

Scholasticate Memories

The Scholasticate was a slight change of place from the Novitiate. My duties were similar except for new courses and more studies and the special conferences devoted to preparing us for the duty of teaching in our Marist schools. I was happy to have Bro. Adrian August as my teacher; he was a very kind person. There was a strenuous two years of study ahead of me along with some active work in the library, and in the printing press with Brother Tarcy. We really had some powerful men in Brothers Adrian, Frank Xavier, Leo, and Mike Casey. It was Frank Xavier who impressed me most with his teaching. He prepared copious amounts of typed notes for us and pounded his text so hard that he made holes in the pages of his notes. Many of the letters became holes in the paper. But he taught us to be dedicated and to take the trouble to become good teachers. We also had some of the old French Brothers who were educational gems in their country. There was Bro. Paul Acyndinus, and Brother Ptolomeus, the math whiz of the century. During those two years we were invited to teach Catechism to the children of the Mt. Carmel Parish who had no parish school of their own, and attended public school. By special arrangement they were let out of classes early on Wednesdays so that they could come to the parish church for our classes in religion. We also had four nuns who used to come from out-of-town to assist with the teaching. There were classes on Sunday after the ten o'clock Mass in addition to Wednesday afternoons.

This was the first class I ever taught and, of course, there was a young man who seemed to relish giving me trouble. His name was Carmen Virgilio. One day he so exasperated me that I picked him up by the shoulders and gave him the choice of having me throw him out of the church or pay attention in class. He chose to stay, so I put him down and began to use him to distribute papers, pick up the books, etc. From that time on, I never had any trouble with him. Today he may be considered hyperactive. Back then, I used the solution of giving troublemakers increased responsibility with very good results, and this became my practice for future classes.

At the end of the year the pastor, Monsignor Pernicone, gave us each a book as a gift. It was titled *To Whom Shall We Go, Thou Hast the Words of Eternal Life*. This Christmas gift became the vade mecum for me and kept me from ever getting discouraged or giving up too easily. I learned the hard way that I needed God to "come along" with me in the affairs of life, and that I would never be alone. Whether it be in pleasures or troubles, He is ever right there waiting to be asked for help. What a tremendous lesson to learn at the very start of my life's work!

I recall the plays and orchestra recitals that we prepared for and to which we invited the entire Poughkeepsie community. I played the French horn and had parts in some of the plays. But the choir and the wonderful songs that we enjoyed occupy a special place in my memory. We would practice the songs endlessly, but when it was time for a break, we would ask Bro. Frank Xavier to tell us some stories. He could often make up a story as he went along and had a captivating delivery. When we sat in a circle around a good fire, and Frank Xavier was standing up acting every word he said, we could not but help being fascinated.

He was the life of the party. He was also a great one to help in the library. There was much to do in the library as the Scholasticate had just then qualified, in 1929, to become the Marist Normal Training School, which allowed us to offer two years and two summers of college credits acceptable anywhere. St. John's and Fordham were the first to agree to accept our courses.

One point that impressed me very much was the care and solicitude for the sick Brothers, a tradition that stemmed from our Founder, we were told, and that is held sacred by every Marist who ever lived here. When I was in my Scholasticate, there was a thin sick Brother who was still young and had been a Brother only some eight years. He had entered from Manchester, New Hampshire, and went through the steps of training leading to the Brotherhood. Shortly after being sent out teaching after his Scholasticate, he took sick and had to stop. He was first sent to Tyngsboro to recuperate, and when that did not work, he was brought to the Provincial House infirmary, where he remained eight years until he died. The doctors had done all they could for him and could do nothing about his slow deterioration. We were invited to go to visit him, and to talk with him in French. In spite of his condition, we were always so refreshed after a visit that we would sign up weeks in advance for the privilege of going to talk with him. He could speak only in a slow, low voice, but he was a real saint, and one

could not help admitting that the Lord had blessed us by sending us this example of true dedication. I owe a lot of my own perseverance and attachment to our Marist family to this saintly little Brother, Edmund Jude Lavoie. Not long after he died, the very next group of young candidates as Novices applied for the privilege of being given the name Bro. Edmund Jude. He was one of our greatest teachers and gave depth to many of the important ideas we had been taught that had been superficial before meeting with him and listening to his advice.

My group was suppose to spend two years in the Juniorate, but since it was going to be a small group going to the Novitiate in 1928 some six of the oldest of our Juniorate group were invited to go to the Novitiate one year ahead of time. We were to make our Novitiate even before some of us had earned our Regents diplomas. We were sent home to visit our families at Christmas time for a five-day holiday before going to the Novitiate. I only needed to pass my English IV and also American history, and was told that I would be given the time to complete those requirements on my own. That was why after taking my first vows, I was kept in the Novitiate for what amounted to an extra year, where I fulfilled the duties as cook for the community and completed the two courses to get the Regents diploma.