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A GRAIL PUBLICATION

St. Meinrad

Indiana

Jimmy

by

Rev. Arthur Niemeyer

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ST. MEINRAD

INDIANA

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A VOCATION

“Have you ever thought about what you would like to be when you grow up, Jim? Getting pretty close to graduation time you know. About time to decide, isn't it?”

“Yes, Father. I know it is. Gee, Father, do you . . . well, do you think I could ever be a priest?”

Father Tom Reiley stopped in his tracks and put out a hand to stay the lad who was walking beside him. The two were headed for the playground on the other side of the school building where a baseball game was about to get underway. But the ball game would have to wait. Here was the opportunity Father had been wanting and he wasn't going to let it pass. He knew Jimmy White was a good boy—one of the best in the eighth grade at St. Mary's. He had always thought he saw the makings of a good priest in Jimmy but lately had begun to feel he might be mistaken, and that maybe God would not call Jimmy after all. Now things looked different. *Jimmy had been thinking about*

the priesthood! So it was time to do something definite.

The priest smiled broadly as he answered the boy. "Why, of course you can be a priest, Jim. That is, if you have a true vocation. Tell me, what gave you the idea?"

Encouraged by Father Reiley's evident interest Jimmy replied, "I don't know exactly, Father. I just feel that way. Sometimes when I am watching you at Mass I get a feeling inside me that makes me want to be a priest so I can offer Mass too."

"Did you ever ask anyone to tell you about the priesthood — what it means and what it takes to be a priest and all that?"

"No, Father. I was afraid to ask."

"Afraid, Jim. Afraid of what? That you would be scolded?"

"Oh, I guess I just didn't want anybody to know I was thinking about it 'cause I wasn't really sure."

There was no one within hearing distance but just the same Father Reiley lowered his voice almost to a whisper. "This is going to be a secret, Jim, between you and me. Here, let's sit down on this bench and talk this thing over."

Jimmy was glad for the chance to

confide in Father Reiley, who, being a priest himself, would be able to understand better than anybody else, better even than his own father or mother.

“You know what, Jim?” said Father Reiley, after they had settled themselves



on one of the schoolyard benches, “I really believe you have a vocation to the priesthood. You know what we mean by a vocation, don’t you?”

“Yes, Father. A vocation means a call from God.”

“Right, Jim. It is God Who calls and chooses the ones He wants to be His

priests. But sometimes the ones He is calling don't realize it. Now, when your mother or dad calls you, you know definitely that they want you for something and you obey. Well, when God calls you He wants you for something too and He wants you to obey Him. There is this difference—God doesn't call out loud as your mother or dad does. No, God speaks to the heart."

"But how does God speak to the heart, Father?"

"God has many ways of making His voice heard, Jim. For instance, the feeling that you say you have experienced during Mass is one way. That was Christ calling you. It is His way of saying, 'Jimmy, I need you—I want you to be a priest.' Here's another way: perhaps you may know some priest that you admire, or a boy who is studying to be a priest, and the thought comes to you, 'That is what I would like to be.'"

"Oh, it has, Father. Many times I've looked at you and wished I could be just like you."

"Hold on, Jimmy, I didn't mean myself, I was just citing an example."

"But I would like to be like you, Father. I'd like to be able to help people the way you do, and be called 'Father'

and be able to preach about God and the Blessed Mother," Jim went on seriously.

"So what, Jim? What are we going to do about it?"

"What can we do, Father?" asked Jim.

"The first thing, Jim, is to decide that you are going to let nothing stop you from answering that call of Christ. He is saying to you, 'Come, Jim — follow Me.' You must answer by telling Our Lord that you have heard His call and you want to follow Him. Then you must pray. Pray hard, Jim. Ask Our Lord and the Blessed Mother to show you the way and to give you the help you'll need. I'll be praying too. Later on I'll arrange to take you to visit the seminary where you will have to go to study."

"Father," said Jim.

"Yes, Jim."

"Don't you think we ought to let Mother and Dad in on the secret?"

Father Reiley nodded. "By all means, Jim. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take a stroll over by your house this evening and break the news for you. How'll that be?"

"Swell, Father. Thanks, Father. I'd better go now."

Father Reiley glanced at his watch. "Time for me to go too, Jim."

“Goodbye, Father.”

“So long, Jim. Don’t forget those prayers!”

“I won’t, Father,” promised Jim as he went skipping out of the schoolyard.

VOCATION MEANS SACRIFICE

John White and his wife, Martha, were sitting on the front porch enjoying a few moments of relaxation at the end of the day’s work. Mrs. White happened to look out across the lawn just as Father Reiley swung around the corner.

“Isn’t that Father Reiley, John?” she asked.

“Yes, it is,” answered her husband, “and I believe he is coming in here.”

By that time Father Reiley was half way up the walk. “Good evening, folks!” he called out.

