed to work for your Church and maybe even get pushed around a bit for it, and you are always to look to the bishops for leadership.

All this being so, I decide that if this is what Pius XI wants, I will try to do it, and the type of Catholic Action we choose at St. Rose's is the cell technique, which is what the communists copied from the early Christians.

The way this works is you get a group of leaders together and they figure out what is wrong with the things people are doing and then they do something about it. I start out with a group of young women in which Jeannie and Janet are among the leaders, and they take to it very well. They figure out right off that the reason a lot of girls aren't doing what they should is because they are getting into places and being entertained where they shouldn't, and so they decide to start out by throwing a dance in the right kind of surroundings.

They get the use of one of the big parish halls and everyone works very hard to decorate it beautifully. They get together some money to hire a better-than-average orchestra. They figure on serving punch and cake. The dance is held in a neighborhood where such events as this are the exception. The idea behind the whole thing is to get all the girls acquainted in a social way, which will help them spiritually and materially.

In the middle of the dance Janet gets up and says, "We are going to have one of these dances every month. We will have a lot of fun, I think."

Well, one of the girls lets out a very sarcastic laugh, and everybody wonders why.

Janet gets around chatting with all the girls and most of them try to be friendly. But the girl that laughed at Janet is not friendly at all. She is a very disillusioned individual and is companion to a boy that can't keep his eyes in one place. They seem very much out of place and ill at ease. Janet finally says to the girl, "You will be back next month, I hope."

The girl says, "What do you take me for? I just came here because it is free. I'm sorry now I did. I never saw such a dead crowd. Nothing to drink. Everybody acting like in church. I know the reason you are doing this. You feel sorry for us. You think that you are better than we are. You've got a little money and you think we are going to hell because we aren't your kind of people. No thank you, I don't care to associate with your kind. Give me a night club with some life in it."

With this she busts out of the hall with her no-good friend and Janet feels kind of busted up. She is tired and overworked, and this is all she needs. She feels terrible, although no one knows it but Jeannie and Jack Thornton.

Jeannie says. "Forget it, Janet. Come on home with me and I'll fix you some coffee and you'll feel better."

Janet says to Jack, "I'm sorry, Jack. I'm not very cheerful company." Jack gives her a funny look. He has never seen her blue before, and it makes a difference. As they say, he was seeing her with new eyes.

He especially sees her with new eyes when she says, "I think maybe that girl was more than half right. She thought we were patronizing her; and maybe in a way we were, even if we didn't mean to. If we are going to do Catholic Action, we have got to learn more humility. We have got to be one of the people, as Christ was. Nobody ever imagined that He was condescending. We have to learn to love everybody in His way."

Afterward, Jeannie and Janet get to reminiscing over their coffee, talking about how they had been partners in the First Communion class and thought they were going to be nuns. Janet wanted to be a mother superior, and Jeannie just wanted to be an ordinary nun, because if Janet wanted to be superior, that was that. That was in the third grade. Then about the fifth grade they wanted to be nurses, because there was such a nice nurse at school and she looked so pretty and clean in her white uniform. Then when they got a

little older they wanted to be married nurses because boys weren't so bad as they used to be. They didn't hate them the way they used to, and saw some future that boys might have too. They still wanted to be nurses, but they wanted to be married nurses. Now that they were out of college they just wanted to be married.

While they are talking they are listening to some new records that Jeannie had gotten and were talking about how hard it must be to be a priest or a nun in India or some place where people are taught to hate Christians.

Janet says she is ashamed of herself for getting so busted up by a little thing like what happened that night, when missionaries suffer so much. Talking something out with someone you like always makes you feel a lot better, so Janet is feeling a lot better, and just then a knock comes on the door.

In comes Bill Prendergast and Jack Thornton. Everything looks about the same to Bill but a lot different to Jack. He thinks to himself that Janet Smith is about the most beautiful girl he has ever seen, and he wonders why he has never thought of this before.

Jeannie mentions that she has a new record which she thinks is very beautiful, but Jack and Janet hardly hear it when she plays it.

Then Jack walks Janet home, and they never felt happier. The sky is beautiful, the breezes warm, etc. They walk the long way around but it seems so short that they just walk around for another hour. Then Jack kisses Janet very reverently and both of them feel that there will never be anybody else. This is the happiest night in their lives.

This Catholic Action cell of Jeannie's and Janet's is only the beginning. Before you know it there is so much going on around St. Rose that it would take a Philadelphia lawyer to keep records. Some of the people of the diocese start saying that the church is getting into too much and trying to be a circus for its people. They say it isn't quite dignified, and so on. The whole thing is somewhat controversial, but I do not let it worry me, because my salary is fifty dollars a month and Father Tim Malloy's is one hundred, and for the fifty I am not getting I don't have to figure out what is done at St. Rose. That is Father Tim's problem, which is why he is in the upper salary brackets.

XIII

FATHER TIM always says that if the entertainment nowadays is bad for young people and if they no longer congregate in their homes, then the Church must provide entertainment or lose the youngsters. He is all-out for the Catholic Youth Organization program, and he thinks there must be changes from the old days. If he thinks so, then the way I figure is that there is a good chance that God wants it that way.

Whenever Father Tim tries to mention all the clubs and organizations in his parish, he always forgets three or four because there are so many of them. When a window is broken or the school messed up, he gets furious and says that he is going to have to stomp on these youth movements, but you always know that he won't, because he believes in them.

For instance, when St. Rose's is beaten in football by St. Philip's, Father Tim wants to know why Jim O'Neil wasn't in there making touchdowns. We tell him that Jim has gone to military school, and he stamps his foot and says he should have stayed at home with his good mother. This would not have occurred to him if St. Rose's had won the championship.

Among other things that Father Tim says is that Janet Smith and Jack Thornton are the salt of the earth. At least, they are the salt of St. Rose's. They have a lot to do with all the activities, and always stay around to clean up after meetings, unlike some folks I could name who get in on all the fun but never lift a hand to help. Well, as Father Tim says, God gives only a few good workers to every' parish, and most people are willing to be on the reception committee and that's all.

Janet even works at Catholic Action outside of St. Rose Parish. She and Jeannie McMullen and Jack and Bill Prendergast and some other folks open a House of Hospitality in a poor neighborhood, where the fellows give away old clothing and food and things they collect. They also play ball with the kids, and like that. But mainly they have catechism classes for the children.

A lot of people go around saying that the poor men who come for handouts are making fools of Jack and Janet and the others, because they take the clothing and then go out and sell it. But Jack and Janet think to themselves that some day these men will be sorry for doing this, and then maybe will help

somebody else. They even give things to fellows who are known to do nothing but drink, because even a drunk has to stay alive if he is ever going to repent.

One of the parish clubs is a club for boys and girls just out of high school. Janet Smith says to me to come to a meeting, and I feel very bad because I should have been there sooner, inasmuch as Father Tim has announced that I am the club chaplain. Janet explains that there are business meetings to decide about hay rides and dances and putting on plays, and so on. She also mentions that there are boys in the club, which is very important: and vice versa.

The meeting is held Tuesday night at eight-thirty, and after this I begin to reserve this time for this purpose. There are maybe one hundred boys and girls, and they look so fine that I am very angry to think of the conditions of the world and the sins that some of them might be tempted to commit and thus lose their beauty of soul. However, I do not shout about the evils of the world because I realize, like the time I talked with Joe Miller the hardware man, that I am not the type for great denunciations.

Jack Thornton is the president and he calls the meeting to order. He says, "We will have minutes of the last meeting." The secretary reads them, but she has no doubt been chosen for her big blue eyes, because you can't hear her very well. Here and there you get the idea that they had discussed sundry things at the last meeting.

One character in the audience, a nice fellow, asks, "Why did we spend two dollars for crepe paper for the last dance?" There is much discussion about this matter, and I am all for saying that I will make up the difference if it is going to bother them. But I see that this is not the point and that you have to discuss stuff in meetings even if it is about crepe paper. Everybody, even Janet and Jim, is very wrought up — all except me. But I am just a novice, and I will try to get worked up too. Everybody has a good time talking about this, so it is o.k. by me.

Before the meeting is over I am called on to make a speech. I think about a lot of jokes that I have heard so that I will go over big, but I don't tell them because I can't ever figure out how to fit them in, although some fellows wouldn't worry about this. I just say, "This is certainly very inspiring to me — so many young men and women meeting together in the church auditorium. I am your chaplain and I hope that you will keep up your good work, and now that I am here I can assure you that you can count on me for whatever help I may give you." Everybody gives me a big hand, although I don't know why.

After the meeting, over doughnuts and coffee, there is a lot of talking. I do my part. It is nothing outstanding — just asking people what their names are and where they went to school. Sometimes I say, "Are you the O'Neil that is related to the district attorney?" But they say, "My name is not O'Neil. It is O'Brien." And of course that throws the chitchat out of gear.

Jack Thornton, I perceive, has taken the advice of St. Paul very well and is all things to all people. He looks for anything resembling wall flowers, and dances and says clever things to them. No one seems to mind, as Jack is so big and handsome and smiles through life.

Janet Smith is vice president of the club, and she does the same as Jack. This makes me very happy, as I realize that the trouble with a lot of our functions is that some of the people feel left out as no one takes the trouble to talk to them.

After Janet and Jack have done their duty to all in the club, they are doing their duty to one another.

The club goes along fine. I am glad to say. The kids like the dances and the sled rides and tire treasure hunts and such things the best. But I like the speeches the best. I think they do the most good. When the officers can't think of anything else they always get a speaker, because I guess there are a lot of people around just waiting to give speeches on things people should know, and when you stop to think about it there are a lot of things that people can learn too. But I don't mind telling you that of all the speakers I put my money on Father Tim Malloy. I think most even one in the club does too, because Father Tim has the wisdom of age but he also has the enthusiasm of youth. He remembers the younger days of his life very well. He remembers the idealism and the uncertainty. A lot of times the youngsters say, "That is just what I always wanted to hear about." after he talks.

Father Tim talks an awful lot about the boy-girl problem. This is a very interesting subject, because I can remember that one time there was a question in our Question Box. "My girl has beautiful blue eyes but she is a non-Catholic. I think I love her. What should I do?" I couldn't figure out what the blue eyes had to do with the subject, but I suppose when you can sign your name anonymously most anything can go.

One of the best talks Father Tim gives is on going steady. He says, "If you boys and girls are smart you will not go steady until you are ready to get married. And you shouldn't be ready to get married until you can support a wife and a family.

"The mistake a lot of girls and boys make," he says, "is going steady too soon. When they get married they have only gone around with one or two boys and this is not enough. The reason is because after you get married you might think how nice it would be to be married to somebody else and this is indeed a very silly thought after you are married until death. The time for looking around is when you are young. Go with someone who is the life of the party. See how that is. Go with the strong, silent type. Maybe that is your type. Who knows? There are all kinds of people in the world, and if you have only gone with one boy steady, you are just plain lucky if you get the right man. And the same goes for the boys, too.

"And another thing. Remember the purpose of dating. It's to find out who you can best live with for the rest of your life. I am told that some people can't find anything else to do on a date but stop at taverns, go to movies and make love. Now life is more than all this. You won't be spending the rest of your lives going to movies and taverns, because you won't be able to afford it. Nor will love-making be your whole life. You'll be going to games together, maybe to the opera. When you are dating use your imagination. See how many different things you can do together and enjoy. That is the way you find out if you will live in happiness the rest of your lives."

That night everyone examines his conscience, and I find out through the grapevine that several kids decide to break up for a while, because they know that if Father Tim says so it is the best thing to do. Especially I am glad to hear that one of our girls swears off a motorcycle rider and another off a roller skater. I don't like these fellows because one wears a big belt and always looks flashy; but mostly they don't like work but only motorcycling and roller skating.

Father Tim is especially angry when he talks of the way the world is dragging youths into the gutter. He says at least a dozen times that I can remember, "If there were die rotten pictures, rotten plays, rotten magazines around when I was a kid that there are now, I don't know how I could have kept my purity. Kids have to be real heroes to keep clean nowadays." And if it would have been tough for Father Tim Malloy, a man of steel, it would certainly be tough for the rest of us.

When Father Tim gives his talks on purity to the group, I think he pleads more than when he talks about anything else. He says, "You're real heroes if you keep your soul clean today. I don't think the martyrs of old had much on the clean boy or girl today. I know God smiles on you and will give you a great reward. Faith, hope and charity are the greatest virtues, I know that, but I say to you be pure and you won't have to worry much about any of the other virtues." Perhaps Father Tim overemphasizes a little bit, but as he says, "You can't go too far extolling this virtue to the young."

He says, "Never give in to temptation. The devil makes it seem worthwhile. He makes you think that you are passing up real living, but I am here to tell you that you can mess up your life more by giving in to impurity than in any other way. St. Alphonsus said that everyone who is in hell today is there because he has offended God in some way by impurity."

And everybody knows that if St. Alphonsus said it and was backed up by Father Tim Malloy it must be true.

Father Tim talks on chivalry too. He says, "I realize that men today cannot throw their coats into water so girls can walk over them, like Sir Walter Raleigh, because clothes cost too much, but they can still be gentlemen. All this bunk in the movies about tough guys throwing girls around, socking them in the face, is a lot of hogwash and a disgrace. If a fellow doesn't think the girl he is going around with is a princess, both of them are wasting their time. I think one of the most disgraceful things in America today is that a man won't get up and give a seat to a woman in a crowded bus, only if he happens to notice that it is his mother or landlady. Why, the great glory of Christianity is that woman has been elevated, and today in America we are tearing her down."

Father Tim also says that "a lot of people will think all this stuff is old-fashioned. Well, I guess it is. There is an awful lot of what they call broadmindedness in the world today. The world is losing its sense of sin. People used to sin a lot, but they realized it was sin. Today if you follow the command of God, you are repressing yourself. You are going to be neurotic. But I tell you that if you want character, if you want that little extra push that is the difference between success and failure, there is nothing so developing as the virtue of purity. A kiss is something sacred, a pledge of special love, not just a way to pass an evening. It is dangerous and serious, and not something to be taken lightly."

I suppose that some of the kids think that Father Tim Malloy is too anxious about things and a little old-fashioned, but most of them realize that he has seen enough of life to know what the score is, and he does them a lot of good.

XIV

WAY I figure it, adolescence is something to be avoided if possible. You feel gawky and tired and unwanted and ugly, but mostly you feel ugly. Then you start getting mad at everything. You go to sleep to sleep off your madness, but you don't wake up not mad. You're madder than ever, and you say nasty and mean things, and your parents are tempted to beat your brains out.

I am no longer an adolescent, but I have to worry' about adolescence more often than I like. The way this happens is that parents get all demoralized with their adolescent children, and not wishing to batter out their brains, they say to them, "You march right down to the rectory' and see Father." It is on account of this that young Jimmy Smith and I go through Iris adolescence together, and it is no fun.

In fact, it is a good thing that Jimmy Smith had a good religious background, or by this time he would probably be doing time in Alcatraz. The way it starts is with Jimmy punching Joe Schmidt's nose. Joe Schmidt never got to play on Jimmy's baseball team because he is kind of unco-ordinated and is always fumbling the ball. Also, he couldn't hit a balloon. But he is a very honest and fair kid, so they make him umpire, figuring that many umpires also make out all right in life.

One day Joe is umpiring and Jimmy Smith comes to bat. Jimmy bats in clean-up position. This time the game is pretty close and the pitcher gets the count down to three balls and two strikes. On the next pitch he puts a nice low one over the outside corner, and what is Joe Schmidt to do but to call it a strike, since he is noted for his honesty and fairness? Jimmy Smith or no Jimmy Smith, he calls strike three, the same way they do in the big leagues.

Jimmy turns purple and yells out. "What's the matter with you, Joe, are you blind?" and similar derogatory remarks. Then he runs behind the plate and takes a swing at Joe and gives him a bloody nose.

