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"My Name is Tommy"

by Patti Stewart

These four words speak volumes about Fr. Tom McKillop. "Tommy" is a real person with simple goals, to be a priest, to serve God and His people, to spread the Good News of the Gospel and to constructively touch the lives of people, especially the young. Sounds a lot simpler than it is, but with support, perseverance and a strong faith, Fr. Tom has made this world a better place.

Tom McKillop was born in Toronto on January 31st, 1928, the feast of St. John Bosco and the birthday of Thomas Merton. Perfect timing, since both of these men greatly influenced his life. St. John Bosco is the Patron Saint of Youth, and the youth of our Archdiocese have played an important role in Fr. Tom's ministry. And like Thomas Merton, Fr. Tom has put his thoughts on paper in two books of poetry, namely What's Happening to My Life? and What it's all About?



Tom was the second of three sons born to Tommy McKillop and Mary Clare Burke. Sadly, both of his brothers died at birth. As Fr. Tom says, *"many times in my life, my parents were real treasures for me."* During the depression, Tommy's father was out of work for a year and was only able to work for one week per year during this time. However, after the depression, they worked tirelessly at jobs ranging from cutting slabs of ice during the day to cleaning banks in the evenings to secure a good education for their son.

Fr. Tom grew up in the west end of Toronto, in St. Helen's Parish. He attended St. Helen's Elementary School, De La Salle Bond St. High School and St. Michael's High School.

As the years progressed so did Tommy's interest in sports- hockey, handball, table tennis and his passion, baseball. Tom played sports in many leagues and his teams won many championships. Tom played baseball under Carmen Bush at the Columbus Boys Club. Carmen Bush, along with Joe DiMaggio, were young Tom's heroes and education soon took second place to sports. As a result he says he "successfully" failed Grade XIII.

The sports-oriented pattern repeated itself when he attended St. Michael's College, at the University of Toronto. Again his love of sports, and his inherent athletic ability caused a few detours on the road to earning an undergraduate degree.

One such detour came when he received a "call" that saw him drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team. Again, education took a back seat as he went off to training camp. But secular stardom was fleeting as Tom found out when he was cut from the team. Reluctantly he returned to Toronto where he completed his University studies. Baseball's loss would ultimately prove to be our gain.

After completing university, Tom attended Teacher's College and began teaching at St. John the Evangelist Elementary School in Weston. As Fr. Tom says, *"It was the equivalent of teaching in a real blackboard jungle"* as his students numbered fifty-two! At the time, Tom was only earning approximately \$2,200 per year. As the only male teacher in the surrounding elementary schools, Tom was soon in charge of all sports, a task he relished! It was his involvement in sports that taught Tom the importance of teamwork; an approach to ministry, which he professes, is *"the only way to go"*. Frank Imonte, a friend and fellow baseball player, suggested, "out of the blue" to Tommy, that he should be a priest. While Tom thought Frank a little "crazy", he began to help the Paulist priests at the Catholic Information Centre. After much prayer and discernment, young Tom entered the Paulist Fathers order in New Jersey. The novitiate begins with a year of spiritual contemplation. There were 20 other young men in the noviate at the time and they all worked very hard trying to discern their vocations. As Fr. Tom says *"the first year seemed like a thousand days- we knew that we were working hard and doing well because we were all losing weight"*.

During this time, Tom took a very disciplined approach to his daily journal, similar to the approach he used as a child to overcome a speech impediment. After the novitiate, Tom attended St. Paul's University in Washington. Even though Tom had earned his degree, he was asked to begin again and take courses which he had already taken and completed at U. of T. It was during his final year of Studies that Tom went to see the Rector to enquire about his progress. He was told at the time that they did have some concerns about him. They felt that he worked too hard, he was too intense and he did have difficulty with his speech impediment. He, along with 16 other young men, were asked to leave.....another detour in Tommy's life. After a few 'good-byes', Tom left Washington and returned to Toronto.

In Toronto, Fr. Tom received some valuable advice from Peter Shea, a friend who was in the novitiate with him, and who later became the Pastor of St. Peters Parish in Toronto. Peter suggested that Tom find a priest as a Spiritual Director, get a job, do some volunteer work and not feel sorry for himself. Tom followed that advice and a priest at Our Lady of Victory Parish in Toronto became his spiritual 'advisor', who in turn, asked Tom to see Fr. Corrigan at St. Augustine's Seminary to discuss particular issues. During the period at the seminary, Tom spent time with a number of young seminarians. After his 'experience' in Washington with the Paulists, he tried to meet each seminarian at St. Augustine's Seminary and affirm their vocation and studies.....always thinking that he himself may never become a priest. However, Tom soon began to realize that the "call" to priesthood was continuing to gnaw at him. After much prayer and a number of retreats, Tom entered St. Augustine's Seminary and was ordained to the priesthood in 1964.