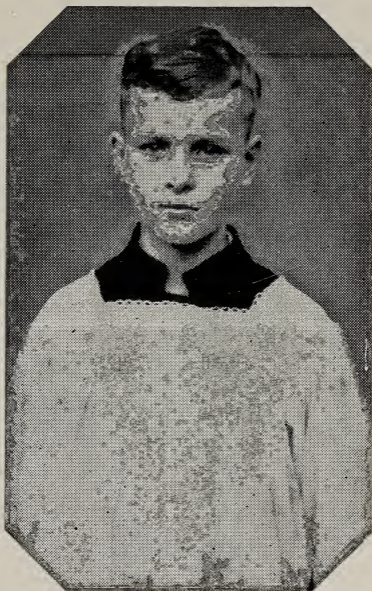
“Good evening, Father,” the two responded. “How are you this evening?”

“I’m very well,” replied their pastor in his usual friendly fashion, then added with a chuckle: “How is everyone at the White House? May I join your peaceful family circle?”

“Glad to have you, Father. Have a chair. What’s on your mind?”

“Your son Jim. Now, now, Mrs. White,

there is nothing wrong," declared the priest, seeing that his word had disturbed Mrs. White, and she was about to excite herself unnecessarily.



"I just want to tell you something about him. What would you say if I told you your son has a vocation to the priesthood?"

"I'd say how did you find it out, Father. He's never mentioned anything like that to us," answered Mr. White, drawing a long puff on his pipe.

"Oh, Father, don't you think Jimmy is a bit young to be making such a decision?" put in Mrs. White.

"No, Mrs. White, he isn't too young. God has put that desire into your boy's heart. He wants him to be a priest. A vocation to the priesthood is the highest calling a boy can have. But it is something that cannot be trifled with. It can be lost you know, or rejected. God only knows how many parents there are who have been the cause of their child's loss of vocation. That is a serious matter to consider, when we stop to think that God will hold those parents responsible who did not do all in their power to encourage vocations in their homes. I know that neither of you would want to prevent Jimmy from answering the call that he has felt and which he spoke to me about this afternoon."

"You're right, Father. We want to do whatever God expects us to do, don't we, Martha?" spoke John White, turning to his wife for her opinion.

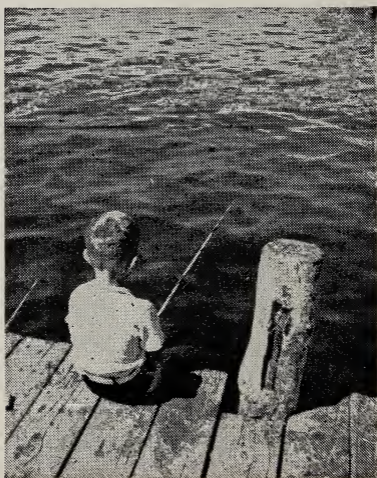
"At least we'll try, Father." answered Mrs. White.

“Good,” said Father Reiley. “I knew I could count on you. It’s going to mean sacrifice, though, on both sides. Jim will have to go away to school. There are long years of study ahead for him. The Priesthood is the most important profession there is. A boy has to be trained for it in the proper atmosphere—away from the world and all its hubbub, so he can think and study about the things of God and the truths of religion that he will have to teach to others. He must be guarded against temptations so that his mind and body will be free to work at the task of storing up knowledge that he will need later in his work of caring for souls. At the same time he has to learn to practice what he intends to preach, which means good, solid spiritual training. I purpose to take Jim down to the seminary for a visit before long so he can get a general idea of what the place is like.”

“Excuse me, Father, but won’t all this schooling cost a lot of money? One can’t run a home or a business without money, and I don’t suppose the seminary can be run without it either,” commented Mr. White.

“You’ve got something there, Mr. White. Yes, it does take money. That’s

part of the sacrifice. The seminaries have to meet with the approval of Rome and of the Bishops. They have to maintain a pretty high standard. However, I may be able to arrange to take care of part of the financial burden for you through the chancery or the seminary. I don't have things worked out yet. I just dropped by to find out your opinion in the matter. Besides I told Jimmy I would speak to you about it this evening. He is fairly bursting to discuss it with you. He's a fine lad, if ever I saw one. But he'll need encouragement from you."





Father Reiley rose from his chair. "I have to get back to the rectory," he said. "Have an appointment at eight o'clock. Must be nearly that now."

"Sorry you can't stay longer, Father. Your news has given us a lot to think about. We are certainly grateful for whatever you do for Jim," said Mr. White. "We'll give the boy all the backing we can."

"Come again soon, won't you, Father?" called Mrs. White.

"That I will, Mrs. White. Goodnight to both of you, and God bless you!"

THE DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD

It was Saturday morning. Father Reiley had just finished his thanksgiving after Mass and was about to put the chasuble and other Mass vestments back where they belonged. Suddenly he heard footsteps behind him, and turning around looked down at Jimmy White's wide grin. There was an eager look in Jim's eye.

"I've straightened up the sanctuary, Father," he announced.

"Good boy, Jim. Are the other servers gone already?"

"Yes, Father, they are. But I was wondering if you would have time to tell me more about being a priest. I'd like to find out more about it."

"I have time right now, Jim. I'm glad you are that interested. What would you like to know?"