One of the fellows says. "Take it easy, Jimmy, this is only a practice game," and everybody feels very sorry for little Joe because he is such a little guy and really a plenty good Joe.

I happen to be walking around reading my Office and take my eyes up at the Pater Noster just in time to see this, and I am more than a little surprised. I come over and say. "Jimmy, that is certainly very small of you. I'm surprised at you. You've got to learn how to control your temper. I never expected anything like that from you. Now tell Joe you are sorry."

Little Joe is all busted up because he feels that he is kind of a pal with everybody and when umpiring would never call them only the way he saw them. Jimmy goes over and says. "I'm awfully sorry, Joe. I lost my head."

Little Joe is crying, not because it hurt so much but because it has been so long since anyone got mad at him. And he says. "That's okay, Jimmy. It didn't hurt much and maybe I was wrong. Maybe it was a little outside."

But Jimmy, as I learn later, is not really sorry. He angry with me, and decides to throw his activity where I will not be in the way. He decides he is going to get progressive.

Soon afterward, it is easily deduced that Jimmy Smith and I are not the pals we used to be. He is very quiet when he has to talk to me and doesn't say much at all that amounts to anything. In the old days he used to ask me what the seminary was like and how hard was it to be a priest. But now we don't talk about anything important, and Jimmy just answers yes and no and doesn't seem to care to talk to me. In fact it seems it would be perfectly o.k. with him if relations are severed entirely.

This bothers me a bit but I lay it up to his going through a phase, although I am not too acquainted with phases. Then one day one of the Sisters tells me that Jimmy is doing very poorly in school. She is amazed and doesn't neglect to mention that she can't figure Jimmy out.

One night I decide to go over to the Smiths and see the family to find out what's up. Jimmy is there and everyone is pretty talkative except him. He just answers yes and no and makes things a bit difficult. Finally, after Jimmy has gladly gone to bed, his mother says to me, "Father, I didn't want to mention it but Jimmy is not acting very well lately. He is very stubborn. He talks back to me. He isn't going to the sacraments. Frankly, I'm worried about him. My husband tried to correct him the other night,

and he said, 'Well, you're not very good either, the way you come home drunk all the time.' Well, my husband felt so bad he went out and got awfully drunk."

After this I realize that Jimmy is pretty universally on the black list. The next day I am in the schoolyard asking hard questions of the first graders like "How much is six and nine?" when I see Jimmy coming out of school by himself. I ask him to walk over to the rectory with me to get some mail which is for the Sisters. I say, "Jimmy, how about going to the ball game with me this afternoon?" He says, "No, thank you, Father. I would rather not," just like that without so much as a reason.

I say, "What's the matter, Jimmy? We used to be such good friends. Have I done something to you?"

He says, "No, Father, you haven't done anything, but I wish you would leave me alone." This I do, as he has me considerably baffled.

I finally realize that if anybody will know what is wrong with Jimmy Smith his gang will. I ask them, and Bill Mallon, a kind of lieutenant in tire mob, says, "We don't know what's eating him. He's not the same guy anymore. He says we're too slow for him, we never do anything. I don't know. I think we have fun."

I find out that Jimmy has a new gang of fellows he is running around with. They are a pretty wild lot. One of them has run way from home at various and sundry times. He wants to see the world, but so far he has only seen about fifty miles of it because the cops always pick him up just when he is getting started. Another fellow has stolen a car because the law is that you must be sixteen to drive and he has not reached that age and thinks that the law would except him if they only knew what a phenomenon he is. They are all the type that think that about forty is long enough for anybody to live and that if you attain that age you are an old goat and ought to be tethered out to die. I make it a point to see Jimmy after I have found this out, and I come right out and tell him, "Jimmy, your head is getting too big for your hat. I don't like the gang you are running around with. They aren't good kids and they won't do you any good. The trouble with you is that you think you are a big shot. You're still young. You'll mess up your life if you go on like this."

Well, Jimmy is respectful but quiet, as he has been for some time now. He probably is feeling sorry for me because I am misguided like most of the other people. I have a talk with Father Tim Malloy and he says, "A lot of times you can't go any farther. You can talk to someone nicely, you can be hard with them, you can do almost anything, but they won't change. They have to learn the hard way."

Next day at Mass. I pray veiy hard for Jimmy. I say, "Lord, Jimmy isn't a bad boy at all. He's just a little proud, maybe like Peter. Don't be too hard on him."

Finally it happens just as I knew it would. Judge Connell gives me a call one day. Judge Connell is a great man. He is the judge in juvenile court and has done a great deal of good because he has high principles and believes that religion is the best thing there is to make people stay on the straight and narrow. He says that "punishment is just the last resort. A lot of times it just makes people resent society more." Veiy often he asks a child who is in a jam if he belongs to any church, and then he turns the child over to the minister of religion, and often as not he is veiy successful. Sometimes he calls in the parents and really lays it on the line to them. He says, "It's all your fault that you have a child like this. What have you ever done for your children? You never gave them any religious training. You never told them about God. What do you expect? I only wish the law gave me the power to send you up the river." When parents are called before Judge Connell they feel pretty scared because they know he doesn't pull any punches.

The judge says to me. "This young fellow was caught last night breaking into a house, with some other kids. He seems like a nice enough boy and I don't want to min him by doing anything that will crush him. His mother tells me that he and yourself are pretty good friends. I am going to turn him over to you for probation." And the young fellow he is talking about is Jimmy.

Then the judge says to Jimmy. "You are a fine-looking boy. You have a fine home. You have a wonderful religion. Christ was the greatest Person that ever lived. He was strong and courageous and brave. If you want to be like Him, be good. It's a lot manlier than being bad. If you ever come into this court again, I will have to punish you severely."

Next the judge calls in Mr. Smith and says, "I hear that you drink. I'm a Catholic just as you are. One of the greatest jobs in the world is raising children the way they should be raised. God has given you the care of an immortal soul, the most precious thing in the world, a soul that will never die. I believe that it is more your fault than your boy's that he did this thing. Think it over."

When I see Jimmy I say, "Well, how are you, Jimmy?"

“I’m okay, Father. I’m awfully sorry for what I did. I didn’t realize how serious it was. I wasn’t going to take anything in the house, honest I wasn’t. I just wanted to do something thrilling, I guess. I promise I’ll never do anything like that again. And I’ll never go around with that gang any more.”

I believe him, because I know that when he sets his heart to something he never changes. I know I will never have to be too tough on him, and when he reports to me every month, as he has to because the judge says so, we just talk about the Yankees or something like that.

But it is still hard to talk to Jimmy. He is kind of lost and lonely. He does not go back to his old gang of fellows. He prefers to be alone. The fellows can’t figure out what is eating at him. He has flights of temper at home just as he used to, although he always says afterwards he is sorry and promises he won’t do it again. He isn’t like the old Jimmy. He isn’t cheerful the way he used to be. I say to him. “Jimmy, you ought to get around with your old pals,” but he just sort of broods around alone, depressed and sad.

He doesn’t go to confession and Communion as much as he used to either. He says he just doesn’t get much out of praying any more. And when I say he ought to keep trying anyway, he says yes. but he never does anything about it.

I am worried about him. His mother and dad are worried about him. So is his sister Janet. But I guess more than anybody, his dad is worried.

I know Mr. Smith is worried, because he comes in to see me one day and busts down and cries like a baby. And if there is anything that makes you helpless and sad it is a man crying. He says. “Father, I want to stop drinking. I know it is my fault as much as Jimmy’s that he got into that jam and that he is so unhappy now. I wasn’t much of an example to him.” This is all very true, but I do not mention the same to Mr. Smith because he has enough troubles already.

Well. I figure this is the most promising tiling that has ever been said, because Mr. Smith says that he wants to stop drinking. Before, he always said he wouldn’t drink too much. I ask him why he doesn’t see Tom Warden of our parish, who had a terrific reputation forbeating up his wife and kids, for waking up the neighbors, and general disorder, and who joined the A. A. and became a model of citizenry.

I know that Father Tim Malloy will be glad that I told him this, because Father Tim has said that the A. A.’s are the best tiling he has ever seen for men who drink. Father Tim says, “It’s a great movement, Bob. They work on the assumption that a man can’t stop drinking by himself. He needs the help of God. He has to realize that there is something greater than himself. When he gets up every morning, he prays. He says. ‘God. I can’t get through the day without your help. Just get me through this one day.’”

I say that this is one of the most wonderful tilings I have ever heard, and I figure that it wouldn’t be a half bad idea for a lot of people to attack life in this way. I think there would be a lot less neurotics if they would just tell God that their problems were too big unless He helped them. In fact I use this idea in the confessional from the moment that I hear it. I tell the penitents about it.

Another thing that Father Tim tells me is that in order to keep from drinking the men must help other fellows who are in the same fix. They must go out any time of the day or night to talk to a fellow who is caught by the habit of drink.

But most of all Father Tim tells me that in the A. A.’s (which stands for Alcoholics Anonymous) a man must be on the level with his God. To Tom Smith, inasmuch as he is a Catholic, this means that he must go to confession, which he has not done in about ten years. Tom Smith does not like to go to confession; and he does not realize that in this matter there are about four or five hundred million people who agree with him — which is about how many Catholics there are altogether, approximately.

The reason that people do not like to go to confession is that it is no fun telling your faults to another person, because this calls for considerable humility, and nobody except the great saints is especially desirous of being humble. But when you come out of the confessional it is certainly worth the small inconvenience, or even great inconvenience, inasmuch as the sun is shining a lot brighter and the whole world appears a lot better.

In fact, with me and with Father Tim Malloy and with about every other Catholic, confession is one of the best things that Christ gave us, even if we are not partial to it. because most of us get jammed up at one time or another with some sin that Christ said would put us in hell or at least in purgatory, and we are morose and downhearted and about ten other things, and it is indeed very wonderful to stop in the church and tell the sin to the priest, who forgives it in God’s name, and then you are rid of all the moroseness and such stuff. Considering the big results, it is really very easy.

I am the first to agree that it would be very nice to just tell your sins to God, as some people say you ought to do. because God is invisible and most of us are such spiritual dopes that we are not really aware of Him and do not appreciate His wonderful and awful holiness. If we did, we would be the last to

want to confess a sin direct to Him, because we would wither away with shame and horror at the thought of how we had been false to Him. I would not wish to stand in the presence of infinite perfection with a foul little sin on my soul.

Anyhow, the fact is that Catholics believe that Christ said to confess to a priest, and that is that, and no argument. Christ said to His Apostles, "Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." That left it up to the Apostles to decide who is to be forgiven and who is not to be forgiven, if any. Now it would indeed be very silly for the Apostles to forgive the sins of one person because they have nice blond hair, and not forgive somebody else's because they haven't.

The only way the Apostles could decide who was to be forgiven was to hear the sins and see whether the person was sorry' for them. The Apostles were very' logical in this matter. I have often thought about this thing, and I have never been able to figure out how the Apostles could decide which ones to forgive without knowing what sins were to be forgiven. Therefore confession is o.k. with me.

You might say that Christ wanted confession to be a hard thing to do. at least hard enough to prove that the person was really sorry', and also to show us that sin is a horrible thing. And actually He really made it very easy for us, because the way I look at it. I would certainly rather tell my sins to a priest, who after all has committed some too. than to try to face the sinless Christ Himself and confess to Him.

Anyway, Catholics have been going to confession since the time of Christ, which is convincing enough for me, and a small price to pay for getting rid of some of the whoppers that Christians, along with other people, can think up to do against God.

Well, as I was saying before I started the sermon. Tom Smith comes along to Father Tim Malloy and tells him that he is sweating plenty' about going to confession after about ten years, and he is losing a lot of sleep over it, and also he is wondering how the priest is going to react to all the whoppers which he thought up and did when he was on his big benders.

Father Tim smiles his big smile and assures Tom that whichever priest hears his confession will be only too glad to get such a big penitent, and will be thanking God. the way it says in the Gospel — that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety -nine just, etc. Finally, after a lot of this kind of encouragement, Tom casts the die like Caesar when he crosses the Rubicon, and he goes down to St. Clement's, where they don't know him, and tells his sins and has them forgiven.

Of course. I never hear anything about Tom's confession from the priests at St. Clement's, although I am very' friendly with them, because the Church will throw the book at any priest who would ever mention the least tiring about what he heard in the confessional. They will excommunicate you and so on, including that you have to go to the Pope himself to get forgiveness and be allowed to act as a priest again. I am not specially versed in the penalties for breaking the seal of the confessional, because it is about the most terrible sin a priest could commit, and therefore I am not much interested, having no intention of doing anything so crazy.

Well, any way, Tom Smith goes to confession; and this, along with the wonderful Christian work of the Alcoholics Anonymous, seems to do the trick for him.

The next two Sunday s. Tom is at the Communion rail to receive Our Lord and to ask Him to help him. So I just keep on praying that everything will be o.k.

Later, I hear that Mr. Smith and problem-son Jimmy are being seen going fishing very much. They also go to several baseball games together, because now Mr. Smith is a lot ahead of the old days financially, since he is no longer trying, all by himself, to support all the distilleries this side of the Mississippi.

This makes me so happy that I sit and think what a great privilege and terrible responsibility it is to hear confessions. Some people are funny about this. They think it would be a lot of fun to hear confessions. In this matter they are way out in left field on the wrong side of the foul line. It is very nerve-racking indeed. I will tell why.

The reason is that it is no fun whatever to be preaching to the people to love Our Lord, Who loves us with the love of one Who has given His life for us, and then to sit in the confessional and hear tale after tale of the traitorous things which have been done to Him.

Just hearing the sins, without being able to give forgiveness in the name of Christ, would be about the hardest thing on earth. The only thing that makes it worth while is realizing the tremendous relief you can give the people who are sorry for their misdeeds. Christ is so good that there is nothing He will not forgive if a person is sorry for it. And He has chosen me, an ordinary' plug of a fellow, to do this great work!

Well, what with confession and Alcoholics Anonymous and everything, things are going very well for the Smiths at this juncture, but they are going to be put to the test very soon.

XV

WHENEVER IT RAINS I often hang around my room and bone up on St. Thomas, and if he gets too tough I turn to Westbrook Pegler because I always know what he is talking about. Formerly I would write sermons on rainy days, but I gave that up because they were depressing enough even when they were written in the sunshine.

Now I save most of the sunshiny days for seeing people who aren't doing what they should for God. This is because on rainy days most people are just downright contrary.

But I don't visit people on all sunshiny days. Sometimes, when I think the Lord will understand, I play golf. After all, Christ was a great walker and liked the sunshine and did a lot of great thinking in it.

Father Tim Malloy, who has never played golf in his life, says that golf is a pushover, but in this matter he is way out in left field. Theoretically, he is right when he says, "Baseball is a hard game because a pitcher is throwing a ball at you with a curve or a drop, and therefore to hit a baseball is quite a trick, but golf is a cinch because that little white ball is lying down there right in front of you, and any goof could hit it." But practically, golf is a very lough, not to say aggravating game.

I hit over the ball and under and to the left and to the right but never in the middle. Moreover I am fool enough to think that every time I go out I am going to do better. That is the reason that I call up Jack Thornton one day and ask him if maybe he couldn't get off work for a while, as I can sandwich about nine holes between two converts.

I have secretly gone out to a practice range and straightened out my drive, so I suggest that we play for a dime a hole and think that I will be able to buy a few cans of food for the hungry Japanese with my winnings.

It looks good for the Japanese at first. I am concentrating on getting more right hand into my swing, as this will correct a very bad slice that I have. It goes pretty well for about six holes, and I begin to think that the dark days are gone for me and that life will just be one grand fairway. On the seventh hole, I must have forgotten the secret because I hit an awful slice. Jack and I go over to have a little look, and it is at such times that golfers get confidential.

Jack says, "Father, I've been doing a lot of thinking lately. I suppose you know I like Janet Smith an awful lot. Well, I want to get to heaven an awful lot, too. I've been wondering if I shouldn't be a priest. I want to be perfect."