Upon ordination, Fr. Tom was appointed Associate Pastor at St. Mark's Parish in Etobicoke under Fr. Gerry Cochran. Fr. Gerry was an open and affirmative priest who encouraged Fr. Tom to get involved with the Youth Ministry in the parish. Fr. Tom loved young people and after a year of working with teens and young adults, he was asked to be the Director of the Catholic Youth Organization (C.Y.O.). Feeling that his background in sports was the basis for this appointment, Fr. Tom approached Archbishop Pocock and suggested that the C.Y.O. include a

more apostolic component. With Archbishop Pocock's approval, Fr. Tom says, "I was on fire with enthusiasm, I had finally found my niche".

His work, enthusiasm and love for the young people led him to strive for more - imagine a group of young people of all faiths! It would be a part of the C.Y.O., but would be called **Youth Corps**. The group was to be centered on Jesus and based on Luke, Chapters 9 & 10. "Then Jesus called the twelve together.....and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God....." (Luke 9:1-2) "After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where He himself intended to go. He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few:'" (Luke 10: 1-2)

Since the C.Y.O was funded by the United Way many of the Directors felt that this new 'direction' was not a good one, especially in terms of the finances. After much discussion, it was decided that Fr.Tom, along with several other key people, would continue 'his vision' of Youth Corps separate from the C.Y.O.

At first Youth Corps was based in parishes around the Archdiocese. Youth Corps teams were composed of three men and three women who worked together and focused on a common purpose. The young people first began by reaching out to the community in such activities as The Good Shepherd Refuge and St. Paul's Parish in downtown Toronto. Around 1967, Fr. Tom and the team were impressed by the media response to a Timothy O'Leary Rally and the idea of holding an 'event' with speakers talking about relevant issues was created. Their events packed full houses as the young people heard such speakers as Jean Vanier, Mother Teresa, John Howard Griffin, the 'junky' priest, Dan Egan, Dorothy Day, Henri Nouwen, Dick Gregory, Cesar Chavez, Chief Dan George and Viktor Frankl. These events, which normally took place at Massey Hall and Convocation Hall, touched the lives of many young adults over many years, perhaps even yours. Fr. Jim O'Donnell, a priest and friend of Fr. Tom attended many of these 'events' over the years. When talking to Fr. Jim about his friend, he says "Tommy is a visionary, a person who lives in the present, but is forward looking. He is a shepherd of the young who wants to give them hope by exposing them to people who live the Gospel. Fr. Tom is a person of conviction who sees something and 'goes for it.'" Joe Mihevic, who presently sits on City Council, worked with Fr. Tom on Youth Corps events and echoes the words of Fr. Jim but adds.... "If Tom McKillop says that he will do something, he does it."

Since Fr. Tom's interests were with young people and family life, it was inevitable that he would also become involved in Sharon Family Peace Weekends, which were inspired by Jean Vanier. Even though the location has changed, these weekends continue to take place to this day.

After eighteen years with Youth Corps, Fr. Tom was asked to minister once again in a parish. Because he had worked so hard to build Youth Corps to successfully fill the needs of his beloved young people, leaving was difficult. After much thought and a well deserved six month sabbatical, Fr. Tom became the Pastor at Holy Name Parish in Toronto.

The importance of team was front and centre as he created the Holy Name Parish Team, made up of Elly Kaas Broadhurst, Tom Broadhurst and Sr. Maureen Killoran. According to Elly; "Fr. Tom is a visionary. He sees young people with their gifts of energy and passion creating small communities of justice and compassion in the Church. Tommy uses his 'charisma' to bring this vision to reality with parishioners, with youth and with the community at large." While at Holy Name, Fr. Tom initiated numerous programs including the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (largely due to the efforts of Elly Kaas), religious education programmes for children (greatly attributable to the efforts of Tom Broadhurst) and Small Christian Faith Communities.

Nine years later, he was assigned to St. John Chryostom Parish in Newmarket, as Pastor. Fr. Tom, ever the team player, worked tirelessly with the parishioners and the parish team to develop programs, upgrade the facilities and build a strong parish community.