Jimmy didn't have any questions ready so Father Reiley began by asking him one. "What would you say is the greatest thing in a priest's life, Jim?"

Jimmy thought hard for a moment. Perhaps it was the bright red vestment that Father Reiley was folding so neatly in the drawer that gave him the in-

spiration. "I think it is the honor of saying Mass," he finally answered.

"Jim, you've hit it right on the nose!" exclaimed Father Reiley. "That's just what I hoped you would say. Offering the Holy Sacrifice is the priest's greatest privilege. It is also his greatest joy as well as his greatest consolation. Why is it such a great privilege, Jim? Can you tell me that?"

"You tell me, Father."

"All right," replied Father Reiley, leaning his broad back against the vestment case and shifting his weight from one foot to the other. "I'll tell you. You've heard this in your religion class, I know, but I'll try to bring out more clearly the point we have in mind. Now get this, Jim—every time a priest offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass he is offering the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ just as truly as Christ Himself made the offering of His own Body and Blood at the Last Supper and on the Cross of Calvary."

Father Reiley paused and looked straight at Jim. "You know the story of the Last Supper, Jim," he said.

"Yes, Father. It was then that Our Lord changed the bread and wine into His own Body and Blood and gave the

Apostles their First Holy Communion.”

“Quite true, Jim. But Our Lord did even more—and this is tremendously important—He gave the Apostles the power to do the same as He did. In remembrance of Him they were to say the same words, do the same thing, and get the same result. He made them, as it were, other Christs. And so each morning at Mass, as the priest consecrates the bread and wine, he is not speaking as a man, but is speaking as Christ Whom he represents. At the consecration the priest says, “This is My Body. This is My Blood” and no matter what kind of man the priest is, be he fervent or otherwise, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. But the priest would not have this power if Christ had not first given it to the Apostles. Nor if He had not commanded the Apostles to pass that power on to their successors who are the Bishops, so that they in turn could transmit it to the priests whom they ordain.”

Jimmy was taking it all in—his attention was closely centered on the priest before him.

“Any questions now, Jim?” asked Father Reiley.

“I was just thinking, Father, what an

awful power it is that God gives to the priest. It makes me feel afraid. Do you really suppose He wants to give that power to me?"

"Of course He does, Jim. You see, God doesn't always choose the brightest or the holiest men to be priests. It is God's own power working through men that makes the priesthood so wonderful and gives it so much dignity. God could have given the power to His angels instead of giving it to His priests, but He didn't choose to do so. Look at the Apostles, Jim. What kind of men were they? They had no training in school before Christ called them. Yet they followed Him and He showed them and taught them what He wanted them to do. You can do as much, can't you?"

"I'll try, Father," answered Jim.

"That's the spirit, my boy! Don't get discouraged. And remember what I told you the other day."

Jimmy smiled. "I know, Father. You said, 'Don't forget to pray.'"

The discussion ended there, but Father Reiley noted with satisfaction that his words seemed to be taking effect, for out in the church Jimmy's tousled head could be seen for quite a while above the front pew where he was kneel-

ing in earnest prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

O wonder of wonders that God should take the form of bread, but still more wonderful the way in which it is accomplished! And to think that he, Jimmy White, was being called by Christ and some day the blessed privilege of bringing God down upon the altar might be his! "This is My Body. This is My Blood." Jimmy repeated the words softly as he slipped quietly out of the church.

THE TASK OF A PRIEST

It was hot and sultry. The last class of the day was in session. And Father Reiley was very much aware that his pupils were not concentrating on their Bible History lesson. More than likely everyone's mind was beginning to turn toward the baseball field.

"That will be all for today," he suddenly announced when the class was only about half over. "School dismissed."

Thirty pairs of eyes opened wide at the announcement and thirty pairs of hands lost no time clearing off desks and gathering up ball gloves, bats and other baseball items.

"Hurrah for Father Reiley!" someone

shouted. A chorus of "Thank you, Father" followed.

Jim White was one of the group that crowded around Father Reiley on the school steps a few minutes later.

"Coming over to ball practice with us, Father?" asked one of the boys.

"Sure thing, boys. We've got to win that game from St. A's," answered the priest.

"It was nice of you to let us out early, Father," spoke up Jim White.

Father Reiley's eyes twinkled and he



winked at Jim. "It was nice for the teacher, too, Jim," he said.

"Do you like to teach, Father?" questioned Billy Marvin who was a star pupil as well as a star baseball player.

“Yes, Billy, I like to teach. In fact, I have to—every priest is *commanded* to teach. I’ll bet you didn’t know that.”

“Who commanded you, F a t h e r?” asked Jim.

