

Back Home Again

It had been a tremendous General Chapter and after eighteen years of living in Rome and going on visits all over the globe, I looked ahead to a visit with my family and then some quiet work that would be somewhat relaxing and with much less pressure. However, my Superiors knew me quite well and were also concerned that my reentry should be not only a pleasant one but also one with some kind of challenge, for that was when I succeeded the best. They knew what they were doing, and today I am grateful for that.

Mother had gone through several stages of illness but was still able to manage for herself, and that was a relief, for she could still come on family visits and was not restricted to her home only. They had always been very active and even if she had to slow up she had also managed to keep her interest keen and lively. The rest of the family all had their own jobs to attend to, but they made it a point to include Mother in all possible affairs, and since I was home to stay I was also on the list of those to be invited. I was happy to share stories and news of our various missions and let it be known how happy I would be to still go on a mission some time.

As mentioned earlier the Superiors knew just what would be the best job for me so that I could be useful to the Province. There was a problem with our situation in Tyngsboro, and somehow I was the right person to come along at the right time and attend to the solution. The community there was composed mostly of elderly retired or sick Brothers. None of them were seriously ill or required any special treatment. In fact it was a happy community, and they were most pleased to have me take over as the Director.

The problem to be solved was not an easy one, but would require some wholesale dealing with the right person to be successful. In brief, my job in Tyngsboro required me to take care of selling the house and property to the highest buyer, and at the same time find the proper place and area to resettle our elderly Brothers. There had been a few offers on the property already, and it remained for me to decide which potential buyer would make the best offer and require the least work from us and also the least disturbance of the old Brothers involved.

Tyngsboro had several hundred acres of land, an active farm, a suitable building to accommodate some 200 student trainees and a community of around twenty teachers. The house itself initially had served as a Juniorate, which I entered in 1926. It then became a Novitiate and eventually too large a building for the twenty or so retired Brothers who had either worked the farm there or had worked at the maintenance of a large community of applicants to the religious life. Those who could be of service elsewhere had already been transferred, and there were only a dozen or so actually living in the place at that time. So we were to look for a more suitable location for a much smaller community of retired Marist Brothers, and to make them as comfortable as possible in their age of retirement and make life as pleasant for them as possible.

Fortunately for us the current rage everywhere was the growth of the many computer companies. As a consequence they were seeking adequate places to locate. Our place in Tyngsboro was considered to be just the right kind of installation that could be used almost immediately by a computer company as a project ready to go. Our huge building was just right for a school and could also take care of boarding students as well as commuting ones. The Wang Company already had a project planned in nearby Lowell, and this would be a good start. The deal was closed to the satisfaction of both sides, and I was asked how much time we would need to clear out completely and resettle our community elsewhere. I assured them that we hoped to be out of the place completely by the end of June. I had been appointed there in the fall after my return from Rome and would work full-time to finalize this double task of clearing out completely of Tyngsboro and relocating elsewhere by the end of June 1977.

This would require the sale of all the farm instruments that remained, the saving of the stained glass windows of our chapel, and the complete clearing of all furniture not needed for the new residence or for any of the houses of our Brothers. For many of the farm materials as well as some of the items that would not be of help to us in our new residence, we decided to have an auction, the usual custom in getting rid of such materials. We planned for and announced the auction. All this was also a great way to clear off the grounds of superfluous instruments, wagons, and farm tools of all sorts.

Proper announcement was placed in the local papers, and we got ready all the material to be sold. This not only found a useful home for our extra equipment, but it was a boost to the Province to be able to recoup more funds besides what we would be getting from the sale of the grounds and buildings. Most of our own Marist communities who wanted anything for their use had been given a deadline by which to come and get the desired items before they would be auctioned off.

In the meantime, I was also looking around and asking friends about any suitable area where we could purchase a place that was quiet and adequate for a small community of retired Marist Brothers. Some of the Brothers knew of various places and we investigated each place when suggested. We were looking for a place that would be quiet, have enough land for the old Brothers to be able to walk around, and if possible have a small garden. I was also hoping for a quiet residential area, especially an area known to our Marist friends or alumni.

We visited several places, and at each place we went we made a list of its positive and negative features so that we could discuss them in the community before deciding. We really had several fine places where we could settle in a friendly area and enjoy life. I had also wanted to have a place that was near enough to a hospital and where we could have a doctor available to treat the old Brothers in our own home. We also planned on having a pool on the grounds for bathing and swimming, and also to have the whirlpool facilities on a bench in the pool. This would be helpful for the old bones in question.

Eventually, after quite a search, we found a property that was attractive and that had most of our needs already provided for. It could take care of some seven Brothers and was in a wonderful area where many of our alumni were already settled. I asked Bro. Norbert Cote, my colleague, to come with me and we both found that this was the right place for us in South Lawrence, not far from the church of the Marist Fathers. The price was right, so the Brothers were brought there to see it and just about all were agreed that we should select this quiet place with garden facilities, ample ground to move around in, and a place for the pool, all shielded from the road. We purchased the place and immediately started to move in and get settled, as we wanted to finish the move before the end of June 1977.

We had moved all our personal items to the new place, and everything was ready for us to move. We used two cars to carry the older Brothers, and we left the Tyngsboro chapel after a long visit with rosary and after singing the Salve Regina. We took the Blessed Sacrament with us and moved to Lawrence to our new place where a group was already waiting. We brought the Blessed Sacrament into our little chapel by the door, and after a prayer of thanks to God, to Mary, and to our Blessed Founder, we were settled. We spent time with the neighbors, who welcomed us and were very happy to have us as quiet neighbors. The Brothers were pleased, and we had kept our schedule for the Province and for ourselves. Yes, we were home again!