I say, "No, Jack, I don't think so. I suppose every fellow that does as much for God and works as hard for his Church as you do is bothered by that thought. But I am sure that God wants you to marry' Janet. You can be perfect as a married man if you just serve God the way you are doing now; if you go on trying to make the world just a little better."

Jack says, "Father, I'm relieved to hear you say that. It had me worried for a while. I think I'll ask Janet to marry me tonight."

Jack is so happy and relieved that he tells me to take one of his new balls and hit it because he has accumulated so many. I don't do so, and I am very' glad I don't, because the next slice is worse than ever and it goes in a big lake.

On the way home Jack says that he never felt better.

Everybody is happy indeed that Jack and Janet are going to get married. Mr. Smith is thinking of the wedding a lot because he does not have to think so much of getting a drink, the way he used to. Father Tim Malloy is trying to get the Pope in on the marriage, because he has sent to Rome for the Pope's blessing, telling how Jack and Janet are doing just fine for the Church on the American continent. Bill and Jeannie are going to be the best man and maid of honor and are wondering why they haven't decided on a date for their wedding too, which I wonder also, but I don't say anything because human love is a thing for me to let take care of itself. Jimmy is his same old self and says the marriage is all right by him. Everything is just about perfect.

XVI

THE MORE I look at Father Tim Malloy, the more sensational he gets. Like the day Notre Dame played the Army. Father Tim prays to St. Joseph that Notre Dame will win, because he figures that if Notre Dame beats the whole United States Government, people will be veiy impressed with the Catholic Church. He puts the stable of St. Joseph right on the radio, because he wants him to be right in the game and not off in some comer, where he couldn't do any good. Well, St. Joseph isn't doing any good at all. because Army is pushing Notre Dame all over the field. Father Tim is pleading with St. Joseph and wringing his hands and getting madder and madder. Finally he decides that if that is all St. Joseph cares about the Catholic Church, he isn't going to stay on the nice warm radio any longer. So he puts him outside on the porch where the temperature reads about ten above zero. Well, it is a lucky thing that Notre Dame wins, because if they didn't St. Joseph might still be out in the cold.

The reason that I mention tins is because Father Tim Malloy thought that if you were a Catholic, no matter what you were doing the Catholic Church was doing it too, and not only you. and you ought to be a credit to it. It is like tins one night at ten o'clock when Father Tim and I are listening to a night ball game that Jack Schwartz is pitching. Everybody knows that Jack Schwartz is a good Catholic. He goes to Communion every day and gives talks at the schools on the advantage of good and holy living. He makes the sign of the cross before he starts playing, so everyone can see it. A lot of sports writers say that Jack has a good chance to lead the big leagues. He is pitching to a batter by the name of Luther Nagle. We don't figure that Luther is a Catholic, as Catholics stopped naming their children this about five hundred years ago and this Luther is in lus twenties.

Father Tim says that he hopes that Jack will strike Luther out. because it will do the Catholic Church so much good. Father Tim says that Jack ought to be pitching them higher. In fact, Father Tim is waving his amis so much that I am afraid he is going to get a stroke. Finally the announcer says that Jack Schwartz throw s them in the groove, and I am considerably relieved, but I shouldn't have been, because Luther is just waiting for this and knocks it over the fence, and that is the end of the Catholic Church.

Just then the phone rings. It is a sick call. There has been a terrible wreck downtown. A girl is hurt very badly and wants a priest. I forget all about the ball game and rush down to the wreck as fast as I can go. I go down past the shows with their big marquees, down past Dill's Drug Store with all its terrible magazines. A drunk yells out to me, "Hi ya, Father" just to show that he isn't against the Catholic Church even if it says getting drunk is a sin. An Irish cop says, "Where are you going, Father?" and I say, "I'm on a sick call," and he stops traffic for about thirty-five blocks back and falls to his knees right in the middle of the street because he knows I am carrying Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament to give to the little girl that is hurt. He also grabs a little guy next to him and says, "Kneel down, fellow." The little guy is a Presbyterian and can't figure it all out. but he kneels down and decides that it is some law that the city council passed.

The little girl is lying in front of a store. When I see her face my heart stops. It is Janet Smith, prostrate and all battered up. A car had come over the curb and pinned her against the store front. The doctor is there, and when I ask him what he thinks he says she doesn't have a chance. Then they pick her up and earn her inside.

I stand there, practically knocked out. Finally, when I get hold of myself, they bring me into the room. They are telephoning for Janet's family, too.

There she is. so beautiful, so lovely, so good. She is in a lot of pain but she is smiling. All I can say is, "How are you. Janet?"

She says, "I'm all right, Father." After a bit she says, "I'm going to die. Isn't that right, Father?"

I say. "Janet, you're pretty sick. The doctor thinks maybe you can't make it. I'm sorry, Janet."

"That's all right, Father." She takes my hand in hers and says, "God has been very good to me." I hear her confession. Then I call in the family while I give her Holy Communion. Then I begin the beautiful rite of anointing her for death. This is called Extreme Unction, or the Last Sacrament. Extreme Unction sometimes gives health to the body. I guess I never prayed that anyone would get better so hard in all my life. But often God's ways are not our ways.

I anoint her beautiful eyes, her nose, her mouth, her hands and her feet and I say, the way St. James told us to, "Through this holy anointing and God's most tender mercy may you be pardoned whatever sins you have done by seeing, by hearing, by smell, by taste, by touch and by your steps." I ask all the Saints to pray for her: St. John the Virgin Apostle, St. Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Peter, the great lover of Christ, the great woman Mary Magdalen. I ask Christ to deliver Janet. I say, "May the angels

lead you into Paradise, may the martyrs receive you at your coming, may they lead you into the holy city Jerusalem. May the choirs of angels receive you at your coming and may you have eternal rest."

Janet says all the right things then. To Jimmy she says, "Be a good boy, Jimmy. Take care of Mother and Dad." To her mother, "Don't feel too bad, Mom. It's only till we meet again. Take care of Dad and Jimmy." To her dad she says, "I'm awfully proud of you, Dad. You're the best dad that a girl ever had." To me she says, "Goodbye, Father, keep up the good work. You're a swell priest. Take care of the kids. Tell Father Malloy that I wanted to last till he could get to see me but I don't think that I can make it."

To Jack Thornton she says. "Jack, I love you a lot. I wish we could have been married and had a big family. But I am better off. You know that. I want you to find another girl and get married just like we planned. Have a big family. You'll be a wonderful father." Jack just looks at her; he cannot speak.

Jeannie goes in last of all, because she just can't get hold of herself. Janet says, "Take care of Jack, Jeannie. He needs you. Try to take up his time, so that he will forget me a little bit." Jeannie says, "I promise, Janet."

Some days later, when Jack Thornton comes in to see me, I know just about what is coming. "Father," he says. "I just can't get over Janet's death. All I do is think of her. I walk around alone at night and just keep thinking of her and all the good times we had together. Why do things like this happen?"

"Well, Jack, it's like this," I say. "We aren't home now. This life isn't a picnic for anybody. When the human race fell in Adam and Eve, God said, "Because you have done this you will have to work and sweat to make a living. There will be pains. Above all there will be death." We all have our troubles. You've got more of them right now than most people. But God expects you to take it like a man. Remember in St. Matthew's Gospel the wonderful sermon on Providence. Christ points to the lilies of the field. He says, 'See how beautiful they are. Not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. If God has such good care of these, how much more you. You can't see it now. But if you tell God you accept His will, He will take care of you."

"Yes. I know, Father. I knew what you were going to say, but I was just feeling a little blue so I thought I would stop around. I want to submit to God's will but it is awfully hard."

"Jack," I tell him, "my mother died when I was very young. My dad felt the same way you do. When I became a priest he told me the way that he had of facing the future. On his way home from work he stopped into the church. He sat in the back and just said over and over to God, 'Thy Will be done.' That's the way he got over it. I think you can do the same. Remember when you told me you thought maybe you ought to be a priest to do more for God? Well, now you can do a lot for Him.

"And anyway, Jack, you will see Janet some time. You can't feel sorry for her. She is in the perfect happiness of heaven. You're the only one that is suffering. Don't let this crush you. Try to lead a normal life again. Don't avoid people. That isn't normal. It's okay to go around for awhile and just try to think things out, but not for long. Try to be the same as you were before, even if it is only pretending."

Jack says. "Thank you, Father" and adds that he feels better. As he goes out into the night I know he will make out. He is a grand fellow.

XVII

WHEN THE DOCTOR tells me that I have arthritis. I can just imagine myself all crippled up and leading a life of slow martyrdom. But the doctor says there is arthritis and arthritis: and the kind I have isn't too bad — just sort of uncomfortable and puts a guy on the shelf occasionally. This is very encouraging, since at the tender age of twenty-nine I am not too much for going into retirement and draining the diocese for a few score years. The doctor says that I should go to the hospital for a little while and my back will loosen up. This is o.k. by me since a little rest is always appreciated, and no one can object too much to this one since it is dictated by the Almighty Himself.

My nurse is a girl named Mary Martin, and I am more than a little interested in her because she is like enough to be a twin sister of Janet Smith's. She is more than a little interested in me because she is a non-Catholic who is thinking about the Catholic Faith; and when you can talk about the Catholic Faith on hospital time, it is a pretty good deal at that.

I know Mary Martin's story very well. It happens when there aren't any wars going on. And when there aren't any wars going on, stories like Mary's are sure to make the front page, although I don't know why. Maybe it's because newspapers are just stupid.

Mary is just a kid when she makes the front pages, and she doesn't have much to do with it at all. It is her parents.

Mary's dad at that time is a successful business man. He is married to a lovely woman and they have only one child — Mary. Mr. Martin is getting up in years, as we all do, and like some of the human race he is wondering whether he is losing his hold on the attentions of the fairer sex. As fate would have it, when he is susceptible, he meets up with a big platinum blonde, many of which are just hanging around waiting for men like Mr. Martin.

As the papers bring out when the whole thing becomes a messy scandal, the blonde calls Mr. Martin her little "Bootsy Wootsy." for what reason no one ever knew. The blonde doesn't even know, because when it comes to mental problems she is way out in left field. This big blonde is the ex-Mrs. Conrad and the ex-Mrs. Slattery, and so on. She makes a hobby of collecting "husbands." As far as anyone can figure out, she has nothing more than blonde hair, but notwithstanding Mr. Martin is ready to make a mess of Iris life for her. which he successfully does.

Mrs. Martin hears about this little affair, and makes it a point to meet the blonde in a prominent restaurant in the city to talk things over and see if anything can be done.

Mrs. Martin tells her in a nice way, "My dear, do you know that my husband is several years your senior? We have a very nice daughter, and you are going to break up our home. Now I don't think you love him. I do. Would you please stop seeing him?"

Well, the blonde, who has never learned to control anything, including her temper, and who has not the least semblance of Christianity in her, says, "I wish, Mrs. Martin, that you would mind your own business. Your husband and I are in love, and if he wants to take me out. that is our business." All of which is veiy poor logic, like a thief saying he is in love with the other guy's auto, but it goes today, I guess.

Well, things get very bad and the argument gets worse and worse. Finally the blonde hauls off and takes a swing at Mrs. Martin, and no doubt needing glasses very badly, she misses by half a yard and sprawls all over the floor.

As luck will have it there is a photographer around just then, and thinking that things might happen, he had Iris camera all ready, and as the blonde swings he snaps the picture, which naturally goes into the night edition, since newspapers don't care whose lives they are wrecking if it makes good print. More than this, the picture wins some kind of an award and brings the scandal right out in the open.

Everybody gets a big laugh out of the funny picture of the blonde, since it is very funny indeed. I guess I even get a good laugh out of it myself, although I am ashamed of that now.

The case goes into court and no one is enjoying it in the least except the big blonde. Mr. Martin is very nervous and Mrs. Martin faints a couple of times, but the big blonde poses for pictures and makes all kinds of scenes because she probably thinks this will be the first step in a long, hard haul to the golden streets of Hollywood.

Mrs. Martin wins the case and gets custody of Maty, and everybody is glad. But everybody that gets such a big kick out of the case, and so many laughs at the big blonde when the case is going strong, feels pretty low down when the scene comes out of Mary being given to her Mother. Mary is crying as though her little heart would break. She is saying, "I love you. Mother, but I want Daddy too. I love him, too."

Everybody is just taking for granted that this is an affair between Mr. and Mrs. Martin, but it is really Mary's too. Mr. Martin is a lowdown heel and Mrs. Martin's pride is hurt, but little Mary hasn't done any wrong at all. Big people are pushing little Mary all around, and no one says anything about her in court, but it is pretty obvious that this case has a lot to do with her. But Maty isn't twenty-one yet, at that time, so I suppose she doesn't have any rights. And if she wants to live with her mother and dad, like any other child, it is just too bad.

This is all the newspaper is interested in. They just pick up some other sensational stuff and don't care an awful lot what happens to little Mary. And that is her story.

In the hospital. Mary brings me right up to date on it herself. She says, "After that, Father, I didn't have a happy home at all. My mother used to cry all the time, and I knew it was because she loved my dad so much. Dad quit going with the blonde when she got careless and let her hair grow out, and he felt very bad about the whole thing. He used to send mother flowers and everything, just to try to make up for the wrong he had done. But Mother just thought he would never be any good, and she said that she just couldn't take him back."

I interject here that I too think he was pretty bad.

Man continues. "I often told Mother that if I loved anybody as much as she loved Dad, I would make up with them, especially when they were as repentant as Dad was. But she said that I didn't understand. What do you think, Father?"

"Well, Mary, I think that you are right. Your mother didn't have to go back to your dad, but it sure seems as if everything was messed up for both of them when she didn't. Lots of times we have to forgive some pretty big tilings. None of us is perfect, and there are a lot of things in most of our lives that we wish we hadn't done, and the big consolation is that God is so forgiving."

"Father, I wasn't a good girl at all. I wasn't happy. I didn't know what I wanted. I saw a lot of silly movies and read a lot of sirupy love stories. I guessed that they must be the happiest people in the world. But I realized that I would never be like they were and I just got more unhappy. I did a lot of miming around, but thank God I never did anything real bad. I guess I respected myself enough not to get into too much trouble. I was mean to my mother. I told her I hated her. She loved me so much and wanted to hold onto me so much that I got away from her. She couldn't control me. I wanted to jump over a bridge or something. I wasn't happy at all."

Mary's experience with Christianity, she tells me, was just as bad as the rest of her life. She went to church because it seemed to be the civilized thing to do. She joined the church of the Reverend Ferris, who was a grand man. Essentially he was a perfect gentleman, because he wouldn't hurt anyone. He loved Christ, he loved Christ's poor, he prayed and led a very fine life. But he was a little careless in his appearance. His suit looked at times as though he had slept in it. Occasionally his shoes weren't shined, and Maiy would tell him so because he was the kind of man that you could talk up to. He used to say he just forgot. He was so ready to live a full life for Christ every morning that he probably overlooked some of these minor things.

When Mary belonged to his church she was happier than she had ever been in her young life.

But Reverend Ferris' church owed its existence in great part to a wealthy dowager. She had a lot of money and had paid for most of the church. She was a very precise woman, and when Reverend Ferris' clothes weren't pressed she was more than a little angry.

One Sunday morning the Reverend was in rare form. He said, "We are weak, terribly weak. The only time that we get interested in God is on Sunday. Religion is just a social thing to us. Don't you know that Christ said, 'I have come to cast fire on earth'? We are not on fire. Christ is too much on fire for us. We want to be rich and flaunt our riches in the face of the world, but Christ has said 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' (The dowager winced at this.) We don't stick by our promises in marriage. We would treat Christ today just the way he was treated nineteen hundred years ago. We would crucify Him again because His doctrine would be too hard for us. We ought to examine our consciences to see if Christ is important to us. Do we give our faith even a passing thought every day? Christ has said, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.' With most of us there is cause for shame in these words."