In 1997, after thirty-three years of dedicated and prayerful service, Fr. Tom retired. It hasn't slowed him down any as he continues to be a very busy person, teaching young people sacramental preparation, celebrating Mass and giving the homily weekly at Sunnybrook Hospital, attending Christian Family Peace Weekends in the summer, Peace Camps, run by the Centre for Christian Ministry, co-creating art pieces with Deacon Frank McLean and writing "lots of letters". Even in retirement Fr. Tom continues to serve. As a retired priest, Fr. Tom says, "If it wasn't for Shepherds' Trust I would not be able to live at Anglin House, right in the midst of the University and all of the young people". Fr. Tom has come full circle, beginning by teaching young people, founding Youth Corps and Sharon Corps, and now living in retirement in the midst of young students.

Fr. Tom has touched the lives of many people in his years as a priest. He touched mine many years ago, when as a new Parish Worker, I attended with some apprehension my first Zone Meeting. I needn't have worried; Fr. Tom was gracious, welcoming and very encouraging. No wonder he had and continues to have the love and respect of so many members of our Catholic community.

The following words of a young person speak of Fr. Tom's life..... "I look at my life and see all its hills, wrong turns and valleys, I hear the mantra of young people whispering through me 'No Problem' ."

Thank you and God bless you Fr. Tommy.

All Monsignor Kenneth Robitaille Wanted Was to Be a Priest -- to Serve, Counsel and Help People

by Paul De Courcy



Monsignor Kenneth Robitaille's 48 years as a priest have taken him down many different roads - educator, administrator and parish priest.

Monsignor Robitaille is in remarkably good health and enjoying his retirement years in a modest midtown apartment. It's a new adventure - the shopping, cooking (which he loves) and the cleaning.

The seeds of Monsignor Robitaille's vocation were planted in the Georgian Bay community of Midland, Ontario. No one person influenced his decision to become a priest. "I liked the priests I knew growing up in Midland. I liked how

they helped me through my teenage years. I also had wonderful parents and a strong Catholic life at home. But I think I was born to be a priest. It's all I ever wanted".

Monsignor studied at Saint Augustine's Seminary and was ordained in 1954. Following his ordination, he was sent to teach at the seminary in Amos, Quebec. Upon his return to Toronto, he served three years at the Chancery Office as secretary to Cardinal McGuigan, who he describes as a great builder, a brilliant man and an astute administrator. Then it was back to the classroom, this time at Saint Augustine's where he taught Latin. Four years later, Monsignor Robitaille was sent to do post-graduate work in French at Laval University in Quebec City and in France. He returned to Toronto with his Doctorate degree to teach French at Saint Augustine's Seminary.

In 1970, Monsignor Robitaille returned to the Chancery Office as secretary to Archbishop Phillip Pocock. Five years later the vocation to which he truly aspired came true. He was appointed the parish priest at Saint Rose of Lima. "It's all I ever wanted as a priest - to preach, to administer the sacraments, to counsel and to help people", he said.

In 1979, he was made a monsignor and appointed rector of Saint Michael's Cathedral, where he spent the next 15 years. The last seven years of Monsignor's active ministry were spent as pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows parish.

Despite his extensive travels, Monsignor Robitaille says "it's not the places I've been but the people I have met" that have highlighted his priesthood. He is also optimistic about the future and believes the Church has never been as holy as it is now. "We may have fewer Catholics, but those who are practicing their faith are committed and are going to Mass because they want to. This is the age of the laity," he said.

Monsignor Robitaille calls the Shepherds' Trust a "generous pension plan" and he's encouraged to see what he calls Cardinal Ambrozic's care and concern for his priests.

"I'm happy, but not surprised by people's support for the Shepherds' Trust. It shows their gratitude to the priests who have served them over the years, and who have been there to baptize, marry and bury friends and relatives. Now we can live our retirement without worry and anxiety. Pastors do not retire from the priesthood but from administration and are ready to help in parishes when and where they are needed."

Looking back, Monsignor Robitaille says he would change nothing in his life.

"All I wanted was to do parish work, yet I spent most of my priesthood in administration and teaching. I'm not complaining, but I'm firmly convinced of the role of Divine Providence in my life. I still think the priesthood is the most challenging vocation in the world - it's a magnificent adventure."

Message from the Cardinal

My dear friends,

This past summer we were happy and blessed to have the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II and hundreds of thousands of young pilgrims in our midst for World Youth Day 2002. In his homily at the closing Mass at Downsview, the Holy Father spoke of "dedicated and generous priests and religious whose only wish is to serve and do good". The Holy Father urged us to "be close to them and support them".

