

from the

MARTYRS SHRINE

Auriesville, N.Y. 12016

No. 3

INDIAN
SUMMER
1978

FEATURED
IN THIS
ISSUE:

SHRINE'S
BIGGEST
DAY
IN
FOUR
DECADES

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SEVEN
JESUITS
MARK
ANNI-
VERSARIES

REV. WILLIAM R. MESSNER, S.J. 1916-1978

After a long and painful illness stemming from a fall on the ice on the Shrine grounds in January 1967, Father William R. Messner, S.J., former Shrine director and superior of the Jesuit community at Auriesville, died in Lenox Hill Hospital, New York City, on the evening of Sunday, September 17.

Despite an association of only three years with the Shrine and the Retreat House, Father Messner is still fondly remembered as he was deeply respected and loved by many pilgrims and retreatants who have never ceased asking for him.

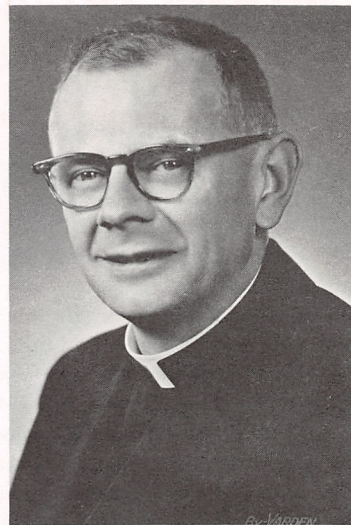
A native of Rochester, Father Messner studied at St. Andrew Minor Seminary in that city and then at Mt. St. Mary's, Emmitsburg, Md. before deciding that his vocation lay with the Society of Jesus. He entered the Jesuit novitiate of St. Andrew-on-Hudson in Poughkeepsie in 1937.

Ordained at Woodstock College in Maryland in 1950, he was sent to Auriesville a year later for his year of tertianship and then in 1952 entered the United States Army as a chaplain. For his service in the Korean combat zone he was awarded the Bronze Star. There followed a tour with the 2nd Armored Cavalry on border duty in West Germany, several states-sides assignments, and a term as a brigade chaplain with the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii.

Returning to Jesuit community life 12 years later, he spent a brief time at McQuaid High School in Rochester before being assigned to Auriesville in early 1964. Later that year he became the successor to the late Father William J. Schlaerth, S.J. as head of the Shrine and to the late Father Edward A. Ryan, S.J. as the Jesuit Superior.

Father Messner is remembered by many of our pilgrims for pioneering the work of liturgical renewal in accordance with the directives of the Second Vatican Council. It was under his competent direction that mass at Auriesville was first offered in English with the celebrant facing the people. What the pilgrims did not realize was that he spent long hours in tedious research and mentally fatiguing consultations when

See *FATHER MESSNER*, page 5



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MARTYRS

Born in Rochester January 30, 1916

Entered Society of Jesus

September 7, 1937

Ordained priest June 18, 1950

Died in New York City September 17, 1978



Auriesville Years

Rector, Auriesville Community 1964-67

Shrine Director 1964-67

Director, Retreat House 1964-65

Other Milestones

Teacher, Xavier High School, N.Y.; 1944-47

Chaplain, United States Army 1952-64

Fr. Minister, McQuaid High School,
Rochester 1964

Rector, Colegio San Ignacio, Puerto Rico
1968-1973

Retreat Director, Gonzaga Retreat House,
Monroe, N.Y. 1973-77

Murray-Weigel Hall, Fordham University
1977-78

New Chapter in History of Martyrs' Shrine

Prayer Groups Fill Coliseum in Five Hour Liturgy

10,000 Keep Prayer Vigil As Pope Paul VI Succumbs

When word reached the United States on Sunday afternoon, August 6, that the late Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, had suffered a heart attack, over 10,000 worshippers had just filled the Shrine Coliseum for the start of a concelebrated pilgrimage mass.