Well, everybody said it was a very lovely sermon and it made you think. But the Reverend was on his way out. He was offensive to the dowager. She and a few of her friends thought that the Reverend was a little too positive in his notions and a little strict in his interpretation of the quotation, "What God has joined together let no man put asunder." After all, some of the best parishioners had taken seconds in the marriage pool. He insisted a little too much on poverty of spirit. The dowager informed the powers that be that she was thinking seriously of joining elsewhere if the Reverend were not transferred. With the new building program coming up, what could be done but give the Reverend his walking papers?

In his place was sent a perfect little Lord Fauntleroy. He was very well dressed and always had his shoes shined. His hair was always combed, and so forth, but he never said anything like, It is wrong for a fellow to take his secretary out, and such things, because maybe somebody is doing this and will not like it. He never spoke very loud, because maybe he just didn't have emotions. The dowager liked him because she could be a mother to him.

The Reverend Ferris was farmed out to a little country parish and was very happy. He said that farm people are very wonderful to work with because they own their land and grow their own food and don't have to grovel to anyone and can say just what they think and admire him for doing the same.

Mary just went to church once more after the Reverend Ferris left. She did this because when he was leaving the parish he told Mary to do so. But she never went back. In fact, she didn't go to any church. She was fed up.

Maty tells me, "I lost my religion very fast after this. I met a fellow named William Langford Lawrence. When he got older he dropped the William and was just Langford Lawrence because this sounded sophisticated. I kind of went for him because he seemed so smart. There wasn't a thing in the

world that he couldn't find fault with. Now, most people just find fault with some things, but he found fault with everything. In those days I thought that was smart.

"He had great contempt for the 'masses' as he called them. They were like a bunch of animals, breeding and eating and dying. They were okay in their little way, but they weren't like the smart set who could say all sorts of things that were insulting and very sharp. The worst thing that Langford had to do was to rub shoulders with the 'masses' on the bus. He was going to be a writer, but just now he was only a budding genius, and so he had to ride the bus.

"Religion came in for quite a beating too. Father. There wasn't any God or if there was He didn't care what was going on on earth. God was an idea that was made up to keep the masses in check. Especially, Hell was a good idea for crafty churchmen to keep the masses in order. The Catholic Church was especially clever in its control of the masses.

"He was older than I. Father, and I felt very important when he was saying all these things. It seemed like he and I were so far above everybody else. We spent a lot of time drinking in taverns and criticizing all that other people held sacred. It was fun for a while because we seemed so right and everyone else so wrong. But it eventually got kind of boring. Everything that everybody else seemed to have a good time at was just a manifestation of their not being wise. About all we would do was sit around and drink and criticize.

"One night as usual we were in a tavern and as usual picking people all apart. I am sorry to say it, Father, but I was listening to him use Christ's name very freely. There was a big fellow and his girl sitting next to us, and he says, 'Say, fellow, I don't like your language. I don't use that kind of language in front of my wife and I wish that you wouldn't.'

"Well, Father, I felt awfully cheap, and I thought how ashamed the Reverend Ferris would be of me. Langford was just high enough to resent this, and thought he could lick the world, so he said, 'I will use Christ's name anywhere and any way I please, and what are you going to do about it?'

"Well, with this the big fellow took him outside and hit him so hard he must have bounced. Langford, I guess, thought that fighting was for the proletariat and never learned much about it.

"I couldn't even feel sorry for Langford, I was so disgusted with him and with myself for the kind of people that we were. I was standing next to the big fellow's wife and I said, 'I'm sorry about what happened. I used to love Christ, too.'

"We went home and I put a bandage on Langford and told him I didn't want to see him any more. He wasn't too put out, as he was getting pretty bored with me and vice versa. He probably had me pegged as the proletariat.

"He isn't writing plays like he wanted to, I hear. He is just getting drunk and smashed here and there by people he is insulting.

"The fellow that socked him is a newspaperman, and he said that he would like to talk to me some time. I was veiy' much for this because he is one hundred per cent man, which I can't say for Langford. I went to his office and he laid the law down to me.

"He said, 'You're a veiy good-looking girl. What in the world were you doing with a bum like that? Haven't you any self-respect? Do you want to end up in the gutter?'

"Well, I had reached the end of my rope. I just broke down. The newspaperman got veiy kind and gentle then and said, 'I didn't want to hurt you. You don't need to worry. You're just a kid. If you've made some mistakes, you're just starting life, and you can make up for lost time.'

"He said, 'Get yourself some religion. Learn to love God and leave things up to Him. Life isn't halfbad that way. Do things for other people, and your life will really be happy.'

"Well, it was right then and there that I decided to be a nurse so I could do things for people, and that's why I have told you everything. I say my prayers every night and I was never happier."

Just then, Pat O'Malley comes into the hospital room to see me, and Mary and I both say, "Well, how are you Pat?" And Mary and I and Pat are all very happy indeed because we are all pals. Pat, it turns out, is the newspaper-man that laid the haymaker on Langford.

XVIII

FATHER TIM MALLOY isn't called on much to give talks outside of St. Rose Parish because he always says what he thinks, which isn't too much in vogue and generally cuts down on one's speaking

engagements. I am more than somewhat surprised, in fact I am amazed, when John Hayes Public School has the temerity to call on him to make a few remarks at their graduation. I know how furious he gets when he talks about America being a Christian country' and not having any Christianity' in the schools. My arthritis is coming right along, but I am sorry that I will have to miss this talk. Anyway, I know that Mary Martin who admired the Reverend Ferris so much, will get a real thrill out of Father Tim Malloy, so I tell her to be sure and hear him.

When she comes back to the hospital she says it was one of the grandest talks that she had ever heard. Father Tim had said. "I am a Christian. Almost all of you are Christians. I believe that Christ was the most important person that ever lived. You should too. He is going to give you eternal life, which is really something to think about. Now let's look at the record. (Father Tim Malloy was always looking at the record because he admired Al Smith.) Christ says, 'He that follows me walks not in darkness.' What are we doing in our public school system to light the way for our children? His doctrine is not allowed to be taught. I believe in separation of church and state. I do not believe in the state being hostile to the Church. I believe that we have the greatest country' in the world. But I do not think it will long endure, if we don't get busy and bring Christ into the schools. School is supposed to teach people how to live. How can they live without Christ? We Catholics believe that children ought to be taught about Christ even more than about Napoleon and Alexander the Great and all the rest of them. He is a lot more important. We think that in school a child ought to be told that there is eternal life, and not just about this life here on earth. We think that the child ought to be told that to know and follow Christ is the way to get eternal life. We believe in telling the child every' day about Christ, because to know Christ is to live. Did not Christ say, 'I am the way, the truth and the life'?' How can we teach children a way of life and truth without the Master? I know it is difficult, but in some way we must get Christ in the school, not only in the church. You are a beautiful, inspiring group of boys and girls. Go to your church and learn about Christ, and your education will be complete."

This is what Mary Martin remembered that Father Tim said, but he said a lot more. He said that he wasn't criticizing the teachers. They didn't have any tiring to do with what was taught. He also told the boys and girls that they were wonderful and that they should be a credit to the fine school that they were graduating from. But still, all in all, it was not the most diplomatic speech that was ever given at John Hayes School. But Mary' Martin liked it very' much because it was so outspoken, the sort Reverend Ferris would give, and because Maty' felt that if she had learned about Christ when she was in high school, she wouldn't have messed up her life so much. Maty decides then and there that the Catholic religion is for her, and she wants me to take her through the instructions.

XIX

MARY'S CONVERSION isn't at all hard. She likes the idea that Christ is really God because her minister, Mr. Ferris, always insisted that He was, and because Mary couldn't see any reason why He was not. Mary also likes the great unity of the Catholic Church. It teaches the same today as nineteen hundred years ago. It hasn't even changed one of its doctrines. It seems to Mary that if such tilings as divorce were wrong a thousand years ago, they are just as wrong today, and she can't understand how some churches can allow it. You can read St. Augustine a thousand years ago and you can read him today, and the teaching is just the same.

Mary likes best of all the doctrine of the Eucharist. She is easily convinced that Jesus Christ is really present although the Host looks like a piece of bread. This is the best tiling that has happened in her whole life. After her conversion, she goes to Communion as often as she can. She asks me, "Father, why don't Catholics go to Communion more, if they believe that Jesus Christ is actually present in Holy Communion?"

And I say to Mary, "I don't know the answer to that." Then I say: "Maty, the greatest obstacle to your Faith from now on will be the fact that some people in the Catholic Church aren't very' good Catholics. They believe that sins are forgiven in the confessional, but many of them wait years and years before using this wonderful gift of God. I don't know why. Catholics believe that God Himself is personally in the church at all times, but we don't visit Him enough. I can't answer this one either. Maybe it is that we don't think. We don't ever take time enough to really think what it means to have the Creator of all things in the Church.

“The best advice I can give you is to be a really holy Catholic and not waste time watching some who do not seem to be that. Maybe they do not understand as well as you do. Keep your mind on your own life. Try to realize what it means to have Jesus really present among us all the time. Bring all your troubles to the church before you bring them any place else. Christ is just as much in every Catholic church as He was on the shores of the sea of Galilee. Come and see Him often.”

And Mary does. Many times when I enter the church, Mary, the convert, is the only one there talking to the Master.

A LOT OF PEOPLE who are not Catholic, and have some sort of affair that requires meeting a priest, have to take a couple of good hookers of bourbon before they can face the ordeal, because it is so awful. They think that priests aren't quite human, and that when they get you in the house they will slap some sort of spell on you. and first thing you know you'll be baptized, or maybe even a fourth degree Knight of Columbus.

But Dale Anderson, who is Mary's boy friend, is a fellow that is different. I like him. This is natural enough, because he says, “I like priests. I think they are real people. I don't believe what you Fathers believe, but I admire you for believing it. I figure priests are regular. They feel about things just like anybody else. They would like to have a wife and a lot of kids but they make the sacrifice, and I admire anybody that believes in something and sacrifices a lot for it. In my opinion some of the greatest men in the world are the missionaries in foreign lands. They give up everything for the God they believe in. And I am one fellow that will always take off his hat to that kind of people.”

Dale is a tall good-looking boy and certainly looks as though he is made for greatness. His conversation is lively and he has a good sense of humor. I am naturally interested in his reaction to Mary's change to the Catholic Faith and so is Mary.

We both talk about baseball and agree that the Yankee pitching is a little weak, and we take a few politicians for a ride, plus a few newspapermen. His business. I find out. is law. and his ambition in life is to be wealthy and honored. Finally I ask him: “What are your religious ideas?”

“Well, Father,” he says, “I've never thought about it much. I try to be reasonably good, but I really don't know why. I guess it's because it's the social tiling to do.”

“What do you think of Christ?” I ask.

“Well, Father. I guess He was a pretty wonderful man. At least everyone seems to think so. I guess some people say that He never existed. But I don't know why. To tell you the truth. Father, I have never given it a whole lot of thought.”

“Do you think He is God?” I ask him.

“Father, you've got me there. I never thought about it very much. I guess I think about business too much. I want to be a success and give Mary all the nice tilings she deserves. I suppose you would say that I was not too much for religion, but I'm not against it either. I'm neutral. I guess I never thought about much except making a good living. My religious training has been sadly neglected.”

“You know, Dale,” I say, “Christ said. ‘What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?’ It doesn't make a whole lot of difference how much you make in the world. You can have a nice home and a beautiful car and lots of money, but if you lose your soul you are a failure. That's the way Mary thinks now, you know.”

At this point I notice that Dale is looking out the window, and he says. “Oh, I'm sorry, Father, what were you saying?” and I say, “Guess we'll call it quits for tonight.”

As he is leaving, he tells me that he has a new idea on making money, but I don't quite understand it. I go up to my room thinking that things between him and Mary won't go so well, since they aren't compatible on this matter of religion.

I NOTICE, now that it is some months since the death of Janet, her brother Jimmy is going to Mass almost every day, except a couple of days when he reaches out and turns the alarm off. Besides this, he and Iris gang are making visits to the church. They say it helps their souls and also their batting eyes. Since this is very commendable, I decide to commend Jimmy.

I call him into the house one day and I say, "Jimmy, I am proud of you. You have changed so much, and I think it is wonderful. I am sure that the Lord is pleased with you."

He says, "Well, Father, I was plenty busted up when Janet died. I never cried in front of the boys, but I cried a lot at home. That's just between you and me. I thought I would never go outside again. You gave a sermon about taking your troubles to God. You said he was just like a Father and would understand, so I decided to try it. Well, it worked out swell."

I am very elated at this, especially the part about me telling people to go to church with their troubles. I begin to feel a little proud, but then I decide that it is probably some nun, praying for people, that made God give Jimmy this grace, and so I don't feel so proud after all.

I say to Jimmy, "Well, that's fine. Now the main thing is to keep it up. Lots of times people do something pretty good, but they don't keep it up. They get tired and quit after a while."

"Father," he says, "I've been doing a lot of thinking lately. I sort of figure I would like to be a priest, just like you are."

This floors me. I am amazed no end, and I am more amazed that he wants to be like me. All I can think to say is that I am very well pleased indeed and that I will pray like anything for him. I then find out that he must be going back to school now to make up some homework that he had not done, which I think isn't the best sign.

I tell him that he will have to learn how to work hard if he wants to be a priest, and he will have to start having his homework so as to get in practice for the prep-seminary; but I am really figuring out that he will be wonderful.

XXII

MY NEXT CONFERENCE with Dale Anderson is less successful than the first. We talk about the more practical things of marriage. I begin by saying that marriages are successful when people like the same things and when they think the same about things. Then I get practical and say:

"There is the matter of birth control. You know that it is wrong to practice it."

I notice that he is not looking out the window, as he did the last time.

He says, "Yes, Father, I know this. And frankly it has me worried. I know that Mary has been taught this. But what are we going to do? Suppose that I cannot support a big family. What can I do?"

I say, "You will be able to support all the children that God sends you. You remember that Christ told us about His Father in heaven. He told us if His Father takes such good care of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. He will take care of us. God loves us more than we imagine, and if we trust in Him all things will work out all right. Maybe it will cost some sacrifice and suffering — but things that are worth while always do."

I see very obviously that this does not convince Dale at all. and that he would rather have about ten thousand dollars in the bank than rely on the Heavenly Father.

I say to him, "You see, Dale, how different your way of looking at life is from Mary's." And he says, "I see what you mean. Father."

I further mention that it wouldn't be good for Mary to be going to Mass all alone on Sunday. I say it would not be good to be married under such circumstances. I say as he is leaving that he ought to think over the problem of marrying a Catholic, and he says that he will give it a lot of serious thought.

We part the best of friends, and I am sure that we will get along the best ever, discussing anything but religion. I figure that some day he may be a religious man, but certainly not yet.

When I see Maty the next time, she tells me that they have decided to call it quits for a while. It came about this way. Dale and Maty are out on a date. Mary is very enthused about her Catholic Faith and is telling Dale about it, as any girl would do who is in love with a boy. She says, "Dale, my Catholic Faith is the greatest experience of my whole life. I wouldn't give anything for it. I wish you were a Catholic. Isn't it wonderful to believe that Christ is personally present on earth today, that He isn't dead? Isn't it wonderful to believe with all your heart that a priest can say over bread, 'This is My body,' and Christ is

just as present as He was two thousand years ago? Isn't it wonderful to know that Christ is present in every church with His body and blood, waiting for us to come in to talk to Him and tell Him about ourselves? Isn't that about the most wonderful thing that anyone could believe?"

And all Dale says is, "Yes. Mary, I guess you are right, but maybe if you have another hamburger you will feel better."

Maw admits that it is hard saying goodbye, but both she and Dale agree it will be better all around, as they are certainly not hitting tilings off the way they should if they intend to get married. Mary tells me that they are going to try it out and see what happens.

