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Monsignor Vincent Foy's life devoted to the Church

by Anne Conway

The bank of file cabinets along one living room wall and the large, paper-strewn desk opposite tell the visitor that Monsignor Foy is still active in his retirement.

"I keep busy with my research and my writing," he says. "For example I've had a number of articles published on causes I believe deeply in, especially the Pro-Life movement. I'm also a member of the Board of the Call to Holiness Canada movement."

"In order of ordination, I am now third in the archdiocese," he says. "I was ordained in 1939. The discipline in the Seminary then was strict. One could be expelled for having a newspaper in one's room, for allowing another seminarian to enter one's room, or for having an alcoholic beverage, even while on vacation. Discipline in recent years has gone to the other extreme. Perhaps that is one reason why vocations are down so drastically. We all need a sense of order and a willingness to deny ourselves."

Monsignor Foy was baptized at St. John's Parish, in Scarborough. As a child he lived in Holy Name Parish, also in the east end. "Our pastor was a great role-model," he says "There were always thirty or forty altar boys, and we all had to be there for the 11a.m. Mass on Sunday and then in the evening for Benediction. I was about ten when I knew that I wanted to be a priest. Nothing else even occurred to me."

"I entered St. Augustine's seminary in 1933 and was ordained in 1939. I was to study Canon Law in Rome, but the start of World War II complicated things, and eventually I ended up at Laval University in Quebec City. In those days there was no salary or allowance for student priests and so I spent three years in real poverty. I did receive thirty dollars per month for the summers spent working in the Chancery Office. Then in 1942 I was posted full-time to the Chancery Office, and for some time I lived at Blessed Sacrament rectory before moving to the Cathedral."

Monsignor Foy spent nearly twenty-five years in Marriage Tribunal work. He said, "When the Toronto Provincial Tribunal was set up in 1948, I was its only full-time member. Later, I was joined by Father Fulton (now Bishop Fulton) and then Father Courtemanche. Fr. Clune, now Bishop Clune, was a part-time member. We were fortunate in having Margaret Cronin as our first full-time secretary. She could translate evidence into French and at that time all cases going to Rome had to be in French, Italian, Spanish or Latin."

In 1957 Monsignor was appointed the head of the Archdiocesan and Provincial Marriage Tribunals and also was named a Monsignor. He is the last of Monsignors in Toronto Archdiocese created by Pope Pius XII.

The adage, "If you want something done, give it to a busy man." comes to mind with his next words: "During this time, I was also Director of Catechetics for the Archdiocese. It was a part-time assignment but I had the duties of approving texts, setting annual examinations, marking the top papers from the whole Archdiocese, and organizing summer school and the annual Catechetical day in the Cathedral. All of this was on a budget of sixty dollars per month for postage! Any additional expenses had to be paid from the Tribunal budget."

In 1966 all this changed. Monsignor Foy was assigned to St. John's Parish as Pastor. "Imagine coming home as Pastor to the church where you were baptized!" he marvels. Pastorally, it was a difficult time. The revolutionary changes following Vatican II were not always welcomed, especially the liturgical changes. Seven and a half years later he was transferred to "one-man parishes" in Bradford and Phelpston for the remainder of his service as a pastor.

Ill health unfortunately forced an early retirement. However, he continues pastoral visitations at Providence Villa and other long-term care facilities. His work in support of the Pro-Life movement has been described above, and continues unabated. He has won a number of awards in recognition for his Pro-Life writings.

Three final questions prompt Monsignor Foy to reflect a little further. Asked about some memorable experiences, he thinks quietly and then says, "Always, daily Mass remains my most memorable experience..." Pointing across the room, he continues, "That Rosary hanging there also brings back vivid memories. When I was living in Rome, it was blessed by Pope Paul VI. I was often on papal ceremonies as a Eucharistic minister. When he died I touched this Rosary to his hands just before the coffin was closed. It was then blessed by Pope John Paul I and again touched his hands after his death. It was also blessed by Pope John Paul II. I hope to be buried with it."

What about The Shepherds' Trust? "Some of our priests are in need, and for them, The Shepherds' Trust ensures that they are not neglected. I knew real poverty when I was studying at Laval; compared to that, what the Trust provides is a real bonus!"

What does he hope to be remembered for? "For fidelity," he says promptly. "Fidelity to the Church and to the teachings of the Church ...and trying to live that fidelity. We must stay with Peter. Living the truth means that we are living with Love and in Love. It's as simple as that."



Father Norbert Gignac "owes his vocation to his parents' example"

by Anne Conway

"Come along to the Boardroom. We'll talk in there." Father Gignac introduces several Sisters we pass on the way to the Boardroom at St. Bernard's Residence, Thornhill.



Father Gignac's energy spills across the table. "I tell you, I can't begin to thank the Shepherds' Trust enough for what it is doing! It is fantastic, a Godsend! Without it I could be living in a rectory somewhere, at someone else's pleasure. With it, I can live here, in dignity, with enough room for my needs, meals, other care if I need it, and my friends. The Shepherds' Trust supplies the 'backbone' we need to live on our own if we wish!"

Father Gignac spent 32 years in Oshawa, where he was responsible for building two churches, St. Mary of the People, and later, St. Joseph the Worker. "That's the best time in the life of a parish," he says, "the people are committed and excited and work very hard. After the doors are open, though, it's tougher to keep the enthusiasm going." His other assignments included St. Patrick's in Markham, and 14 months at St. Mary's in Victoria Harbour, just before he retired.

He retired in 1995 and now shares chaplain's duties at several homes for the elderly, saying daily Mass, and Sunday Mass at the nearby Parish of the Good Shepherd. "We serve whenever and wherever we can." He used to travel a bit, but now is restricted by these clerical responsibilities. "But that's OK," he says, "I had my day! Now we can help out Brother Priests who are all alone in huge parishes, who need a break every once in a while."

