

## Monsignor Gerard Breen lives fulfilling and rewarding life as a retired Priest

by Barbara Klich

For Monsignor Gerard Breen the priesthood is a family affair. His parents' three sons all became priests and worked in the Archdiocese of Toronto. Now at age 82, Msgr. Breen lives at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Markham, where his brother Father Basil Breen is the pastor. Their brother Father Bill Breen died in 1994. The family grew up in St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Toronto where religious vocations were common. "We had about 400 families in the parish and at one point we had 14 priests and 14 in religious orders, so it was rather special," he said in an interview.

Msgr. Breen credits his parents with providing a strong religious faith. He said times were definitely different when he was growing up and life was very family centred. His love of music was nurtured by an aunt who was an organist in great demand and Msgr. Breen, an accomplished pianist and organist found music was a special gift in his seminary years. His father was choir director at St. Vincent de Paul and a violinist. Hockey was also a strength and when he was at St. Benedict's Church in Rexdale he started out with four teams that eventually grew to a league of 54 teams with 800 athletes. He said that 225 men volunteered two and a half hours each week to this sport. "We truly brought the whole community together in those days," he added proudly.

Msgr. Breen worked with the Catholic Women's League, was a trustee with the Metro Toronto Separate School Board, founded Holy family Parish in Whitby, and built Chaminade High School in Toronto in the 1960's. He said that the honour of Monsignor is really one shared with his two brothers since they all worked as diocesan priests.

Today, he is still active and he fills in for priests who are away from their parishes. He said that his reflexes are still good and he is thankful to God for all of the blessings he has been given in this life. He is also thankful that the Shepherds' Trust is now allowing him to live comfortably. "The Shepherds' Trust allows me to continue with my priestly work and to live a better life," he said.

Ordained in 1941, Msgr. Breen looks forward to 2001 when he will celebrate his 60th year in the priesthood and his brother Father Basil will celebrate his golden jubilee. With good health, a lively spirit, and a busy timetable, Msgr. Gerard Breen says that as a retired priest he can now live a fulfilling and rewarding life. "For many of us, the Shepherds' Trust is truly a Godsend."



## Message from Cardinal Ambrozic



Dear Friends,

During my recent visit to Rome, the Holy Father Pope John Paul II used the image of the shepherd and flock to indicate the kind of service and dedication required of our priests. It seems appropriate, then, that the name of our benefit fund for retired and disabled clergy - The Shepherds' Trust - also gives witness to this special relationship.

At present, seventy-two retired and disabled priests are being supported by The Shepherds' Trust. On their behalf, and on behalf of all of our priests, I wish to express my deepest thanks for your generosity over the last three years through the November parish collection.

While the financial situation of the Trust continues to improve, we still have a long way to go before we reach a fully adequate fund level. Thus, I ask for your continued generosity in this year's parish collection on the weekend of November 13-14, and for your remembrance of The Shepherds' Trust in your will.

With renewed thanks for your kindness in "Caring for those who have always cared for us,"

Yours in Christ,

Aloysius Cardinal Ambrozic  
Archbishop of Toronto

# "Retired" takes on new meaning for Father John Bolger

by Barbara Klich

When Father John Bolger says that he is a retired priest in residence at St. Boniface Church in Scarborough, the word retired takes on a new meaning. Asked how he spends his days, Father Bolger said that he doesn't like to keep strict timetables because of the pressure. However, he does manage to celebrate Mass on the weekends, take the parish Mass on those days when there are funerals or other events taking place, visit a nearby retirement home on a regular basis, counsel people, and help with confessions. While this sounds as though it must be a full agenda, Father Bolger said that he finds his level of participation in the community is not too difficult. "At my age though, one can expect some health problems, so, I just keep going and I am functioning pretty well," he said.



Father Bolger was ordained in May of 1947 and two years ago at his golden jubilee his parishioners at St. Francis de Sales Church in Ajax, Ontario, honoured him with a special Mass attended by Bishop Clune and Bishop Knight, as well as a tribute dinner for 300 held at the Pickering Centre.

Father Bolger came from a family of six children and he said that he was influenced to enter the priesthood by the example of his sister who was a Sister of St. Joseph and the gentle nudging of his pastor, the late Msgr. McGrand at St. Anthony's Church in Toronto. "He suggested that I might want to think about becoming a priest," he said. His years have been filled with a strong commitment to his parishes.

He was in Alliston, Ontario at St. Paul's Church early in his career and he said that was a rather unique parish since there were people from town, some from nearby farms, and some families of the service personnel at Camp Borden. "It was small enough to get to know the people and that was important," he said.

He was at Holy Cross for 12 years in Toronto and at St. Francis de Sales in Ajax for 18 years. As Director of the Catholic Women's League for seven years he had the opportunity to travel around the diocese. As a travel enthusiast he visited the Holy Land on a tour in 1988 and enjoyed pilgrimages to Rome as well.

In residence at St. Boniface, since July of 1997, he said that former parishioners often remember little things about him. "They mention that I baptised their child or officiated at a wedding or funeral and it could have been many, many, years ago, but they still remember," he said. His philosophy has always been 'to do the best you can.'

Today, he is able to continue with his vocation and he said that he is grateful for the help from the Shepherds' Trust. "The Shepherds' Trust is my bread and butter and it allows me the freedom to carry on in my priestly work." Father John Bolger enthusiastically looks forward to the years ahead.

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The *Newsletter* is published by:

**The Shepherds' Trust**

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