About this time I suggest to Mary that she would probably be glad to be a member of the club that Janet and Jeannie started before Janet was killed. She says she certainly would, so I arrange it.

XXIII

IN ORDER to make the entry' of Mary into the club a very pleasant experience, I tip off the members of the club various and sundry' to be very' nice to her. I must be getting old. because it is very' obvious that tliis is unnecessary, as I should have known, because she is the type who could not be overlooked very easily, since the Lord does not so very often make people as beautiful as He made Janet Smith, the girl who was killed, and Maty Martin, who looks so much like her.

Jeannie is especially interested in Maty as she reminds her so much of Janet. Mary seems to be having the best of times and is smiling and enjoying herself immensely. I am very interested in her reactions, and she relates as follows.

"Father, this club is a very wonderful tiling. Everyone has been so wonderful to me. You know, Father, I never went with many boys. I always went steady. I guess the trouble with a lot of people is that they never get to know other people. They just pick out a few people and don't tty to meet other people, and they miss a lot, Of course, Father, I still like Dale a lot, and I don't know but what he will change and I will marry him. After all, Father, you don't know what it feels like to be in love."

Tliis, I admit, is true, although when I was in high school I could not do my work for thinking of a certain girl whose name escapes me right now.

I tell Mary that I want her to do her best to forget Dale for a while. I tell her to try to get interested in someone else if possible. She promises that she will. And I know that anyone who is doing such a good job for God will make out all right.

Father Tim Malloy says that priests could be very good matchmakers for people when they are in love, and very often they would do a lot better job than persons themselves, picking out their lovers. He says that a lot of people use absolutely no judgment in picking out the person that they are going to live with forever. I therefore make it a point to have a few words with Jack Thornton. We discuss the finances of the club, which is always good for a few remarks if there isn't much else to talk about, but mainly I ask him if he thinks that Mary Martin isn't a pretty nice girl. He tells me that she is and that he has had a few dates with her already. This is very good for two reasons. First, I realize that he is getting over Janet's death, which is good. Secondly, of all the eligibles for Mary, I would place Jack at tire top of my list.

XXIV

A RETREAT is a time when the Bishop tells all the priests of his diocese to go away to some religious house and think things over. He is of the opinion, no doubt, that a fellow can easily run dry of ideas and can get all absorbed in doing tilings and really forget pretty much about God. The retreat is a time to get all filled up again and enthused about the religion of Christ. A letter comes to you from His Excellency the Bishop, and it says to stop marrying people and burying them, and to stop giving instruction, and so forth, and to leave these tilings to other priests, and go away and make a retreat. At the retreat the priest in charge gives a number of talks and tells you all about how wonderful heaven is. and how you can be there forever if you are a good priest. He tells you that the tilings of the world don't amount to a row of beans because they won't last, and in more elegant language about how wonderful Christ is, and how displeased He would be if He knew His priests weren't working hard to make people better.

Sometimes they tell you different things, but mostly it goes like that. Of course, you knew it all before. In fact, it is what you tell the people every Sunday. All the same, if you try pretty hard to make a good retreat, you are all pepped up, and make a couple of resolutions which show that the Bishop knows what's what when he tells you to go away and make a retreat.

While I am away thinking things over, it comes to me that there are still a lot of men in St. Rose parish who are grand fellows but aren't doing much about making the world a better place to live in, at least in any organized way. They are praying and working very hard to make a living, and are raising pretty good-sized families, which, of course, is very good, but then they have a lot of spare time which might be used by some enterprising priest for the good of the Faith.

Of course there is nothing startling about this idea, as the Church has probably had it for nearly two thousand years, but I just sort of come to think about it while I am making my retreat.

I am imagining all the men in St. Rose's who do a good day's work and say their Rosary and do other things, but would be very glad to do more if they just had somebody to tell them what.

O'Malley is a pretty enthusiastic Catholic, so on my way home from the retreat I decide to talk to him about the above-mentioned. He says it sounds pretty good to him, and that it would probably get him out of weeding the garden, a chore which he dislikes very much.

He agrees with me that there are a lot of men in the parish who would like to do a little extra-curricular work for the good of religion. We therefore decide to call in a few of the parishioners and talk things over and get the pros and cons on things. It will be a man's group, like Janet's and Jeannie's for the girls.

O'Malley is the guiding light for the group, as he always has a lot to say, some of which is not noteworthy. I just go around to the meetings to make them somewhat official, but I let the laymen do most of the talking as this is their baby. I hear what is being talked about, and tramp into the ground as much as possible all heresies which I recognize.

The first meeting is called with just a few men present, so as not to confuse the issue too much. I tell them that there are a lot of things in the parish which could be better. I say that the priests cannot do it all themselves, and that they need help from the laity. This is a very safe and orthodox statement, I know, since it is what Pope Pius the Eleventh had been saying all the time he was Pope, and he was somebody, as everybody realized.

I say, "You people are successful in business and in running your homes. You are successful because you have imagination and push and ambition. There is no reason why you can't use this ability in making the world more Christian. Now I am not going to tell you what to do. I just want you to figure it out. Talk over conditions and see how they can be made more Christian."

O'Malley then takes over, because he can always think of something to say when the meeting goes dead. He is always able to think of one of his newspaper columns any time ideas are at a minimum. Most of the men at the meeting realize that they do not do much thinking, and that maybe it would be a good idea to put their ideas on paper sometimes, the way the newspaperman O'Malley does.

Working on the family is the project that seems to be most favorable to all, because no doubt all of them have families, and they are constantly reading in the papers about children clubbing their parents and such things, which do not appeal to the ordinary parent. Moreover, the kids seem to be doing a lot of purse-snatching and various other things, which makes it rather hard to do the ordinary things like walking down the street. They also realize that divorces are really on the upgrade, and the newspaperman O'Malley, who is pretty survey-conscious, says that somebody has predicted and verifies that by 1960 there will be one divorce for every marriage. Thus they all agree that they had better do something about the family.

XXV

THE NEWSPAPERMAN O'MALLEY does a good job of guiding the discussion, and sort of leads to a pet peeve of his, which is a comic store which he thinks is none too good for the morals of the younger generation, let alone those who are several years past the age of reason. In its magazines, men are killed by the hundreds, and all sorts of hideous plans of crime are portrayed, not to mention the sexiness on every page. It seems that writers who have nothing else to do just sit around and think up all kinds of sins to commit, and put them down on paper and drag down quite a bit of cash for doing the same.

It is indeed a sorry sight, but all the well-meaning citizens have never got very angry about it before, including me also, which I am sorry to say, realizing that Christ would probably be not too pleased with me for not doing something about this before this group started raising a little Cain. I am therefore pleased with the plan that the group have.

The newspaperman decides to do a little pre-investigation before things get under way, to see just what the attitude of the proprietor is. He goes into the drug store and says, "I am from St. Rose Parish. I am a newspaper-man. My children come into your drug store, so do a lot of my friends' children. Although I like your drugs and rate them with the best of drugs, and although I think that you are a very' decent sort of fellow, I wish that you wouldn't put these magazines on display."

To which the druggist retorts, "I don't tell you how to write and I don't expect to be told how to run this store."

At this, O'Malley becomes incensed and says, as though he personally is keeping the man from starving, "I shall therefore be forced to withdraw my patronage, and get my friends to do the same."

Actually, all he ever buys anyhow is a few aspirin once in a while, because O'Malley's family is very healthy.

O'Malley feels very good about telling off the druggist, and is very compensated spiritually. He feels that he has done something like Christ did when he drove the money changers out of the temple. At the next meeting of his group he tells one and all of his experience, and says that something ought to be done about this. They all agree and decide to see just the way the wind blows if a little boycott is started of a drug store which is offending them.

Jack Thornton gives an impassioned speech to his group of young people about the filthy literature that is seen in this particular drug store. He remarks that the man has been asked to remove it and has not done so, and that a group in the parish have decided that they will not patronize the drug store until he does. He says that the least a Catholic group of kids could do would be to back up this worthy movement. He is so sincere — and of pretty fair proportions physically — that one and all think that it would be taking their lives in their hands to patronize this particular merchant.

I give a little talk in the grade school to do my little part. I am very proud to be a part of this whole thing. The sisters also say that they think it would be a good idea if the boys and girls did not go to this drug store, and they mention that by the way, they can see very well from the school just who goes into the store. The children, seeing the great mass of authority wielded on this matter, do their parts very well.

Then all that is to be done is to wait.

XXVI

O'MALLEY, HOWEVER, is a guy that finds it very difficult to wait. He can't just sit around and wait for developments. He has to snoop around and see how things are going. It is for this reason that one night he decides to go into the drug store and see how things are going. He goes in and orders a pack of gum, as he thinks this won't help the druggist to make too much of a living. He incidentally strikes up a conversation with the druggist.

He says he is very' glad to see the druggist, but he sees very' readily that the vice versa is not true. He tells the druggist what has been done by himself and his friends, which the druggist knows, but O'Malley goes over it again.

The druggist then asks him why he doesn't mind his own business, and says that maybe if he did he might write for the New York Times some day, which the druggist wishes very much, as New York is plenty far away. This is very' well taken, and the newspaperman realizes that he isn't on top as yet.

"Listen," says O'Malley, "why don't you take a few of the magazines off the rack? It wouldn't have to be many. And then we could get along fine."

"No. I am not going to do it. No one is going to tell me how to run my drug store. Now if you would please not bother me. I would like to deal with some customers that I like."

Realizing that this is not the night for conversation. O'Malley leaves the store. The next thing I know. I am being called by Mrs. O'Malley, who says that O'Malley has met with a serious accident. I wonder just how bad it is. and I am very worried as I hurry over to his house. When I get there he is all bandaged up. He relates to me the following.

"It's not serious, Father. I was on my way home tonight and saying the Rosary, and I was on the third sorrowful mystery and wondering and imagining how painful it must have been for Christ to have His head crowned with thorns. All of a sudden I knew something of what He felt. There was an awful crash on my head. I saw the brightness of Heaven. That's all I remember."

We both agree that this is the way the druggist has of telling him not to be too apostolic, because O'Malley is not in anybody's hair at the time except the druggist's — which is most unusual. I am all for calling the police and telling them all about this, and telling them the way the finger of suspicion points, but the newspaperman says no, that he would like to think things over first. I don't understand this, but it is O'Malley's head, so I figure he can do about it as he wants to.

XXVII

THE PRIESTHOOD has its ups and downs. When Jimmy Smith goes away to be a priest it is up for me. Our Lord said that the harvest was great but the laborers few. I figure that besides being a good harvester yourself, about the next best thing is to go around looking for harvesters. Now I am not proud enough to think that it was I alone that got Jimmy to go away and be a priest, but I figure that I had something to do with it. And so the day that Jimmy goes away, I am pretty much up. I give him some choice advice. I tell him to concentrate on the Latin, and that if he does this, they might not care too much if he couldn't figure out problems like X going Y hours, and so forth, which comes in algebra, and which I never could get. I tell him to pray a lot and ask God for help, as I figure God can direct him a little better than I can. I tell him not to worry about stuff, because God will take very good care of him.

When Jimmy goes away. Mr. and Mrs. Smith are there, and they are very happy. After having lived so much of their life, they figure it is wonderful that their only surviving child is going in for God one hundred per cent. Mr. Smith says to me. "This life isn't too much. I'm awfully glad that Jimmy is working for the next one. He's got a big advantage on us who work in the world. We can get so tied up with making a living that we forget what we are here for. This is the best thing that ever happened to us." I think this is very wonderful, because I know how much Mr. Smith is going to miss Jimmy, as they have been such good pals.

Little Sheila Slattery' is there too. She lives two streets over from Jimmy, and kind of has a struggle, praying that Jimmy will make a good priest, because she likes the idea of Jimmy being around. Jimmy never pays much attention to her, except that when there isn't any of the gang around, he might talk to her for a while, but he did think she was a very nice girl — although he doesn't care about girls at all, he says. Little Sheila sheds a few tears, but it is o.k., because everybody else is crying, too. Some people talk as if Jimmy is going away to prison, because they don't seem to realize that boys can walk out of seminaries just like any other building.

I sort of forget about Jimmy, what with all the other stuff that is right at hand, except when I write letters to him and he writes to me. Most of the letters are about the same as all letters. We both say that we can't think of much to say, and therefore only cover about one side of a page. But one day I get a letter from Jimmy that doesn't sound very good. It says:

"Dear Father, I am doing pretty well in my studies. Latin is o.k., English is o.k., history is o.k., and algebra is pretty near o.k. Baseball is deluxe but there are a few other things which have been building up. I put a little harmless snake in one of the kids' beds the other night, and the rector does not think it is funny, which I agree after he talks it over with me. I say a few wise things in class, which I thought very funny, but I don't think they are funny now that he has talked them over with me. The last time he calls me in, he asks me if I think that all he has to do is to talk to me. I see Iris point, and I tell him so, but he gives me pretty much of a going-over. I hope that these tilings will not hurt my chances of being a priest, because I want to be one more than ever now. Say a prayer for me that I won't get into so much trouble. You will be glad to hear that I have made the baseball team and am batting four hundred, which is the highest. The only thing is that I am not on the baseball team any more, as the trouble I have gotten into has put me off the team, but I deserve it."

Among the visitors for our Forty Homs Devotion is the rector of the minor seminary. I am very nice to the rector this evening, and after a while I get him alone to have a few words about Jimmy. I would like to know very much what he thinks of Jimmy, which I imagine isn't very much.

He relates to me the following, "Jimmy Smith has been getting into a lot of trouble lately. Some of the priests are veiy concerned about him."

I feel that this is very bad, since if Jimmy can stir up so much comment in such a short time, his chances of going the route, as they say in baseball, are very limited. He will be lucky to make the third inning.

However, the rector goes on. "I like Jimmy. He is ven impetuous and full of life, but he has a lot of faith. He is more or less the kind of boy Father Malloy must have been. He tries his best to get his studies. He spends a lot of time in the chapel talking to God. And there isn't a bold or proud bone in his body. When I talk to him, he tells me he will do better, and I am sure he means it. I have been stem with him, but I think that he is a grand boy. I don't think that you will have to worry too much about Jimmy, Father. But, of course, I don't want you to tell him these things."

This gives me great relief. And that night I am not hesitant to tell the Lord that, if He doesn't mind me saying so, I see eye to eye on Jimmy with Him, and that I am sure he will make a good harvester in the Lord's vineyard.

XXVIII

A FEW NIGHTS after O'Malley is hit on the head, Jack Thornton comes to me looking very upset, and wants to talk to me very badly. I mention to him that I think he looks very bad and concerned about something, and I ask him what is on his mind.

He tells me that he is in love, which makes me understand why he looks so bad. And, of course, it is Mary Martin, which I am very glad to hear.

However, he says, "This is the catch, Father. I don't think that she loves me. I told her last night that I was in love with her, and she said that although she thinks I am very wonderful, she is not so sure that she wants to marry me."

"Jack," I say, "I suppose you know that I think a lot of Mary. I think that anyone who marries her will be veiy lucky indeed. She loves God very much. Like most converts, she loves our religion very much, and sacrifices for it. Here is my advice to you. Take her to church with you. Lent is just beginning. Go to Communion and Mass together — every day if possible. I believe that if it is the will of God, this will make it wonderful for both of you."

The next thing I know, both Jack and Mary are going to Mass every day. I tell the Lord that I don't want to force His hand, but that if He wants to know what I think of the two of them getting married, I think that it would be very wonderful for them and for the Church.

One day, accidentally on purpose, I meet Mary outside of church. I tell her I am very proud of her for going to Mass every day, and that perhaps God will give me a good mark on the right side of the ledger for being the priest who instructed her in the Faith. I mention that I have seen that she and Jack are seeing quite a lot of each other, and I wonder what she thinks of him.