“That’s an easy one, Jim. Our Lord commanded the Apostles to teach when He said, ‘Going therefore, teach ye all nations,’ and naturally whatever He commanded the Apostles to do all the Bishops and Priests of the Church must do also. Now, every priest doesn’t teach in a class room, but every priest does have to teach. That’s why we have sermons on Sundays, and at other times like Lent and Forty Hours and Missions. Preaching is one of the pastor’s first duties. He is bound to instruct his parishioners in their duties. We all have duties toward God, ourselves and our fellowmen—we can’t get away from them. True, we can learn a lot about them during our school-days but that isn’t enough. As we grow older we take on greater responsibilities and need more instruction on how to shoulder the burdens that life brings. Our Lord spent three years preaching and teaching. The Apostles were constantly receiving instruction from Him. He taught them how to live, how to pray, how to teach

and how to die. After His ascension into Heaven Christ sent the Holy Spirit who would encourage them and bring back to their minds all that He had taught them. And so the priest speaking from the pulpit is carrying on the work of the Holy Spirit because in his sermons he brings back to the minds of the people all they have learned in their catechism and instructs them more fully about their duties, and he also encourages them to do what is right. But a priest can also teach without opening his mouth."

"You're kidding, aren't you, Father?"

"Honest, I mean it, boys. Ever hear that little saying, 'actions speak louder than words'? Well, example is one of the most powerful means of instruction there is. Our Lord used it. He was a perfect model of obedience, purity, humility, patience, kindness and of every other virtue. He didn't just tell the people that 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the clean of heart, blessed are the meek'—oh, no, He showed them by the way He lived. I know of a priest who won many converts just because he was understanding and kind. But suppose we consider the group of you standing with me now. Why, I might talk

all day about fair play, honest sportsmanship, being a good loser and all that sort of thing and not get to first base. But let a bunch of boys on the field show all those qualities while at play and the idea goes over like a homer over the fence. It takes example along with words. Get what I mean, boys?"

"Yes, Father. We get it," they shouted in one voice.

"Well then, let's go over to the playground and give a little silent instruction on how to win a baseball game. . . ."

Long after the ball practice was over for the day Jimmy White was still pondering Father Reiley's words. The task of teaching which Christ had imposed on His priests was a big one, but Jimmy would not have to wait until ordination to begin his teaching career. By setting a good example he could begin right now.

SHEPHERD OF SOULS

Father Reiley sat in the back of the schoolhall, watching listlessly as Sister Anna put the eighth graders through final practice of the graduation exercises. Presently one of the girls began reading the class prophecy and Father Reiley pricked up his ears to listen. He

was not at all surprised to hear that Billy Marvin would one day be in the pitcher's box of a big league ball team, but he was surprised when he heard Jimmy White named the future pastor of St. Mary's. He couldn't figure out who had let the cat out of the bag, but



as soon as the signal for dismissal had been snapped and Sister had been congratulated on her well planned program, Father drew Jim aside and questioned him: "Say, I thought we had a secret. Who told?"

"I don't know, Father," answered Jim. "Sister Anna must have guessed it. She's pretty keen that way."

"Well, my boy, since you're going to be my successor as pastor of St. Mary's some day, maybe I ought to tell you a little about the job a pastor has," said Father Reiley half jokingly, yet seriously enough for Jim to sense that more instruction on the priesthood would be forthcoming if he encouraged Father to talk.

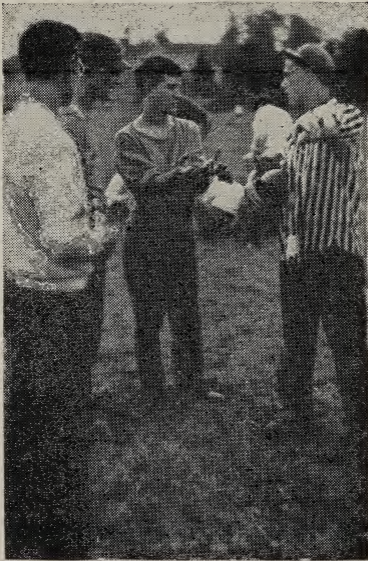
"Go ahead, Father, shoot," replied Jim eagerly. "I'm listenin'."

So Father Reiley again opened fire. "Jim," he said, "a pastor has more to think about than himself. A parish priest is responsible for the holiness of all the souls in his parish. That means a lot of work. He is really a shepherd of souls. The people of his parish are his sheep. And just as the old-time shepherds of Our Lord's day cared for the sheep of their masters so does the priest look after the souls that God places under his charge. Christ was the first Good Shepherd. He gave Himself that name. He said, 'I am the Good Shepherd. I know Mine and Mine know me.' The priest then, if he be truly another Christ, is also a good shepherd.

He must know his sheep and care for them."

"How does he care for them, Father?" put in Jim.

"Like this, Jim. When the priest baptizes the children of his flock he is put them into the sheep-fold of the Church. Later on he arranges protection for them from the wolves that would destroy them. This he does through the Sacrament of Confirmation which the



Bishop administers in order to strengthen souls against the attacks of the devil. It is also the priest who prepares food for his flock by bringing the Body and Blood of Christ down from heaven through the Mass; for isn't it in Holy Communion that our souls receive divine help to make us grow in holiness? Then there are the poor strayed sheep and the lost ones who must be brought back. There are the sick and wounded sheep who must be healed. All these are taken care of in the Sacrament of Confession. There are the wandering sheep who want to seek shelter in the sheep-fold. These are the converts who must be instructed. Yes, Jim, at every turn of life the priest is there ready to aid—he even stands as God's witness when in God's name he blesses the solemn contract that couples who enter into marriage must make. And when the awful agony of death comes upon the soul, who but the priest can give real help? It is the priest who brings the Holy Viaticum, and who anoints the body with the purifying oils of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction."