Gathered at the Shrine for the much publicized Day of Prayer and Healing on the feast of the Lord's Transfiguration they were most probably the only congregation of its size anywhere in the country assembled beforehand to pray for the Holy Father during his last agony. Father John P. Bertolucci, pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Little Falls and chairman of the Albany Diocesan Service Committee for the Charismatic Renewal, had just appeared at the high altar atop the palisaded sanctuary area with the two other principal concelebrants of the liturgy, Father Ralph A. DiOrio of St. John's Church, Worcester, Mass., and Father Joseph E. Orsini, of Immaculate Conception Church, Camden, N.J.

Sharing the news with the congregation, Father Bertolucci urged all present to offer the Holy Sacrifice for the dying pontiff. During the two and one-half hours which followed, the pilgrims prayed with one voice, sometimes with a song, at others with an enthusiastic outburst of praise, that the Lord would accomplish His will in the life of His faithful servant, Pope Paul.

Just as the 36 priests and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist had completed the distribution of holy com-



Father Ralph DiOrio speaks from the high altar to the largest congregation to assemble in the Coliseum in 42 years.

munion, word was brought to the sacristy that the Pope was dead. A typical comment heard from many of the worshippers was: "One could sense the emotion in the crowded Coliseum the moment the announcement was made."

Speaking from the high altar, Father Bertolucci expressed the sentiments of the congregation when he prayed from the abundance of his heart: "Lord Jesus, we ask You to receive Your servant, our wonderful Father Pope Paul, into Your hands. Reward Him with Your presence after all he has done in Your name. We thank You for giving us such a leader in these days of challenge. We pray for the Church during these coming weeks when there will be no one at the helm of the bark of Peter. We beg the Holy Spirit to enlighten the minds of the cardinals who will soon be meeting to select the man to take our Holy Father's place."

In the words of the Shrine Director, Father Thomas F. Egan, S.J. as quoted in the press next day: "August 6, 1978 will probably always be remembered by the participants in this special Day of Prayer, first because there were so many of them, and secondly because of the unusual event which was announced while they were gathered in prayer."

The Montgomery County Sheriff and his staff in carefully made calculations estimated that by early afternoon there were over 14,000 present on the Shrine grounds. This gave the Shrine its largest attendance for a single day in 42 years.

Participants began to arrive at the Shrine by 8:30 a.m. in light rain. Despite the weather, traffic was backed up along Route 5-S as far as Fultonville and almost to Amsterdam within an hour's time. Bottlenecks were reported at the two nearest exits of the New York State Thruway. When the first



"And they brought their sick to Jesus." The sick and handicapped ring the sanctuary area during the charismatic liturgy on August 6.

— photo by Ken Godey

event of the day began at 10 a.m., a period of shared prayer in the Shrine's open-air amphitheater, over 6,000 were present to listen to Father Orsini and pray with him. Eventually the program had to be terminated because of heavy rain around 11:30 a.m., and many in search of shelter made their way to the Coliseum, where a scheduled pilgrimage mass for the Club Maria Madonna Santissima della Libera of Schenectady was already in progress. An ordinary Sunday congregation of perhaps one thousand suddenly became closer to three or four thousand. Yet there was little confusion or lack of reverence.

The Valley Voices for Christ, an ecumenical singing group from the Utica area, presented hymns of praise at 1 p.m., a program which had originally been intended for the late morning out-of-doors. By the time the liturgy began an hour later every pew in the Coliseum was filled — this would normally account for 6,500 — and an estimated 1,500 additional worshippers found places within the church in the area between the first row of pews and the communion rail, the 24 aisles and even within the sanctuary. A full three rows of the sick, the aged and the handicapped were ranged in concentric rings around the sanctuary area.

The three main concelebrants, Fathers Bertolucci, Orsini and DiOrio, were visible to all at the high altar underneath the giant crucifix, while another 20 priest-concelebrants were positioned in front of the usual altar of sacrifice on the lower level. Another Utica choral group, the Love of God Prayer Community, led the vast congregation in frequent liturgical hymns and chants at appropriate points during the mass.



Father Joseph Orsini addresses the pilgrims with little protection against the elements during the morning period of shared prayer in the rustic outdoor amphitheater.