She says, "I like Jack very much, Father. You know that he is the one who suggested that we go to Mass every day. He stops for me before we both go to work. I was never happier in my whole life. It's hard getting up in the morning, but receiving Christ in Holy Communion really makes the day wonderful. It used to be that things looked the worst in the morning, but now I look forward to the morning and receiving Christ in Holy Communion.

"Father," she continues, "we have our breakfast together every morning before we go to work. It isn't much — just a cup of coffee and a roll at some restaurant — but I never had so much fun talking in my whole life. We talk about how many children parents should have. We talk about how a lot of people don't want them, and how we want just as many as God will send us. We talk about how people should raise their children, and how they ought to pray with them. We have a wonderful time."

I ask her about Dale Anderson, and she says that she thinks of him a lot but that she would never many' him. There is too great a difference in their religious views. They wouldn't be happy. Her religion is too much a part of her now. I am indeed veiy pleased with the way that things are working out, and I don't think that Jack need be too concerned.

Maivy tells me that Jack has a pretty good job. She says that the boss likes him and that he will probably get a raise any day now. She says that in her opinion Jack is about the most wonderful boy in the

world. He is so wise, so gentle and so kind, and she just loves to hear him talk. He has so much to say. She says that I am very interesting too, but this is sort of an afterthought.

XXIX

ONE NIGHT the druggist calls me up and says in a very pleasant voice that he would like to see me some time. He says that he would think it very nice if O'Malley and myself would stop in. Being suspicious by nature. I am a bit afraid, but O'Malley says that he knows nothing will be wrong. I hope that if martyrdom is ever to be my lot, God will give me the grace to go through with it, but I don't like the idea of walking right into it. However, if O'Malley wants to go down to the druggist's and get slugged again, I decide to go with him. Anyway, my funeral would be quite the tiring as I would have died for the Faith.

When we go into the store, I just wander around looking at merchandise and noticing that there aren't any bad magazines at all. Since it was O'Malley's idea to go more than mine, I let him go up and talk to the druggist. I see that the druggist is all smiles, but I remember that so was Hitler when he walked into Austria. Finally, I am invited over, as the druggist wants to talk to me too. He tells O'Malley and myself to look at the magazine rack, which we do, and we see that there is some very wonderful literature there, and that no one could quarrel with it now. We look very pleased, and the druggist relates the following:

"You did to me just what I deserved. My mother died about a month ago. I've done a lot of thinking since then. She was a wonderful woman. The minister that gave the little talk told how she never did anything to hurt anyone in her whole life. He said that she was a very unusual woman in a world of wickedness. He told how wicked people were today, and how they didn't keep the Commandments of God. He told how men weren't keeping the solemn promises of their marriages, how loose the world had gotten and how soft. He said that my mother was a credit to her family and to her God. He told us that we could well imitate her. He said that if the world didn't sin so much, there wouldn't be so much trouble in it. He said that if people kept the law of Christ and loved one another and respected the rights of one another, that it would be a pretty decent place to live in.

"I began to think of all the harm I had done. Oh, I was pretty decent myself. But the stuff that I let people buy from me! I thought what a son I had been to such a good mother. That is the reason that I have cleaned up my store, and I am very glad that you helped bring me to my senses. I am very sorry about what happened to you. Mr. O'Malley, and you and your family can come in here any time for anything, and there won't be any charge at all for whatever you get."

He then invites us to sit down and have something on the house. I would like very much to have a soda, but he will hear nothing of this, as sodas are not expensive enough, and so I have a banana split, even with a cherry on top.

OUT OF THE Catholic Action group, Jack Thornton and O'Malley are the most active. They have become very friendly. I suppose they see more of one another than even I do. After the meetings of the Catholic Action cell, they keep on carrying on the conversation, usually at some reputable tavern, where they have a couple of beers. I guess they cover about all of the Catholic theology at one time or another. In fact many times they are on the verge of getting tossed out of a tavern for talking so loudly. But they have begun to think very seriously about some of the pressing problems of Christianity.

Mostly they come close to getting tossed out of places on their ears when they are talking about juvenile delinquency. O'Malley gets so loud that other people can't hear what they are saying. He has done a lot of thinking on this, and when he can't think of anything else to write a column about, he dashes one off on juvenile delinquency. One day when talking to Jack he mentions that the trouble with families today is that too many people are hanging around taverns and leaving their families to shift for themselves. And then he remembers that he is one of those guys who are in a tavern, and he says that he never thought about it, and so he makes a resolution to just go in once a week, unless there is something very pressing to be talked out. and then because it is special he will do it twice a week.

One of the tilings that he and Jack Thornton decide to do is to visit a planned parenthood meeting and see just what they have to say about things. They go in and listen to many talks about the curse of big families, and how kids in these families never get anything out of life, and how their parents have given them a dirty' deal. They seem to think that people should be sure that their kids get a college education and a car and a few diousand bucks to start life, and if their parents don't give them this, they are downright scum.

Jack and O'Malley are very disgusted with the reasoning of these people and know that the selection of cases is of men and women who have absolutely no responsibility, and that they don't say anything about the frugal people like Jack's and O'Malley's folks who raised very fine and big families on only a few bucks. O'Malley knows how to get the floor, as he lias gotten it in every discussion in the past twenty years, and always has something to say.

O'Malley asks in a very polite voice, which he uses on occasion, if the people believe in the Bible. Tliis they do, because the meeting is held in a Christian church, which is having a little trouble making ends meet and therefore hires the hall out to the planned parenthooders. Most of the people here profess that they are veiy good Christians, as they should be in a Christian church, and are only looking out for helping poor and unfortunate people.

O'Malley then shouts out, "In the Book of Genesis there is the story of a man named Onan who practiced the sin of birth control. It is stated in this book, Chapter 38, Verse 10, that 'God slew Onan because he did a detestable thing.'"

Well, everybody is in quite a panic, because the planned parenthooders don't quote this very often. They realize that they never should have let O'Malley get the floor, and they are quite put out that God would have the nerve to say such a thing and that He puts them in quite an embarrassing position.

Of course, O'Malley never gets the floor again, although he is always waving his hand in the air. And so he is finished for the evening. But he says later, "I didn't care much that I didn't get the floor. These people will never forget what I said, because it was what God said. They will forget a lot of the other things that were said, but they won't forget what I said." And that is pretty true, because they are most of them Christians and have respect for the Bible, and wonder how come God said this.

Jack Thornton is on the other side of the room from O'Malley because he had thought before he came in that probably sooner or later O'Malley would pop off, and anyone who was associated with him would be odious. Mary has insisted on going with him, because they go most everywhere together. He finally succeeds in getting the floor.

He says that he has come from a big family and that his dad didn't have much of a job at all. He says that if his family had heard what was being talked about, they wouldn't have had him, probably, which he thinks would be a very bad idea, especially for him, as he likes living pretty much. He says he knows that a lot of the people there are interested in other people and want them to have a good life, but that he thinks they are being misled. He says that God has been pretty good to men. He gives them what they have to eat. He has arranged all the planets. He has made the world a rather nice place to live in.

Jack Thornton says that he thinks this meeting isn't just the thing that God would like, since it is up to Him to say who is going to live and who isn't. He says that he thinks a meeting like this is to stand up to God and tell Him that He doesn't know how to run the world, and that this is very bad Christianity. He adds that the way to help the poor is not to stop them from having the joy of children, but to get some justice in the world, so that they won't be so poor but will have a fair share of the wealth.

Well, no one is very impressed with his talk at all, except Maivy, who thinks it is most beautiful, and O'Malley, who thinks that maybe a talk like tliis is better than his, since Jack Thornton got to talk a lot longer than he did. The three of them walk out at the end of the meeting, but no one seems very enthused over them. No one asks them if they won't please come back at some further date. They figure that they are just some Catholics who have listened to their priests too long.

XXXI

FINALLY. IT HAPPENS just the way a lot of people thought it would. All the people of Europe are killing one another because they can't get along. We Americans hope that we won't get into it, but finally, the day before the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1941, the Japs attack and we declare war.

It doesn't mean a whole lot to me, not knowing what war is. I go into Father Tim Malloy's room and tell him about it. Just as I would tell about the city deciding to build a big building. He is terribly affected. It seems that he grows at least five years older. He says, "This is going to be terrible. Won't the world ever learn?"

Soon, boys are going away very fast. To the young, this is just a big adventure. Officers appear on the streets, and people say that they are captains or generals when they are only lieutenants. The uniforms appeal to a lot of people. All the atmosphere is to make you think that war isn't bad at all, when it is.

Father Hany Cauley, the very handsome boy that O'Malley's second cousin went ga-ga over, is still a pal of mine, although he is much more famous than I. He has gained quite a reputation around the diocese for being a good preacher and has done a wonderful job with the kids of his parish. One day he invites me out to lunch which is indeed unusual, but since he will probably pay the bill I am very glad to go out with him.

He tells me that he is considering very much asking the Bishop if he can go away and be a chaplain. He says to me. "How about going down to the Bishop's with me?"

I am all for this, since I have done a great deal of thinking about war lately. In my bed at night, I am thinking how nice first lieutenant's bars would look on me. I do not fear that I will be any lower than this, because this is how they all start out. I think how proud my mother and father and brothers and sisters will be of me, and even my uncles and aunts. I am very glad that Harry has brought this matter up. I also think that it will be nice to give my all for the forces of America and for God, because we are fighting a terrible and pagan enemy. I think of how wonderful it will be to die for this, provided it is not too painful.

I ask Father Tim Malloy what he thinks of the whole thing, and he says, "Go to it, my boy, and God bless you. If I were younger, I would go myself."

Harry and I go in to see the Bishop. It is kind of a frightening experience, as I don't see the Bishop too often because he is a big and important man. I also know that he has a lot of important people to see, and I never go in to see him unless it is something a little more than ordinary. He is very wonderful to us and says that he is glad to see us. Harry does the talking. He says that we have come in to see about being chaplains. The Bishop says that many of the boys have been in to see him, and he has a list much longer than he can use.

He says, "Father Cauley, I have been thinking about asking you to go for a long time. I was hoping that you would volunteer." Then he says to me, "Father, I am going to put your name on the list, and maybe I will call you later on." And I figure this is curtains, as I will no doubt be at the bottom of the list.

Well, I feel rather bad that he doesn't select me right out, as he does Harry, but I can see his point. Harry is a great talker. He will be able to tell the fellows just what the Lord thinks of things, and he will be able to keep them on the right track much better than I. He is a little older than I am, and he looks more like a general than I do. In an officer's uniform he will look right at home, but I would look like somebody that sneaked in through the back fence. And maybe people will be arresting me all the time for impersonating an officer. The Bishop realizes, I guess, that I want to go to war. But he doesn't apologize or say he is sorry, because he knows that I know that he is doing what he thinks is right. When we leave the Bishop's office, Harry says that he is sorry that I didn't make the grade, but I say that it isn't too bad, since I will serve God better at home because I wanted to go so badly, and I will be doing more for God by staying at home.

The only time that I give my blood for the service of my country is when the Red Cross takes blood from the people for the soldiers. I get in just as soon as they start, because I feel very patriotic. They take my blood, and as I am going over to get a doughnut and a cup of coffee, which the United States gives you for your trouble, I pass out like a light, and when I come to they tell me that they think I have done enough for my country, and they figure that there is enough blood in the country without mine.

I go down to the train to see Harry' Cauley off, and I feel very bum in my black clothes, since he looks so nice in his officer's uniform. But Harry is quite the fellow. I get a letter from a soldier one day. He is in the same company as Harry. and he says that the fellows are really in Harry's corner. He says that Harry is the most popular man in the whole outfit, and that he does just what everybody else does and never gets any favors because he is their man of God. I can see very readily that the Bishop was right in letting me stay and take care of the sheep at home.

O'Malley doesn't have to go on several accounts, mostly physical. He has varicose veins, flat feet, and several other things that make you wonder how he is still living and getting around, although O'Malley says that he feels just fine. This is indeed a very good break for Mrs. O'Malley and all the little O'Malleys,

because O'Malley, if he was getting shot at, would probably get mad and stand up and make a speech on the evils of war, and get all shot up, and leave a widow and a bunch of fatherless children.

Jack Thornton is gone before we hardly get accustomed to this business of war. He is shipped away to officer's candidate school and will certainly be an officer in no time at all. Mary Martin is all busted up at the way the war wrecks their lives. They decide not to get married for the present. This is going to put them back several years — years that in a way must just be thrown away, years of waiting. But Mary is brave, as everyone has to be. We just have to see it through, and probably it is what we have coming to us for outraging God so much.

XXXII

THIS TIME Bill Prendergast and Jeannie McMullen are married, and even parents. Mary Martin and Jack Thornton had stood up for them before Jack went to war. They are just as happy as happy can be. Bill is writing a book about a fellow and girl falling in love, with a lot of other details that have them falling in love and out of it several times but finally making the grade. Bill is doing this to make a little cash, because they have a new little son that they have named John. He is named after St. John the Baptist, because Bill doesn't want him to turn out the way his father did when he was young, and they figure that St. John the Baptist, every inch a man, will see to this. He is also named, secondarily, after his sponsor, Jack Thornton, and Jack doesn't mind at all running second to St. John the Baptist. Very soon after the baby is born, and when they decide at the hospital that the child is strong enough to have the parents take over, I am asked to baptize it. They don't want to wait very long to have it baptized, since something might happen to it, and they want to make 'sure that if so it will go to Heaven. They figure that something could very easily happen to it, as O'Malley calls up one night and says he is coming over in a couple of weeks to see the baby. They decide, therefore, that they will get it baptized as soon as possible, since O'Malley is as likely as not to drop it on its head. (Joke.)

Little John Prendergast is just a little mite of a man when he comes to church the first time to be baptized. He is about as red as red can be. When I put on the stole for the baptism, I feel very good. I always feel very good when I put on the stole. The stole is the main vestment for the priest. It is a sign that he is going to do something very great. The priest always wears it when he is offering Mass, bringing Christ into the world. He wears it when he forgives sins. He wears it when people are anointed and prepared to die and face Christ. I always feel that when a priest has on the stole, he is kind of lifted in the air above everybody else. He is the bridge between God and man. When you have the stole on you are doing just what Christ would be doing if He were still on earth. It is a sign.

It sure is great to baptize. When the little babies come into the baptistry, I always think of the words of Christ: "Unless a man is born again of water and the Holy Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." By a simple little ceremony, pouring water over the baby's head and saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost," you give title to eternal life with God. It seems pretty hard to beat this for real living — so little effort and such wonderful results. I put salt in little John's mouth and say, "Be the salt of the earth," just as Christ said. He seems to like it. Then I charge him to go forth and be savior for a wicked world. I put a white cloth on his head, saying that now little John is perfect, and that he should never soil this white robe by offending God. These are things that have been done since the time of Christ, who instructed His first priests, the Apostles, what to do.

But not long afterward Bill has to go to war too, leaving his wife and baby. It is terribly hard for Jeannie to say goodbye, but it is being done by a lot of young mothers.

Almost before we know it, our boys are sending letters from every corner of the world. The hand of death strikes here and there, and we just live and pray for those we love. Christianity thinks a lot of a human life, as is shown when it makes such a ceremony over the little baby that God sent to Bill and Jeannie. Christians know that a human soul is worth more than all the world. But people that aren't real Christians don't think this way. Men are just numbers to them, and souls by the thousands are hurled into eternity every day. It is by far the worst war that has ever happened, and a lot of people figure that God is very put out with men, and that this is a warning that they only have one more chance.