Father Reiley paused and took a deep breath. "Oh, it is such a wonderful work, Jim, . . . a beautiful work!"

Jim thought to himself: "Father

Reiley must be a true shepherd or else he couldn't look the way he does now." But Jim wanted to keep the conversation going so he said: "What else does the shepherd do for his sheep, Father?"

"'The Good Shepherd gives his life for his sheep'" quoted Father Reiley in answer to Jim's question. "Every pastor gives his life for his sheep, Jim, even as Christ did. The years of his youth he gives to the study and preparation necessary for ordination. After ordination he takes up the actual work—he gives his time, his health, his talents, he sacrifices his own pleasure, he risks his life and sometimes his honor, in caring for the needs of His Master's sheep. The Good Shepherd represents the mercy of God. The priest, is above all else, the dispenser of God's mercy. And never before has the world so needed the mercy of God!"

"Gee, Father," cried Jim. "Even if I had thought about giving up the idea of being a priest I couldn't now."

There was a long moment of silence which was not broken by either of the two who sat absorbed—each in his own thoughts, yet each thinking of the other.—Suddenly there was a sound of youthful chatter. A group of girls was re-

turning with flags, bunting and streamers with which to decorate the hall for the graduation exercises.

"Looks like we're going to be in the way here, Jim," declared Father Reiley coming out of his dreams. "We'd better get out before we find ourselves wearing a piece of red, white and blue drapery."

Jim laughed. For some reason his heart felt very light and his spirits rose high as he tried to keep his short little legs in step with Father Reiley's long ones which were hurrying toward the nearest exit.

THE PRIEST A MISSIONARY

A tall, heavy-set man, dressed in black, with his hat pulled down and his coat collar turned up, made a quick dash from the bank door to a parked car. However, what looked like a bandit trying to make his getaway with a bank loot was really only Father Reiley trying to dodge the raindrops of a sudden shower as he hurried back to his car after depositing the weekly parish collection.

"More rain," he mumbled to himself. "But at least there is no danger of flood in these parts."

Father Reiley stepped on the starter

and had not gone more than a block or two when he spied Jimmy White huddled against a corner building. He was trying to shelter himself from the rain while waiting for a bus.

"Hop in, Jim," called Father Reiley, as he stopped for the traffic signal.

"Hello, Father. Am I glad to see you!" exclaimed the lad, brushing at his wet clothes with his hands and settling himself in the seat next to Father. "I didn't expect all this rain today. I thought we'd had enough for awhile."

Father Reiley laughed. "That isn't for us to say, Jim. But I know one thing, all this water is going to do a lot of damage in some places."

"Dad was saying this morning that Father Stone's new church is being threatened by flood. That's a pretty good distance from here, isn't it, Father?"

"Yes, it is, Jim, but it's in our diocese. I'm telling you, Jim, you don't have to go to the foreign missions to look for excitement. There is plenty of it right here in our own diocese. A diocesan priest is as much a missionary as any."

"How do you figure that, Father?" questioned Jim. "I always thought one

had to go to China or some far-away place like that to be a missionary."

"Not at all, Jim," replied Father Reiley, swerving the car out of the way of a delivery truck. "If it is a matter of zeal and the enduring of hardships, then you can get all that right around here. Strange as it may seem there are places in this diocese almost as poor as some in China. That's not saying we don't need foreign missionaries. No, indeed. Christ said to teach all nations. But I do say that the priest who takes on the pastorship of a small mission center is doing heroic work wherever it's located. He has to build and repair on almost nothing and usually with what labor he can manage to get from the people in their off time. Most of the time there is no school and no decent rectory. Instructions to the children must be given separately in the evenings or on Saturdays and Sundays. The priest very often has to travel great distances to take care of his scattered flock. Maybe it isn't as glamorous sounding as doing mission work in a foreign country but it adds up to the same things—hardships, loneliness, heartbreaking disappointment—all those things have to be faced by the diocesan missionary too.

Paints a rather gloomy picture, doesn't it, Jim, and 'twould be a rather gloomy life too, if it weren't for the purpose in back of it.

Jim wanted to ask Father Reiley what he meant by that, but seeing that they were almost to the rectory he answered with: "I can get out at the rectory, Father—it's only a few steps around the corner to home and the rain has stopped now."

"So it has, Jim. Looks like the sun is coming out. Well, that's the way it is in the life of a missionary, Jim. The rains of trouble, hardship and disappointment come but so does the sunshine of success. In the heart of every missionary there is a spirit of zeal and love for souls that shines through on the darkest days and makes them bright because the missionary knows He is doing God's greatest work and..."