Father Gignac grew up in the small town of Penetanguishene. He owes his vocation, he says, to his parents' examples. "My mother was a saintly woman, God bless her. My father was a daily communicant, a member of the choir for 50 years, and an active member of the Knights of Columbus. I was the second youngest of 16 children. My sister is a nun, living over at Morrow Park. She's 89, and looks 65!"

At the end of a mission he attended in Grade 13, Father Gignac determined that he had a vocation to the priesthood: "I wanted to be able to reach people like that priest did!"

Despite lacking formal religious education after Grade 8 -- there was no Catholic High School in the district-- he was accepted at St. Augustine's. "The first year, I was lost! Here I was with all these brainy guys-- like Bishop Clune, Basil Courtemanche, and Bill O'Brien -- I knew nothing!" Despite these early misgivings, Father Gignac did indeed keep up, and was ordained alongside his friends in 1945.

A strong influence on his pastoral approach was his youthful involvement in the budding Young Catholic Workers movement. He says he has used the guiding principles of the YCW all his life: "See--what is in fact happening. Judge--its rightness by the standards of the Gospel; Act--in a way to make it good, or if good to make it better."

As a young pastor he was given the opportunity to implement some of the principles of the YCW Movement. "It was based on the dignity of the human person and the development of leadership amongst the Laity in all walks of life, and their acceptance of responsibility in the Church and in the World," he explains.

Then when Vatican II came along, he was overjoyed: "At last! This was the YCW mandate--involving the laity in the active life of the Church--put into action!"

Vatican II proved to be one of the highlights of his priestly life, he says. Using the analogy of the theatre, he goes on, "In the Mass before Vatican II, the priest was the actor, the people the audience, and God was the prompter. Now we see that the people are the actors, the priest is the prompter, and God is the audience!" Father Gignac uses both hands to emphasize the difference, his eyes intent on the image before him.

Father Gignac found these years to be exciting for other laity-related changes too. "Parish Councils! The laity are the ones with the knowledge and skills here, not !! Getting parents involved in readying other parents whose children are preparing for the sacraments! And the RCIA!" His eyes sparkle as he talks about each one.

There are memorable small moments as well. Bringing the Sacrament of the Sick to a person dying in hospital, and on the way out responding to the beckoning finger of the person in the next bed: "Please Father, receive me into the Church. I have believed in Jesus for a long time...." He proved to be a venerable old Jewish gentleman, well up in years. Father Gignac says he witnessed many, many examples of God's grace healing both spirit and body.

He reflects for a moment. "What do I want to be remembered for? As a priest who was there when people needed me...as one who was available to children, to their parents, to the elderly" And he adds gently, "As one who was a father to all."

He adds, "If I had the choice to make again, I'd do it all over again in a minute. The joy of it!" His eyes focus on the middle distance, and he shakes his head a little, as if in wonder at being so blessed by God.

The Shepherds' Trust Launches Web Site

by Anne Conway

"But just what is the Shepherds' Trust? And how does it work?"

Many of us have heard questions like these. We may have asked them ourselves. Now, with the launch of The Shepherds' Trust web site, we can get the information we need ... online.

Mary-Jo D'Agostino, who creates the Shepherds' Trust posters and newsletters, designed and built the web site. Within the Catholic Church, she has produced internet sites for her own parish, ShareLife, and the



Archdiocese of Toronto's Office of Stewardship and Development. "Based on the feedback of the many visitors to these sites," she explained, "I was convinced that a web site would be a great vehicle to provide information about The Shepherds' Trust, and to increase awareness in the community of its existence, its goals, and how it operates."

Currently, the web site includes sections on the board of trustees, financial reports, a listing of retired priests, highlights from newsletters, ways of giving to The Shepherds' Trust (including a mail-in donation form), and a contact page where guests can share their comments.

In future, Mary-Jo says, the site could include the means to make online donations. Many other possibilities will suggest themselves too, as the project evolves to meet the needs of the Shepherds' Trust and their internet visitors.

"It's very exciting," she concludes, "I believe that the web site has so much potential for increasing support for The Shepherds' Trust. It's just one more way of caring for those who always cared for us."

Shepherds' Trust 2001 Campaign Net Record Results

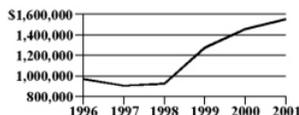
You did it again!

You've proven for the sixth year in a row that "Caring for those who always cared for us" is not just a theme but a reality.

You donated \$1,542,765.00 to The Shepherds' Trust in the 2001 parish campaign, which represents an increase of 5.9% over last year's total.

These results are all the more impressive because of the tremendous demands placed on everyone's contribution dollars this past year. The general economic environment, requests for contributions to various September 11 funds, and the general increase in competition for all charitable donations, hit us all. Notwithstanding all of these factors, your response to The Shepherds' Trust demonstrates that helping our retired priests is a high priority for each of us.

As you can see from the chart, our donations have increased each year. This is a healthy and needed trend, as the number of retired priests will increase significantly over the next five years.



Special thanks to all parish representatives for the tremendous job that you did. Clearly your messages were heard and heeded.

But even though the annual parish campaign takes place only once a year, remember that you can donate to the Shepherds' Trust at any time. There are a number of ways to do this: for example, cash donations, gifts of stocks or other securities, or bequests, to name a few. Call The Shepherds' Trust office (416-934,3400, ext. 614) or visit the Web Site at www.shepherdstrust.org for more information.

Once again, grateful thanks from all the clergy of the Archdiocese of Toronto for your generosity and caring. You are remembered in their prayers, and in the prayers of all of us involved in the campaign.

Neil Conway, Chairman, Board of Trustees

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