Father Harry Cauley writes to me very often, I suppose because he feels bad that the Bishop did not send me to war as I wanted. He is in the thick of it. He tells me that there is quite a bit of wickedness in the army, and that life isn't normal at all. Fellows are all by themselves, all mixed up, good and bad, away

from their good mothers and dads, away from their girls that they used to go to church with. He says that sometimes it gets pretty awful, and that fellows just seem to think of today. He says that he gets up and gives sermons on real he-man stuff. He tells them that Christ said on the last day He will separate the sheep from the goats, and to the goats he will say, "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire." He tells them that God is good, but He won't stand for them breaking His law. He says. "You might be killed any time. Do you 'want to bum in Hell forever, after going through all that you have gone through?" He quotes St. Paul to them and says, "Neither adulterers nor fornicators nor lovers of soft living will enter into the kingdom of Heaven." He really lays it on pretty hard, but he says they are real he-men and that they need tliis kind of stuff. I am more glad than ever that the Bishop has sent Harry instead of me, because I can just see Harry talking like tliis and not hearing a pin drop in the church. Hany always knew a good bargain when he saw it. and it would kind of get him angry, seeing really good fellows throwing away a whole eternity with Christ for a couple of minutes of pleasure.

Harry tells me he hears thousands and thousands of confessions, and that he has forgiven a lot in the Name of Christ. Tliis kind of makes me feel a little tough, because hearing confessions in the service must be about the most satisfying thing that a priest can do, and I would like to be doing the same. Harry tells me how they are going into battle in a few minutes. He tells me how the fellows come to him and feel like heels for all they have done and for making such asses of themselves, and how he says the words of forgiveness — "I absolve you from your sins in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost" — and how. when they are all finished with the battle, a lot of the fellows that went to confession aren't on tliis earth any more. He says it feels swell to see them looking down on you from Heaven and telling everyone around that you are the great guy that fixed them up at the last minute.

Harty tells me of one fellow that got badly wounded. He was out on the battlefield, where the bombs were going off all around him. He thought his number was up but it wasn't, because the good guys in Iris outfit got him to the doctor and the doc fixed him up just fine. But the fellow said that he wasn't a bit scared on the field, that he sort of felt as though the angels were coming down on the field and were gathering up the good fellows for Heaven. And he said that he had gone to confession and received Christ in Holy Communion, and wasn't at all scared and didn't care if he did die. This, Harry says, makes him feel like a million bucks, and it would any priest, because a fellow would really feel that he was doing something.

One day Jeannie phones me. and she is all broken up. She has got a letter from the war department that Bill is missing in action. Well. I walk around my room about sixteen times, thinking of what I am going to say to Jeannie. What can be said? There isn't a thing in the world that can be said that she doesn't know already. About all I can think to say is, "Jeannie, you've got to trust God. He's a Father to you. He won't give you more than you can take. Maybe Bill will turn up. All we can do is hope and pray."

Well, word doesn't come for about eight months. Jeannie looks awfully bad. I guess every day she just waits and waits for the mailman, and every day there is nothing for her. It is certainly terrible. You wonder how people can hold up under this strain. Jeannie is praying to God every day and telling Him that she doesn't think that she can raise little John in the proper way without Bill, but that if He doesn't want to send Bill back it is o.k., as God knows best. Jeannie is a great little girl, and God must have thought so too, because at the end of eight months there is notice that Bill is a prisoner of the Germans.

Bill finally gets the news through of what happened to him. The Germans had surrounded them and he was in a half track behind another half track. They are trying to get through to their lines, and the first half track Tritis a mine and the boys are killed. It slides back into their half track, disabling it, and they, remembering the famous quotation that "discretion is the better part of valour" surrender to the great number of Germans. Bill says that when they were taken in they were pretty scared, because the Germans had been drinking a lot, and they were wondering if they might not be trigger happy. But they were a very decent gang of fellows. They were playing records of the Andrew sisters and having a grand time. They asked all the fellows if they knew the Andrew sisters and one of the fellows, who should have been in the diplomatic corps, said that he did, although he had just got their autographs once. He said this to keep them in the right frame of mind. And he told them all about the Andrew sisters, including some stuff that the Andrew sisters probably didn't even know about themselves. Most of the Germans were clean-cut looking fellows, and not at all fierce like they had imagined them. Some of them were Catholics and had medals around their necks and assisted at Mass with the American prisoners many times. There was even an ex-seminarian among the Germans, who was just tossed in the army but who hoped still to be a priest some day.

Bill Prendergast strikes up a particular friendship with a German lieutenant. Most of the German officers can speak English pretty well, but this fellow has English down about as well as you could have it. Bill knows this because the fellow says, "What in hell are we fighting for?" This is the kind of English that you don't learn in books. He goes on to say, "I like you and you like me. You fellows don't want to kill us and we don't want to kill you. All I want is to go home to my wife and kids and have a job and mind my own business." Bill can't see anything wrong with this. They both decide that quite a bit of investigating could be done to find out who really makes these wars. It isn't the common people, because they are satisfied with saying their prayers and having a job and kids and a home. But every now and then nations get mad at one another and kill a lot of people that don't mean any harm to anybody. Bill and the German sort of figure out that it is the big people of the world who are to blame. But just then they happen to think about their own sins, and they kind of shut up and sit there thinking that just about everybody is at least partly to blame.

Bill finally gets home to his wife Jeannie and his little son, John — and to Father Malloy and me, but we don't mean as much to him as Jeannie and little John. Little John doesn't know what it is to have a father, but he gets used to it and is very pleased.

No one that I know very well does anything remarkable in the army. They are just good soldiers, risking their lives very often but not getting much credit for it, because it is the ordinary thing to do. A lot of fellows have to go before generals in the war because they do something they shouldn't and are being court-martialled. Jack Thornton goes before a lot of generals too. not to be court-martialled though, but because the generals think that Jack could tell them a few things, which is very unusual indeed. It seems that Jack has a very terrific record as a captain for keeping Iris boys in line. There is hardly a boy that ever went A.W.O.L. on Jack, and they aren't getting diseases, like some soldiers, and are behaving themselves in a very remarkable way. The generals therefore call Jack before them and tell him to have a paper ready to read to them.

Jack goes before the whole group of big shots and several papers are read. Jack gets up and says that the subject that he has been ordered to speak on is discipline in the army. He says that he uses Christian principles with his men and gets very far. He says. "Most of the time in the service the reason that a fellow doesn't do wrong is because he is afraid of being punished. This is very good, but added to this I believe that a great deal can be done by appealing to the moral principle that a man has in him." Jack then gives examples. He says that he has great success with Iris boys when they are on leave in a town because he gives them a talk on decency and gentleness and kindness. He says. "Fellows, we are going into this town. Now you can all be gentlemen. Most of you have girl friends or wives at home. They think that you are decent and kind and good. Now it is the sign of a coward to take advantage of some poor girl in this village just because we are the victors. And it's not decent to nun the home of a man who has saved his money all his life simply because we are on top at the moment. That is being just like the pagans that we are fighting. Now I expect you fellows to have fun. but have it decently."

Jack goes on to say that he thinks that one of the biggest mistakes that the army has made, and one that they will have to pay for, is the attitude that it isn't wrong to break your marriage vows, or faith with your girl back home, or faith with your God if you don't spread disease. He says that it would be much better if talks were given telling what a cowardly tiling it is. and how remorse will be in a decent fellow's life for a whole lifetime for doing this sort of thing, and especially about what God thinks of it.

If they are Catholics he gives them a talk the way Harry Cauley would, about throwing away eternity for a little pleasure. He tells all the Christians about Christ and how wonderful He was, and how strong and patient and loving, and how brutal they are.

He winds up by saying that the worst mistake the army has made "is leaving religion up to the chaplains alone." He says that if the leaders of the army were more religious-minded, everyone would have a very good record and the army in general would have a better record.

Well, a lot of the fellows that hear Jack say he gave a very good talk, but some of them just say, "He must have been educated by the Jesuits," and let it go at that.

Jack goes through a lot. But God must be saving him for Mary Martin, because he isn't even scratched in the war.

FATHER HARRY CAULEY finally gets it, just as a lot of fellows thought he would. One of the boys is wounded pretty badly, and Father Cauley crawls out of his foxhole to give him the Last Sacraments. He anoints him and hears his confession, and Jim Bares knows that everything is o.k. with God and himself. Father Cauley is dragging him back into another foxhole with the help of another fellow, and just as they are getting him there Father Cauley is hit.

He knows he is going to die and tells the fellows that he isn't afraid at all, and that it would be very nice indeed if they prayed for him, and they all promise that they will, Protestant and Jew and all of them, because they think that Father Cauley is about the bravest man that they have ever known.

When tilings aren't so very hot any more, and the shooting quiets down, there is a service for Father Cauley, and a very fine officer gives a little talk to the men and says, "Greater love than this no man hath than that he lay down his life for his friends." All the fellows say that they feel about as tough as they felt during the whole war, at this funeral service. And Jim Bares is going away as soon as he can to be a priest, because Father Cauley died saving him. He had thought about it before, but this made his mind up. This is very unusual, as Jim Bares is already a lawyer.

Jim, who has been through a lot of the war, says that it got him back to reality. He has seen so many fine missionaries in far-off lands giving their lives to God, and they seem to be really living, even if it is tough. He has decided to be a missionary.

XXXIV

THE WAR is over, about as quickly as it starts. Everything gets back to normal, and the kids stop wearing war emblems and hats just about as fast as they started to wear them when everything started. There are a lot of people who will never forget the war because of the way it messed things up. The kids are wilder by a little, maybe, because of the excitement of war, and a lot of soldiers doing things in peace time that they never would have done if they could have stayed home near their family and their church. But all in all, on the surface, things look just about normal.

One night I decide to treat myself to a show, because I am a little fed up with things, and also because I want to see "Going My Way," which is coming back to town the third time and is highly recommended.

As I am leaving the show, I make sure to make my Roman collar visible, so everybody will know that I am a priest, because Bing Crosby and the man that wrote and produced the show did such a good job of portraying a real priest. Lo and behold, I run into Dale Anderson, who was Mary Martin's boy friend.

He says to me, "Gosh, am I glad to see you, Father! How about having a piece of pie and a cup of coffee with me? I never gave you anything for those talks that you gave me."

This sounds good to me, and the next thing I know we are talking about Mary Martin. I am afraid that when he hears about Mary getting married he will not be too friendly to me, and that I will be paying the whole bill.

"How is Mary?" he says.

"She's going to get married, you know," I say, thinking that there is no use just beating around tire bush.

"Gee, that's swell, Father. Is she going to marry a nice fellow?" he says, not seeming a bit put out.

Well, when I see that he is not the least bit demoralized. I figure that I can give Jack Thornton quite a build-up. I say, "She is manying Jack Thornton, and in my opinion he is a very wonderful boy. I am sure they will be happy."

"Gee, that's fine, Father. She was a wonderful girl. I still think of her a lot. But you were right, Father. When she became a Catholic we were miles apart. I remember how it used to get me when I was dating her and she had to quit eating at twelve so she could go to Communion the next day. I just couldn't see that. We had an awful lot of arguments. I just couldn't see a lot of things. I'm awfully glad that she is marrying a swell fellow. I wouldn't want anything to happen to Mary.

"You know, Father, ever since you talked to me, I have been doing a lot of thinking. I've read the whole Bible through in the last year and I got a big kick out of it. I think I see things differently than I used to. I see there are a lot more important tilings than making money. Being of service to people, being a doctor who does a lot for poor people or a lawyer fighting for the rights of the oppressed, or being a missionary. I'm even going to church a lot now. Believe it or not, Father, I pray every day. I think that

Christ was the most wonderful person that ever lived. I like your Pope too. He seems so sensible in all the things that he says about the world today. Maybe I'll be a Catholic some day. Who knows?"

The coffee and pie sure taste swell after this. I thank God for Dale and pray that He will continue to lead him on. As we part I ask him to drop me a line every now and then. And I am glad to say that to this day we correspond and write about a lot more serious things than the weather.

XXXV

FIVE YEARS after I am ordained, our class has a big celebration. We all throw a few bucks in a kitty and blow ourselves to a big meal in a private room where we can all take off our coats and discuss freely what we think the Bishops of the Church ought to do to make things go a little better. Afterwards some of the fellows who like to play golf go out on the links. At the end of the day we all agree that it was a wonderful day. When I am driving home though, I am pretty blue. I don't get blue very easily, but I am thinking back over the five years that I have been a priest, and in my mind I feel that I have been pretty much of a failure. A lot of the fellows were telling about their experiences in bringing back hardened sinners to the Church, and they were doing a mighty good job indeed, but it didn't seem I was doing much at all.

To make matters worse, just about this time a cop drives up to me and says that I am doing about sixty and it will cost me in the neighborhood of fourteen. I tell him that there are about a million babies in China that need baptism and that the missionaries need a few bucks to get around to the babies and that I am saving my money for these missionaries. But he doesn't seem to care about the babies in China, because he says, babies or no babies, I will have to ride back with him to the Justice of the Peace and talk things over with him. We do this, and the Justice of the Peace says that he will take up this little matter of the babies in China with the city council, but as I leave I think that fourteen dollars worth of babies in China are caught short. This makes me feel even more morose than ever. I like babies and wish them all to be baptized in Christ.

On the way home, I stop at O'Malley's house and tell him about the old gang getting together and the good time we had. While I drink his coffee I think that maybe I will get pepped up a little and not feel so blue.

All the O'Malley kids seem very pleased to see me. They are always this way, but this doesn't make me feel too good, because I think they are sort of wasting their time admiring a failure, which is not what young children should be doing. I hold the baby on my lap and think what a wonderful thing it must be to co-operate with God in creating a human being that will never die, and that maybe this is the life that I should have chosen.

Finally, as always happens when I go to O'Malley's house, he and I adjourn to the kitchen and discuss things and draw big and magnificent plans for the remaking of tire world. I do not have much to say though, and just sort of push my spoon around in the coffee and do a lot of thinking to myself.

O'Malley says, "What's the matter, Father?"

Now I don't usually tell my troubles to a layman, but I am all off the beam this day. And I am kind of glad that I am, because O'Malley gives me the lay point of view on the clergy and it makes me feel pretty good.

I say to him, "Well, it's like this. Today I am ordained five years. I have just driven twenty miles, and I have been thinking of the past five years. I haven't done much at all. It's sort of like repairing a dam. what I have been doing. I've made some converts, about twelve a year. I've fixed up a few marriages. But for every convert I've made, I imagine that five or ten Catholics have left the Church. For every wrong marriage I've straightened out, about three more couples go out and get married the way the Church says you shouldn't. It looks to me as though we are fighting a losing battle. Maybe if I worked a little harder, it wouldn't be so bad. I haven't wasted too much time, but there is so much to do that I haven't done. Sometimes it seems too big a job for just an ordinary plug like me."

O'Malley says, "Look at Christ. He was the Son of God, and when He died I suppose that there weren't a hundred people that followed Him. At the foot of the cross were three women and the youngest Apostle. Of the twelve that He specially chose, one was a traitor and the rest ran out on Him in the pinch. The way I figure it is that we should do the best we can and forget about the results. No one but God knows how well we are doing."

Well, I feel kind of cheap for squawking at not doing better than Christ and for thinking I was a failure for not doing more than He did. When you look at it this way it makes you feel like kind of a heel. When O'Malley says this I don't feel near as bad as I did before, and I stop pushing the spoon around in the coffee. I drink it instead.

O'Malley never could stop being eloquent with just a few sentences. He is always a man of a few thousand words, and so he continues. "I wasn't chosen to be a priest. I couldn't live the life, but I will never cease to admire one. If you just live your life without falling into sin tire world will be a better place to live in because of your vow of chastity. A lot of people think that it is impossible to live this way. God can't help but be pleased with you even if this was all that you accomplished.

"Another thing. We people in the world are working in the world all day. You are telling our children about God, in your instructions. You have to say your breviary prayers every day. That takes about an hour. You say Mass. A lot of the time at home you are thinking how you can make a speech that will make people love God a little more. You go out to different people's houses and tell them that they hadn't ought to be living the way that they are and that they'd better get busy and do a little better living. They say that you love some one if you do things for them. My goodness, you are doing for God most of the day."