Father Reiley stopped in the middle of his sentence and chuckled a little. "What am I trying to do here, Jim—talk you out of being a missionary or talk you into it."

"I don't know, Father," responded Jim. "But you've cleared up a few things that I'd been wondering about."

Thanks for what you've told me and for the ride too, Father."

The doors of the car slammed simultaneously as the two climbed out. "As far as I'm concerned, the diocese is the only missionary field I'm looking forward to," called Jim over his shoulder.

And that was all Father Reiley wanted to know.

STEPS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Some of the players said it was Father Reiley's pep talks, some gave the credit to Billy Marvin's super pitching, while others said they never would have won the game if Jim White hadn't come through with that four bagger when he did. But if you had asked any number of the spectators they would have answered, "Team work, that's what did it!" And they would have been right.

Father Reiley was justly proud of his boys and he was taking them on an outing to prove it. All the way to the park they had been re-hashing the plays of yesterday's big game and glorying in the final score of 8 to 7.

Finally the conversation turned to the losing team. "Father Casey's a swell coach, I think," spoke one of the boys from the rear seat of the station wagon

in which they were riding (it had been borrowed for the occasion).

"I think so too," agreed the boy sitting next to him. "He's almost as good a coach as ours."

"You said it, Jack, nobody can beat Father Reiley," boasted Billy.

"Thanks, boys," said Father Reiley. "But remember, Father Casey has been at St. Ann's for only two years. In fact that's all the longer he's been ordained. Most likely he played ball while in the seminary, and I'll wager he was on a team like ours once, but that would have been fourteen years ago—before he went away to study for the priesthood."

"Golly!" exclaimed Ted Peters. "Fourteen years ago. How many years does it take to become a priest?"

"Subtract two from fourteen and you've got the answer, Ted. It takes twelve long years of hard study—and here's something that will surprise you, I know—every young man who receives the sacrament of Holy Orders must receive seven ordinations!"

"Whew," whistled Ted. "No wonder it takes so long!" Everybody laughed. Jim White was the first to ask: "Won't you please tell us about the seven ordinations, Father?"

“OK,” replied the priest. “As soon as everybody quiets down.”

In an instant all were silent, waiting eagerly for Father Reiley to begin. The priest straightened himself against the seat of the car and started his explanation.

“You all know that Our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Holy Orders when he ordained the Apostles His first priests and made them the first Bishops of the Church. He also gave to them and to their successors the power to ordain other priests and consecrate other Bishops. At first there was only the order of priesthood. Later, as the Church grew and more ministers were needed, deacons were ordained to assist the priests. Gradually five more orders were instituted, making seven all told. I’ll try to explain a little about each one. First, though, I must tell you about the tonsure.”

“What’s that, Father?” asked Ted, who by this time had become deeply interested.

“That, Ted, means a hair cut,” replied Father Reiley. “The idea was copied from the Romans who shaved the heads of their slaves. The early Fathers of the Church shaved their heads to

proclaim themselves slaves of Christ. This same idea prevails today. The Bishop cuts the hair of the candidates for the priesthood as a sign that those young men belong especially to Christ and intend to dedicate themselves to the service of the Church."

"Don't they look rather queer?" someone asked.

Father Reiley expected that question and he smiled broadly as he answered: "The Bishop doesn't shave their heads. He just cuts a few strands of hair from five parts of each one's head so as to form a cross. It is hardly noticeable."

"When do the seven ordinations start?" asked Billy.

"After the candidates have received tonsure they are called clerics and are eligible to go on to the seven final steps that lead to the priesthood. These steps are the four Minor Orders and the three Major Orders, and together they make up the seven ordinations that each candidate for the priesthood must receive."

"The four Minor Orders," continued Father Reiley, "are Porter, Lector, Exorcist and Acolyte. Porter means guard of the doors. In the time of persecution, reliable men were needed to inform the faithful of the time and place of divine

services. The Porters had to open and lock the doors and keep out those who would cause a disturbance. Later on they helped to take care of the sacred vessels, ring the bells and usher. Now those duties are performed by the sacristans, ushers and janitors.

“Next comes the order of Lector which means reader. In the early days the Catechumens, that is, those who were preparing for baptism, were not allowed to remain for the whole Mass. They received instructions from the Scriptures which were read to them before the actual sacrifice began. The Lectors were especially trained to read the Scriptures. We can easily understand why, when we realize that in those times there were no printed books such as we have now. The text was written by hand in manuscript form and it required a really skilled reader to make sense out of it. Gradually the work of the Lectors was taken over by the deacons and priests and so the Lectors formed a schola for singing the various parts of the Mass. Now the choir takes the place of the schola.

“The third Minor Order is that of Exorcist. The duty of the Exorcist was to perform exorcisms over the Catechu-

mens in order to drive the devils out of them. Today the priest performs these exorcisms at the time of baptism.

“The last of the Minor Orders is that of Acolyte. It was his duty to assist in the services, light the candles, pour the wine and water. Now the servers at Mass do all that.”

“May I ask a question, Father?” inquired Jack.

“What is it, Jack?”