Thanksgiving after communion was followed by a talk by Father DiOrio, known to many of the worshippers for his ministry of healing during the past several years. He called on the Holy Spirit to heal all those with ailments and sicknesses of every kind. While the liturgy actually ended at 5:30 p.m., Father DiOrio continued his ministry of healing for another two hours, going up one aisle and down another, praying over various members of the congregation.

There were individuals present who claimed they had been suddenly cured. They came forward into the sanctuary at

USE THIS *ENTIRE* FORM FOR REQUESTS YOU HAVE OF THE SHRINE STAFF YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ARE ALREADY TAPED ON THE REVERSE SIDE

CONCERNING MASS CARDS

Enclose your offering for each Mass. (The usual offering is \$2.00, but larger stipends for the upkeep of the Shrine are gratefully received.) Check or Money Order is preferred.

Date _____

Dear Father Director:

Enclosed find my offering for _____ Mass(es) for
M _____ (living) (deceased).

Send Card to: _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Before Mailing sign card _____

Mail to: FR. DIRECTOR, MARTYRS' SHRINE,
AURIESVILLE, N.Y. 12016

CONCERNING ENROLLMENTS

In the Martyrs' Memorial Association

The usual offering is one dollar for an individual annual enrollment, five for a family, living or deceased.

Dear Father Director:

Kindly enroll _____

in the Martyr's Memorial Association for _____ year
(or years) or perpetually.

Send enrollment to: _____

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Before mailing sign card _____

Mail to: FR. DIRECTOR, MARTYRS' SHRINE,
AURIESVILLE, N.Y. 12016

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Friends and Pilgrims,

It is now nearly 12 years since Father Bill Messner had to relinquish his duties here at Auriesville. Other Jesuits have come and gone, there have been the ups and downs which most works within the Church have to face, yet for the most part our apostolates on Martyrs' Hill have by the grace of God prospered. The retreat house is now in the final months of what has proved to be its busiest season, while the Shrine can point to its largest attendance in several decades.

On September 21, when Father Bill's remains arrived from New York, we gathered in the Coliseum for a Mass of Christian Burial. His sister, Sister Mary Patricia, S.S.J., members of her congregation, some relatives and close friends joined with us. Father Paul Gampp, our superior and retreat house director, who had been ordained with Father Bill 28 years ago, was the principal concelebrant and homilist. As he spoke of the sufferings his classmate had endured, the thought occurred to us that if there have been advances at Auriesville in the intervening years, they were due in good measure to the prayers and sacrifices Bill had offered. He never lost his interest in the places he had served and the people he had tried to help — his associates here and in Puerto Rico, his retreatants, the friends from his days as a chaplain. It was probably the reason why during his long

JUST A FEW MORE 1978 HIGHLIGHTS

Sun., Oct. 8 — PARISHES OF HARLEM (NY City)

St. Charles Borromeo & All Saints

Pilgrimage mass at 12:30 p.m.

SUN., OCT. 15 — UKRAINIAN DAY (Rescheduled)

Byzantine Liturgy at 4 p.m.

SUN., OCT. 29 — ANNIVERSARIES FOR 7 JESUITS

Concelebrated mass at 4 p.m.

periods of confinement he kept cheerful, showed flashes of humor and never complained.

On the day of Father Bill's death Bishop Hubbard was with the Knights of Columbus, who had come to Auriesville for their annual statewide pilgrimage. In his homily he pointed out that God, while he asks very few of us to shed our blood for the cause of His Son, as the Auriesville Martyrs did, does invite all of us to be martyrs in the original sense of the term, giving witness by our words and actions to those around us. All of us who were privileged to know Fr. Bill Messner, especially in his final years, recognized in him a martyr to the sufferings Christ Our Lord took on Himself to redeem us. May Father Bill be with the Lord forever.