One very tangible way to support our priests is by a donation to the Shepherds' Trust Fund for retired and disabled priests. Currently, 83 retired and disabled priests are being supported by the Shepherds' Trust. Together with them, I wish to thank you most sincerely for your generosity over the last six years through the November parish collection.

The financial position of the Trust is improving each year. However, we have not reached as yet a fund level which can support the retired and disabled priests of today, as well as the priests who will need this support from the Trust in the future.

This year's parish collection will be on the week-end of November 16-17. I ask for your continued generosity in this collection and for your remembrance of the Shepherds' Trust in your will.

Thanking you for your magnificent support, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

Aloysius Cardinal Ambrozic
Archbishop of Toronto



Archdiocesan Office Supports Retired Priests

by Joan Breech

For just over a year now, Joan Beaulieu has been developing the Office of Retired Priests as its first Coordinator. This office was created by the Archdiocese to provide resources and supports for diocesan priests in their pre and post retirement years. Joan is building on the relationships she had already established with many of the priests while working for Priests' Personnel for the Archdiocese for almost ten years.



In the early stages of setting up the Office, Joan spent a great deal of time researching what other dioceses are doing for their retired clergy both in Canada and the United States. Sixteen dioceses in Canada have shared information about their retirement programs with her. She has traveled twice to the U.S. eastern seaboard to meet with representatives from three states. This tri-state organization has been particularly helpful to Joan in learning about different types of housing available for retired priests and how best to match the needs of the priest to the type of housing. Joan has been encouraged by the support and says, "We are all ready and willing to share whatever information or program anyone develops."

The housing information obtained from the many dioceses will be reviewed by the Retired Priests' Residence Committee which has been formed to investigate the possibility of a retirement residence for the Archdiocese. The committee, which includes two retired priests will request input from all the diocesan priests through a questionnaire and focus groups. As Joan suggests, "there should be several options available to priests upon retirement and having a specific residence provided by the Archdiocese for their consideration would be more than beneficial."

Most of the activity in Joan's first year has focused on meeting the needs of the retired priests. Joan connects with them frequently, either informally or through structured activities. The connection may be as simple as a phone call or visit or through the Spring and Fall Retired Priests' Luncheons. Joan explains, "I visit regularly with the residents at Providence House and can spend many wonderful hours listening to their stories of former times, helping them over rough periods, making sure their needs are met and bringing them goodies as requested and sharing any news from the Chancery that is interesting." Joan adds, "I call them on their birthdays so that by year's end I will have talked with each one."

Sometimes required to find housing to meet the special needs of a priest, Joan has truly experienced the work of Divine Providence when a housing placement miraculously becomes available thereby avoiding the long waits which many seniors endure. Joan keeps in constant touch with housing providers, retirement residences, seniors agencies and long term care institutions to always have the most up-to-date information available for the priests. In addition to finding housing, Joan connects the priests with meals on wheels, homemakers, personal support workers and nursing care. In her role Joan is constantly looking for new resources and information which she shares individually or through a newsletter published periodically throughout the year.

Emeritus, the Retired Priests Newsletter, developed by a committee of mostly retired priests includes sharing of stories and memories of the priests, news from the Coordinator, pertinent information for retirees and even recipes. The committee is very fortunate to have Fr. Dermot Cullen as a member. He is the executive editor of his own newsletter called *CinqDoos* - named for the seminary class of '52 who have recently celebrated their golden anniversaries. The committee hopes to eventually publish *Emeritus* four times each year.

For Joan, this role is very rewarding and fulfilling. "I am still learning my role but there isn't a day goes by that I don't thank God for giving me this opportunity to serve Him in a way that I believe is necessary and good. It is a pleasure working with and for our retired priests."

Exciting Additions to the Shepherds' Trust Web Site!



Personal Stories

This is a special section where we can share our stories about the priests who have served our community ("*I Remember Father ...*"), and where priests can tell us about their life in retirement ("*My Retirement ... A Priest's Story*"). Drop by and visit a while ... read the stories or submit one of your own! Feel free to be creative ... short stories, poems, brief comments ... it's up to you!

Online Donations

Online donations through a secure server are now an option for those donors who prefer to give through the Shepherds' Trust web site. This is a great way of taking advantage of credit card incentives (e.g., Air Miles, VISA Club-Z, etc.). And you can still have your online donation credited to your parish! Thank you to those who have already supported The Shepherds' Trust through this ever popular method of giving!

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