“Well, if the duties have all been taken over by others why does the candidate for the priesthood have to receive the Minor Orders?”

“That’s a good question, Jack,” remarked Father Reiley, pleased to find the boys following his explanation so closely. “The reason is this—the Church uses the Minor Orders, which are so called because they are of less importance, as a fitting preparation for the Major Orders which are of grave importance. All the Minor Orders recall the fact that the priest is the responsible guardian of the house of God and everything connected with it. And although various duties are now performed by lay people without the rite of ordination it is up to the priest to see that the duties are carried out.”

“I guess that explains that, Father. Now tell us about the Major Orders,” replied Jack.

“There are three Major Orders—Subdiaconate, Diaconate and Priesthood,” began Father Reiley. The Subdiaconate was introduced into the Church when the work of the deacon increased and divine services became more solemn. The Subdeacon must take on the obligation of perfect chastity, of never marrying, and of saying the Divine Office like the Deacon and Priest. And like the Deacon and Priest he dresses in sacred vestments when he takes part in the services. But it is only when deaconship is bestowed that the indelible mark of the Sacrament of Holy Orders is imprinted on the soul. For after the cleric is ordained deacon he participates in the priesthood in so far as he assists the priest at solemn services. He is also permitted to preach and to distribute Holy Communion.”

“Now then, the young man is ready for the final step—the order of priesthood. Through the imposition of the Bishop’s hands he is made a priest forever. He is given the power to offer Holy Mass, to forgive sins and to bless. During the rite of ordination the Bish-

op vests him in the sacred vestments and consecrates his hands with holy oils. Then the Bishop calls upon the newly ordained priest to offer Mass together with him."

Father Reiley paused. "Any questions?" he asked.

"It means an awful lot to be a priest, doesn't it, Father," said one of the boys.

"Yes, it does," answered Father Reiley. "The Priesthood is the heart of the Church. But don't forget that the priests come from the heart of the people in person of young men like yourselves."

There was no time for further comment. The entrance of the park loomed just ahead. Father Reiley knew his talk had made a deep impression upon Jim White who had been silent through most of the discussion, but he hoped he had also made the others see something of the great importance of the priesthood.

A LOOK AT THE SEMINARY

The day for the promised visit to the seminary had arrived at last. It was a day Jim would never forget as long as he lived. And the enthusiasm with which he described it to his mother

when he returned made it a red letter day for her also.

"Oh, mother!" cried Jim. "You should have seen the baseball fields. And the big gym! Father Reiley says I can learn to play basketball there."

Mrs. White looked a little surprised. Baseball and basketball in the seminary?

"Oh, yes, mother," replied Jim to the question mark look on his mother's face. "Father Reiley says the sems have to keep physically fit so they can study. They have a lake for swimming and skating too. And a big terrace for taking walks." Jim's eyes sparkled at the prospects of evening strolls around the well-kept campus.

Mrs. White smiled her approval, then



inquired, "What about your studies, Jim?"

"I have a book that Father Anthony gave me. He's swell... just like Father Reiley. The book tells about the classes. Here it is," said Jim, handing his mother the Seminary Catalogue which the genial Director of studies had given him.

Mrs. White was about as excited as Jim. She paged through the book quickly. On one page she found the schedule for the day. Everything was planned. First came Holy Mass and meditation, followed by breakfast and four classes. At noon, dinner and a period of recreation. In the afternoon there were more classes and recreation until supper. Evening devotions at 7 were followed by study and after that came bedtime. She could see Jim's days would be full.

"The class rooms are wonderful," Jim went on. "And so is the refec... the refec... the place where I'll eat with all the other students," finished Jim.

"You mean the refectory, Jim," prompted Mrs. White.

"Yes, that's what Father Reiley called it. He showed me the dormitory, too, where I'll sleep. Golly, there were a lot of beds there. Father Reiley told me some stories about his seminary days,

and he says the sems still do those things. They have plays and concerts, and lectures and even have contests. Gee, I can hardly wait to get started."

"Well, I'll be needing the Summer to get all your things ready," replied Mrs. White scanning the list of clothing and supplies that Jim would be required to bring along.

Jim paused thoughtfully as the vision of the seminary chapel filled his mind. "Mother, you should see the beautiful chapel. We go there every morning for Holy Mass and Communion. It's so easy to pray there." His thoughts recalled the feeling of peace that had come over him when Father Anthony had led him up the aisle pointing out that much of a seminarian's time is given to prayer. It had seemed to Jim that never before had the desire to be a priest been so strongly felt as it had that afternoon when he knelt for the first time in the seminary chapel and looked upon the huge crucifix which hung behind the tabernacle. The same Christ Who had died upon the cross and Who was present before him in the tabernacle was calling him to follow as closely in His footsteps as any man can, for He wanted him to be one of His priests.

Jim's train of thought was broken by the sound of a door opening. Mrs. White's ear had also caught the sound. "Isn't that dad coming in, Jim?" she asked. But Jim didn't wait to answer. He was out of the room with a dash—eager to tell the day's adventures to his father who he knew would be more than anxious to hear them.

