

The Gartland Family

I wish to recall here another blessing that came as a result of an incident at St. Francis Hospital. I was invited to attend some of the meetings that the Sisters had with their board and was happy to be able to help. It was there that I first met Mr. John J. Gartland, Jr., a local lawyer who was helping the Sisters when he could, and who became very friendly with me.

At one of the meetings where we were the only two males among a large group of women, Jack told me that with all the good Sisters talking, the meeting had run into his regular social hour and he was thinking of leaving. The meeting was about to end anyway, so I invited him over to my office at the college so that we could have a drink and make up for his lost social hour. We became close friends, and I later got to know his wife, who was also a very dedicated woman. Both of them over the years have been invited to become "Affiliate Marists," an honor offered to particularly dedicated persons who help the Marist Brothers. At the time, Jack was a valuable lawyer and the McCann Foundation did not yet exist.

Catherine, John's wife, was especially kind to me when I went off to serve the Lord in Liberia. At the send-off party she had pledged to be helpful, and she did just that by her packages of goodies, which she would collect and mail to us at the mission. Often her packages would be delayed and not come on time for the Christmas or Easter holidays, but they were always much appreciated. She had a knack of thinking of various items that just might be useful but could not be found in a mission.

Meanwhile, Jack had found a way to send our mission a van in good condition, which made it possible for us to drive to the next country to get the food and help we needed regularly. Once a month I used to make a special trip to get needed things as I worked at the Bishop's house as bursar of the mission. We would select a day each month to celebrate all the birthdays of the Fathers, Sisters, and Brothers for that month. This simple practice brought a lot of joy to many hearts. It was after my fourth bout with malaria that the doctor told me that I had to leave and come home, and one of my first functions after I came back was to attend the dedication of Gartland Commons, a gift of the Gartland family to Marist College. The Gartlands have long been dear friends, a very definite unexpected blessing of the Lord. The family is still active in its work for the college and for the entire Poughkeepsie area.