I am by now getting a little ashamed, although I do not tell this to O'Malley. I had not thought of all these things which ought to make a fellow very' glad indeed that he is a priest. I was being just like anybody in the world. I wanted results. I wanted people to say. "Isn't Father a grand priest? The wonderful sermons that Father preaches. Look how the people flock to church. Why, Father must be a saint." It was stuff like ths that I wanted because this would make being a priest very easy.

On my way home I resolve that I will have to get around and see innumerable black sheep in the parish, people that need a priest, although they would say that tilings were very well with them indeed. I resolve to pray very hard, because it is only the grace of God that really turns a person's mind and makes them change their lives. I feel pretty good indeed going home that night.

XXXVI

WHEN MARY MARTIN walks up the aisle to the sound of the organ to marry Jack Thornton, it is Father Tim Malloy who is at the altar, the representative of Christ to bless them. He is stooped and old working in the vineyard of Christ. Forty -odd years of working for the Master are beginning to tell on him. His love for his Master has been very' great. How many thousands of prayers have gone to God for his people, for Jack and for Mary' and the others, only God knows. At night, just before bedtime. Father Tim used to go into the church, and with only the red sanctuary light burning, he would talk to the Lord for about a half horn and tell the Lord how tilings were going. And I am sure that Christ heard him. How many thousands of sins his raised hands had forgiven. Pretty soon, perhaps, he will see the Master, whom he loves so well. The Master will straighten him up and cure his arthritis and give him back his strength. Then he will be young forever.

But now he has to take out his handkerchief to mop his forehead, but mostly to wipe the tears from his eyes. He doesn't want the people to notice this, but he always sheds a few tears when two of his fine boys and girls are getting married, because he is so happy and knows what a fine job they will do for the Church. Father Tim always cries when the kids in the kindergarten put on a play for him and sing "Happy Feast Day to You." I don't know why — maybe because they are like little dolls, and so young and full of life and beautiful. He cries at First Communion too. but mostly I think he cries when his boys and girls graduate from the eighth grade. This is because they are going to leave him. They won't be around so much any more, the way they used to be. So young and innocent and beautiful — and now they are growing up. They will very soon be conscious of the evil of the world, and they will be tempted like older people, and some of them will fall.

When Mary and Jack kneel before Father Tim he pleads with them. He always pleads with the newlyweds. Their crosses can be so heavy, their temptations so great to break the law of God.

He says to them, "Your marriage will be a success if there are three of you united in marriage — you, Jack, and you, Mary, and Christ. Marriages are in terrible jeopardy today. There is one divorce for every' three marriages, and it is getting worse."

I know O'Malley will like this, because he is always interested in statistics.

“If you pray to Christ to give you the help to live with one another for life, if you forgive one another from the bottom of your hearts every night, you will have the most joyful life possible. You are just beginning a real life now. You are the greatest builders in the world today. You will build men and women. The course before you is clear. You are to have children, to teach them to love the Master. You are to lead one another closer to God. If one of you falls back in the service of God, the other one will fall back too, because marriage tends to equalize, to make two people the same. You have a great obligation to encourage one another and not discourage. Do not try to get all you can out of your married partner, try to see how much you can do for one another, and your marriage will not be a failure but a great job well done.”

Everybody, although they think Father Tim Malloy has talked very well, is not worried that this marriage will be a failure, because everyone knows that both Jack and Mary are real Christians and believe from the bottom of their hearts in the promises they make, their sacred promise to live together until death. They're convinced that come what may they will be able to face whatever comes, because Christ will be with them helping them every minute of their lives.

I am over in a corner of the sanctuary, thinking how well God works things out. Jimmy Smith is out of the prep seminary for a little vacation, which he needs. He is serving the wedding Mass with some other fellows and is very handsome indeed. Someone says afterwards, “Jimmy is so handsome. It's too bad that some girl will not have him.” And I think secretly within myself about Pat O'Malley's beautiful cousin Mary who is now a nun, and about what she said once about Harry Cauley. And I say to myself again that the way a lot of people talk, they must want to see only ugly people in the sanctuary, and I don't think that that would go too well at all with all the beautiful vestments and other things. I don't say anything to the woman who says this, because it is a cheerful occasion and no time for getting mad at people. So I just let it go and think that it is very wonderful for Jimmy Smith — just like Harry Cauley — to be giving up his young life for the Master.

The big blonde is there at the wedding too, because she thinks that she has some obligation, since she was tied up with Mr. Martin for some time, and she also probably doesn't want them to think that she has any hard feelings. She is there with her fourth or fifth husband, although it is hard now to keep track, as you are beginning to need an adding machine. She tells me that she is doing some sort of volunteer charity work, to show me that she is a Christian, and probably because her conscience is bothering her, although as yet she does not think it is too bad to be marrying other women's husbands at a great rate and this is just a good indoor sport. She only stays long enough to tell Mary that she wishes her all kinds of luck, but she doesn't say that if this doesn't work there are a lot of other fellows who will be waiting for her. As she is going out, her latest husband doesn't help her on with her coat, and I figure his days are numbered, because in the blonde's book this is sufficient reason for divorce, and a lot of judges think so too and will sit in court calling it mental cruelty or incompatibility or some other fancy name.

The Reverend Ferris comes to Mary's wedding too. He would have come half way around the world to be there. His suit is pressed very well indeed and so are his shoes shined, and the dowager would be right proud of him if she could see him. He takes a seat in the back of the church and prays that God will take care of his Mary. She had written to him about her change to the Catholic Church and he had said that he was very pleased.

He and Father Tim Malloy sat next to each other at the wedding breakfast and got along famously. They were two of a kind, real outspoken men who loved God. The Reverend liked Father Tim so well that he invited him down to his place in the country, and Father Tim went once and liked it so well that he went many times after and they became the best of friends, and Father Tim feels very bad that Reverend Ferris does not have the whole truth and the Sacraments of the Church because somewhere way back one of his forefathers fell into error.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith are there, but they are not too happy, because they are thinking of Janet. Mr. and Mrs. Martin are there too. They do a bit of talking, but reconciliation is out of the question for them. Time has put its finger on this possibility. They both look very worn, and as though they have both suffered a great deal. And I think how right Mary was when she said that she thought that her mother should have forgiven her dad and taken him back.

But the one fellow that I never expected to see was Joe Miller, the hardware salesman that told me I ought to be doing big things for the Lord. He had been in the sendee with Jack Thornton and stops off for the wedding because he thinks so much of Jack. This time he doesn't tell me that he is disgusted with me because my name has never been in big lights. He just says that I have the life, and he wishes that he could think that he had done as much for humanity as I had, although I don't think that I have done much at all.

XXXVII

IT ISN'T VERY OFTEN that I go to visit my brother Bill. He lives too far away. But his wife is a good cook, and he and I have a lot of fun talking about tilings but mostly about the relations of labor and capital.

Usually before I go to Bill's house I bone up on some of the abuses of capital which are written up in labor papers, stuff about workers being pushed around for wanting some security for the future, etc.

I do this because Bill works for a big company and has a pretty good job which keeps him in constant contact with the management, and he is always reading their side of the story and telling me that capital can't give raises because worn-out equipment must be replaced and reserves saved for the future, etc.

Well, Bill and I see the tiling from different sides, and we both think we are right, and in our arguments we get no place very loudly. But as I say, his wife is a good cook, and anyhow he is my brother, so I go to visit him whenever I can.

This particular night, a few nights after the wedding of Jack and Mary, I stay up way past my bedtime, arguing myself blue in the face and trying to convert him to labor's side, but when I leave we are in the same position as when I came.

On my way home, I am thinking that the problem is really very simple, needing nothing but Christian brotherly love, and that the Church and good people ought to get together and get some kind of survey to show what labor makes and how much it costs to live, and what is the expense of running a big business, and so on, and then these facts ought to be published, so that the public will know who is right. This is very big thinking for me. I think, and I suppose smarter people than I have tried it. Anyhow, I get home about one o'clock in the morning, and next morning when the alarm rings, I think there are fat men sitting on my head.

I struggle out of bed and offer my Mass all right, but then I have to serve as deacon for Father Tim Malloy, who has a solemn high Mass for one of our parishioners who died some time ago. During the "Dies Irae," as usual, we go to the side of the sanctuary and sit down. The "Dies Irae" is a very beautiful and dreadful hymn about death, and ordinarily I am very impressed with it, especially when it says that if even the Saints need the mercy of God very much, how about the rest of us? Usually when I hear this I make a resolution to lead a better life. But this particular morning the low solemn tones of the "Dies Irae" are just what I need to put me to sleep.

When the hymn ends, the other priests return to the altar to continue their prayers for the dear parishioner who has gone before us in death, and there I sit, or that I am, sound asleep. Father Tim Malloy has seen a lot of life in his day, but this really dumfounds him. When he notices that I am missing, he sends an altar boy to nudge me, and I wake up wishing I had dropped dead.

Afterward, he does not say a word about it, which just goes to show what a grand old man of God he is. Instead he takes me around showing me what gives with the new church. "I am a hard man to circumvent," he says, the way he did that other time, and then he points around the grounds.

It is something to see. All over the place there are bells and pillars and arches and everything to go into a fine church. The men are working on the foundations, and Father Tim remarks that in a year he will dedicate the new edifice. He does not say anything about Uncle Sam or the Bishop, but I can see where he feels pretty good about them deciding that, inasmuch as he has everything on hand, he might as well go ahead and build — the war being over anyhow.

Then he takes me into his room, with its threadbare rugs and worn and battered furniture, and shows me an architect's sketch of how the church will look when finished. It will certainly be something to make you sit up and take notice, and will relieve the eyesores caused by looking at ugly factory buildings and such things.

The way Father Malloy looks at it, nothing is good enough for the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. His first years at St. Rose he had spent in building up the school, so that the little ones would be taught to come unto Christ. Father Tim figured that the Lord would approve of that; but now that the parish was getting a little ahead, he would have nothing but the best for His House.

Then he claps me on the shoulder, practically breaking my back, and laughs his hearty laugh. "You know, Bob," he says, "I have had some pretty joyous feuds with certain characters in this diocese whom I will not bother to name." I know what he means. He has disagreed with certain priests about

certain policies, and no punches pulled. "I thought," he goes on, "that it would be a good joke if I would have a sculptured panel of hell in my church, and there would be a couple of people in there, and if you look real close you could recognize them." He smiles reminiscently and claps my shoulder again. "But I decided that somebody might misunderstand, so I dropped the idea." At this point he looks very lugubrious. "Bob," he says, "folks nowadays don't have the wonderful robust sense of humor they had back in the great days of the medieval church builders. They wouldn't have thought anything of pulling a great joke like that."

I know what he means, because I remember from reading history that Michelangelo or one of those old titans of art and architecture put a great painting in one of the famous churches, in which he incarcerated in tire infernal regions certain characters with whom he had had a spat or two. Still, I am glad that Father Tim decides against it, because I can just imagine pious folks getting all discombooberated about it — as the fellow in the comic paper says.

Finally, Father Tim says something about having his Office to read, and I go my way to visit some sick people. But I can't help thinking that things at this point are just about perfect around St. Rose's, with Father Tim getting his new church at long last, and the way life is brightening up for all my friends, including Dale Anderson and even Joe Miller the hardware man, who no longer thinks that religion ought to be operated like the Barnum and Bailey and Ringling Brothers Greatest Show on Earth.

XXXVIII

ONE DAY as I look over my mail I see a very special letter from the Bishop. I know that he does not want me to organize the National Catholic Welfare Conference, as the Bishops have already organized this and have done a pretty good job. I can't exactly figure what would be on the Bishop's mind, and I open the letter with considerable anxiety. My stomach sinks a little as I read the following:

"Dear Father, You are hereby notified that you are changed from St. Rose Parish to St. Ann Parish. You will report to St. Aim Rectory next Monday.

"Your work has been satisfactory and I know that you will be zealous in the new field of your labor. God bless you."

I had been expecting it. All around me assistants were being changed from year to year. In fact I had stopped subscribing to magazines for more than a year because I wanted to give them my new address when it came. I feel a little sad because I had had such a wonderful life at St. Rose. Father Tim Malloy had been great. He had let me cany out about every idea that I ever had, as long as he was convinced it was for the good of religion. I had run into hundreds of wonderful people that I would never forget. I have been telling you of a few of them.

I go into Father Tim's room and tell him that I am transfened. I know he feels a little tough and I feel a little of the same myself. He says, "Well, my boy, I'm sorry to hear it. You've done a good job around here, and I'll miss you a lot. But I guess that it's a good thing to get around and meet different people. It will help you to be a better priest. We're in Quist's anny you know, and when we're told to move that is all there is to it."

Father Tim takes out his handkerchief and wipes his eyes, as he does at marriages of his kids and at graduation exercises, and I feel very sad too, because we have certainly become great pals.

I say to Father Tim, "Don't worry, Father, I'll be back to see you a lot. I won't be too far away, and we'll take old Lucifer for a ride and make plans for converting the world."

At my farewell dinner, Father Tim blows me up so big that I am embarrassed, but no one seems to mind, as this is a custom away back in human nature. He says, "Father Robert is the best priest I have ever had." Everyone knows that he has said this of each of the innumerable assistants he has had.

Jack Thornton and Maty Martin are there and tell me how Jack Junior is doing. O'Malley is there too, and he tells me that he is going to move to the new parish of St. Ann, where I am going, so the two of us can show them some real Catholicism. I don't say to O'Malley that he shouldn't do that, because I know that Mrs. O'Malley will sack the whole idea in veiy neat fashion. O'Malley is such a dreamer. He figures that to move all you have to do is pack the kids in the car and be off.

Of course I give a speech in which I sort of choke up. I say to them, "I have tried to do my best" (which I realize is a bit of an exaggeration but is o.k. generally speaking). I say, "I have been happier than ever in my life" (which is no exaggeration, unless maybe my years from one to four were happier, which I

can't remember very well). I finally wind up by saying, "I only hope that through my efforts some of you will lead a better life and love Our Lord more."

I don't even tell a joke, as should be done on such an occasion, because I have been too busy packing my books and clothes to look one up in the joke book.

Afterwards I go over to O'Malley's house to have a man to man talk. We review the work that has been done by lus group of laymen. They have tried to start the family Rosary and are doing quite well. I tell him that it is obvious why God made him meet his beautiful wife and leave the seminary and get married. I say it is because he is doing great work in the world, and I tell him to keep on working hard and praying. I tell him that I think that his newspaper work is getting better and better, and I have gotten quite a few sermons from it. I tell O'Malley this because I am going away. If I was going to stay at St. Rose, you wouldn't have heard a peep out of me.

I tell him that I have a new idea for encouraging vocations, and I know that he will like it because he likes statistics, and will maybe write a pretty good article on it. I say, "It would make very interesting reading to compile statistics of the work of a priest. He brings God on earth three hundred and sixty-five times a year. You could keep track of the number of confessions he hears. He gives at least three talks to large groups of people a week. You would have to figure the number of people. He baptizes so much. He is in his office for so long every day talking to so many people. He writes so many letters, and all of it is for God. I think that you could do something with this, O'Malley."

I drink a cup of coffee as usual, and I don't feel as bad as I did about leaving. In fact I am wondering what new things will open up to me. I go home for a few days to Mom and Dad. and they are very' proud to have me around with them, eating their food and keeping one of their rooms in a turmoil. I am visiting all the sick that they can think of and all the relatives back to about the third degree, some of whom I don't even know. All are very proud of me because I am a priest, even if I am just ordinary'.

When I get to the new parish, the people have a look at me and decide that they will bring their problems to the priests that are already in the parish, as they are afraid to take a chance with me right off. I have quite a bit of time on my hands, so I decide to reminisce about the good old days at St. Rose. I decide to write it down on paper, because the way I figure, I have done a lot of real living for a fellow my age. It isn't big and exciting Joe Miller stuff because I'm not that type, but it's gratifying, wonderful work, not to mention being a good way to show God that you thank Him for everything.