THE PRIEST'S BEST FRIENDS

Father Reiley's breviary lay open on his knee, but his eyes were closed in silent meditation. It was the Feast of St. John the Baptist, and this great saint's life suggested many points worth pondering. So completely lost was the priest in thought that he did not hear Jim White come up the steps to the rectory porch.

"Excuse me, Father," began Jim, and Father Reiley was immediately aroused.

"Oh, good evening, Jim, my boy. I didn't hear you coming. Sit down," replied Father Reiley.

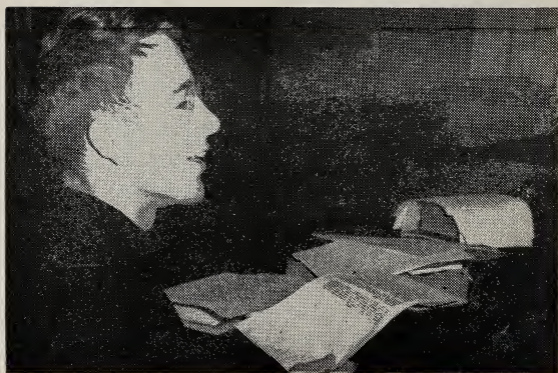
"I don't want to interrupt you, Father," spoke Jim.

"But I have finished saying my Office, Jim," informed Father Reiley, closing the breviary and laying it carefully on

the bench beside him. "Sit down, and I'll share my thoughts with you. There are a good many lessons we can learn from today's feast—you especially, since you are to prepare for the priesthood. Some day you will be learning what the Divine Office is all about and what it means to the priest, but for the time being you can follow the feasts of the Church year through the use of your daily missal."

"I know today is the feast of St. John the Baptist, but how does it have special meaning for me, Father?" inquired Jim.

"St. John the Baptist," began Father Reiley, "is called the Precursor of Christ because he went about preaching to the



people of the great Messiah who was to come and save them from their sins. In a way all priests are prophets of Our Lord like St. John, because they must preach the coming of Christ by faith into the hearts of His people. St. John should be a model for us since his vocation was a very special call to preach Christ. Then, too, St. John said, in speaking of Christ, 'He must increase: but I must decrease.' Applied to ourselves that means that we must decrease in selfishness and increase in Christ-likeness. It means putting aside our selfish interests and thinking of the things of God and of the Church. If you learn to be selfless during your seminary days, Jim, you will have a much more fruitful priesthood from the beginning."

"I hadn't thought of that, Father, but I guess I should," Jim admitted.

"However, St. John isn't the only saint who can be a model for us. There are scores of them," continued Father Reiley, warming up to his subject. St. Peter, the first Pope; St. Paul, the greatest of all missionaries; St. John and St. James and all the other Apostles. They all long to share their priesthood with you, and for that reason they have a spe-

cial interest in you right and want to help you. The Curé of Ars is another saint to whom you should be devoted. He was poor in talents but rich in zeal and love for souls, and because of his great zeal God gave him extraordinary powers for doing good. It was through the confessional that he did his greatest work. He died a poor little pastor, but not before he had become a model for all diocesan priests. Then there is the saint of our own times, the Little Flower of Jesus. Of course she wasn't a priest, but she was especially devoted to the priesthood and has obtained many graces for the seminarians and priests who pray to her. But there is one person, above all others, who is most interested in your success as a student and as a priest and that is . . ."

"The Blessed Mother," put in Jim.

"Yes, my boy, there is no other person to whom we can go with as much confidence and hope of being heard. It was through Jesus that Mary became our Mother. How she must love those who come closest to her Son! A priest is another Christ—how often you will hear that. He has the mission of carrying on the work of Our Lord and has been given a share in His divine power. Be-

cause a priest gives his all to God's service he must forego earthly attachment to women. But Mary is always beside him ready to inspire him and encourage him. She gives her love in a special way to priests because they resemble Christ most closely. Make her your companion now, Jim. Make her part of your everyday life. Remember this, Jim—no priest was ever ordained without the help of Mary and no priest can carry on the work of a priest without Mary to guide him. You can go to her in joy as well as in sorrow. She has known both." Father Reiley paused and smiled.

"Here we were discussing St. John the Baptist and all of a sudden we end up talking about the Blessed Mother. But that isn't such an unnatural conclusion when we consider that it was through the visit of Our Lady to St. Elizabeth that St. John was sanctified even before his birth. Truly every grace comes to us through Mary."

Father Reiley leaned over to pick up his breviary. It was getting near supper time.

"Was there something special you wanted to see me about?" he asked Jim.

Jim replied, "I just wanted to give

you this paper which I received from Father Rector. You are asked to fill it out so I can return it to Father when I go to the seminary.

"I'll be glad to do that, Jim.

"Thanks very much, Father. See you later."

Father Reiley's eyes followed Jim down the steps and watched him until he disappeared out of sight. Only then did the priest turn to go into the house. A prayer for Jim was on his lips. "Keep him, dearest Mother, keep him in your heart and make the goodness that is in him now, grow and grow, and never cease to bear good fruit."