Devotedly in Our Lord

Thomas F. Egan

Rev. Thomas F. Egan, S.J.
Director, Martyrs' Shrine

THE MARTYRS' SHRINE
Auriesville, New York 12016

**WATCH FOR INTENTION SLIP
FOR MONTH OF HOLY SOULS
LET US REMEMBER YOUR DEAD**

**PRAY
FOR OUR NEW
HOLY FATHER
JOHN-PAUL I**



PILGRIM, INDIAN SUMMER, 1978 — Vol. LXXXIX, — Quarterly publication of the Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs, Auriesville, N.Y. Thomas F. Egan, S.J., President and Shrine Director; Robert L. Fleig, S.J., Secretary and Treasurer; Francis C. Pfeiffer, S.J., Timothy C. O'Dwyer, S.J., Paul J. Gampp, S.J., John M. Doolan, S.J., Vincent P. McCorry, S.J. and Raymond B. Fullam, S.J. Board Members.

Entered as second class matter July 6, 1942 at Auriesville, N.Y. act of March 3, 1879.

Father DiOrio's bidding. The names of all these people were taken down in order that there could be subsequent investigation in each case. However, there was no formal claim on the part of any of the priests who had concelebrated that anything miraculous had taken place. The author of an article in one of the diocesan weeklies betrayed an attitude of scepticism and disbelief by characterizing the congregation as "foot-stomping and emotion-charged." In a letter to the editor which appeared two weeks later a lady who declared she had no affiliation with a charismatic group took issue with the article, stating "how impressed she was with the fervor and devotion of the participants."

When the last issue of the PILGRIM presented an article on the history of the Coliseum, members of the Shrine staff wondered seriously whether they would ever again see the structure filled to capacity. Back in the years following the canonization of the martyrs in 1930 and the opening of the Coliseum in 1931, nearly every season had at least one pilgrimage day which brought an overflow throng. The present Shrine director can vividly recall these days when like the high school youths who serve in the Coliseum today he was called upon to be on ceremony for the big events. By the late 1930's, however, the great crowds began to diminish as the vast Coliseum lost some of its novelty. Even at the historic Boston pilgrimage of 1959 led by His Eminence the late

Richard Cardinal Cushing the size of the congregation was estimated at no more than 9,000.

This year's Day of Prayer and Healing thus broke all modern records. The bus count was a precise one and it totaled 129. Even if they were not all filled, this number of buses brought at least 5,000 to the Shrine. Over 50 of the buses were from New England, from places as far distant as Fall River, Mass., Providence, R.I., and Manchester, N.H. Long Island and New Jersey were well represented as were the New York and Buffalo metropolitan areas and all the upstate cities. A nine-busload contingent of Haitian pilgrims from Brooklyn came expressly to take part in the ceremonies and to sing their French songs. The many ethnic strains of America all had their delegates. It was a cross-section of the Church Universal, a congregation who shared in the vision of the martyrs who died here, appropriately assembled on the feast of the Transfiguration and, as it turned out, ready to pray for Pope Paul VI during his last moments on this earth.

Auriesville, Proud of Ties To Late Paul VI, Hopes For Links to John Paul I

After living through the last hours of the late Pope Paul VI so dramatically on Sunday, August 6, both the pilgrims and staff members at the Martyrs' Shrine prayed with the rest of Christendom for the repose of the Holy Father's soul and begged God most earnestly to raise up a new spiritual leader for His people.

There were grounds for feeling a special closeness at Auriesville to Pope Paul, even though he never had the opportunity to pray here. On at least three separate occasions during his pontificate he had expressed his personal interest in and his admiration for Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha, urging the faithful to redouble their prayers that the miracle needed for her beatification would soon be granted.

Last April when the New York State bishops went on the "ad limina" visit to Rome, Pope Paul spoke to them of the tradition of holiness which is the heritage of the Catholics of this state, pointing out that the blood of three of the North American Martyrs was shed on New York State soil and that the three other saints of the Church in America, Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini, Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton and Bishop John Neumann, had all lived significant portions of their lives in the Empire State.

Like our brothers and sisters throughout the world the Shrine family greeted with enthusiasm the election of Albino Cardinal Luciani, now Pope John Paul I, as the new successor of St. Peter. Just as a large number of saints and blessed were named during the first year of Pope Paul's reign, we pray that in these first days of Pope John Paul's pontificate there may be more beatifications and canonizations and that Kateri may be among those chosen.



Father Bertolucci (right) stands beside Father DiOrio before the high altar 15 feet above the congregation before the latter begins his ministry of healing.

Shrine Director Receives Kateri Award to Mark Silver Jubilee as Priest

When Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany came to preside at the Mohawk pilgrimage on the first Sunday of September and confer this year's Kateri Awards, one of the five recipients was Father Thomas F. Egan, S.J., who for the past eleven seasons has served as director of the Martyrs' Shrine. Chosen on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, he was given the citation because of the articles he has written on Kateri and the martyrs.

Also selected by Father Joseph S. McBride S.J., vice-postulator for the cause of Kateri's beatification, and the other members of his nomination committee were Sister Mary Felicitas R.S.M. of St. John's School, Plattsburgh for the two oil paintings she executed, one of Kateri's baptism, the other of her death; Mrs. Josephine Diabo of Caughnawaga, Quebec, for her fifty years as a member of the famed St. Francis Xavier Mohawk Choir; Mrs. Nellie Shirley of Phoenix, Arizona, for her radio program on Kateri in her native Navajo tongue, and Mary Kobrzycki, also of Phoenix, a high school student who has excelled in bringing the story of Kateri to the youth of her state.

— photo by Maryrose Robilatto



Bishop Hubbard presents Kateri award to Father Egan. Father McBride, vice-postulator for the Kateri cause, stands at left. Two other recipients of this year's awards are shown in the picture: Josephine Diabo to the left of Father Egan and Sister Mary Felicitas to the left of Bishop Hubbard.

The year 1978 is an unusual year for anniversaries at the Shrine. For Father McBride it is his 30th anniversary as a priest, while Father Robert L. Fleig, S.J. and Father John M. Doolan S.J. are observing the 15th anniversary of their ordinations.

Moreover, Father Raymond B. Fullam S.J. completed 40 years as a Jesuit in August, while Father Francis C. Pfeiffer S.J. administrator for the Auriesville Jesuit community and former member of the Shrine staff, is presently celebrating his 50th anniversary as a member of the Society of Jesus. Father Timothy C. O'Dwyer S.J. has just begun his 50th year as a Jesuit, and looks forward to his golden jubilee next summer.

A tribute is planned to these seven Jesuits of Auriesville, all of whom are observing milestones in the service of the Lord. It will take place here at the Shrine on Sunday afternoon, October 29, the last day of the 1978 season.

FATHER MESSNER (continued from page 1)

the Shrine first became embroiled in litigation over the taxable status of the cafeteria and related properties. The final decision in favor of the Shrine by the New York State Court of Appeals was not rendered until 1973, nearly six years after he had said goodbye to Auriesville, yet well could he take quiet satisfaction, knowing that he had contributed mightily to the outcome.

After offering early mass one morning in January 1967, Father Messner took a prayerful stroll on the Shrine grounds. As he later admitted, his mind was brimming with plans to renovate the sanctuary area of the Coliseum so that it would be more serviceable for the revised liturgy. He slipped on a patch of ice near the Coliseum door and found he was unable to move. A priest retreatant out for a breath of air after breakfast heard his calls and located the injured superior. Confined at first to St. Mary's Hospital, Amsterdam with a fractured thigh, Father was later moved to Mercy Hospital, South Buffalo after a staphylococcus infection had set in. For months he lived with intense pain until in the fall the doctors decided to sever the nerves in his leg.

By the spring of 1958 Father Messner felt he had recuperated sufficiently to assume the post of rector-president of Colegio San Ignacio in suburban San Juan, Puerto Rico, an assignment he fulfilled with great distinction for five years, even though his injured limb continued to cause him distress.

Returning to New York State in 1973, he joined the staff of Gonzaga Retreat House in Monroe and took up the work of giving directed retreats. Finally in 1977, after another one of many hospitalizations, he was moved to the Jesuit infirmary in Murray - Weigel Hall on the Fordham University campus. During much of the past year he was confined to bed. Early in September it was necessary to amputate the limb which had never quite healed. At long last on September 17 the Lord saw fit to call His suffering servant to Himself.