

12/30/09 <http://blog.rosyfinch.com/?m=20091230> A Postscript from Father Dan Filed under: General, Rutherford & NJ, Grandchildren Posted by: Ken @ 2:15 pm

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Father J. Daniel (Dan) Schneider in Korea, ca1955

My father's brother died four weeks ago. Yesterday we received a letter from him.

"Now that Father Dan is gone," our eldest daughter had lamented. "there's no one left who will write letters to me."

They were frequent correspondents. What they wrote to each other I don't know, but Karen felt a special bond with her great-uncle. At his funeral, others of her generation (Karen was the first of his 69 grand-nieces and nephews) echoed her sentiment— each felt that he or she was his favorite person in the world. I felt that way too, when, as a teenager, we exchanged trans-oceanic air mail letters.

At the very least, each of his friends and relatives received an annual Christmas message. In the old days it was typed out laboriously— at first, mimeographed, later photocopied, complete with strike-throughs and typos. Usually his letter included a personal handwritten addendum. Several years ago, Dan entered the computer world, and this increased his output.

My Uncle remembered so many small details and family stories— things that many of us had long forgotten. Like Biblical parables, his anecdotes were lessons of hope and optimism. Father Dan seemed to remember each and every family baptism and wedding in which he officiated during more than 60 years of priesthood. He wrote memoirs and a family history.

This excerpt concerned his father's difficult childhood in Columbus, Ohio:

My father left school in the fifth grade to go to work because his father's TB made it impossible for him to continue to work as a blacksmith. He got his first job delivering telegrams for Western Union. He'd bring home two dollars a week. He was paid on Friday

and grandma would go out at eight o'clock at night and buy the groceries for the whole week for \$2 – this for a family of five.

One day my father was given a telegram for Mr. Joyce, president of the Green Joyce Dry Goods company. He was told not to deliver it to anyone but Mr. Joyce. So he went to the office with his telegram for Mr. Joyce. The secretary said that he wasn't available and that he should leave it with her. My father insisted, "I must give the telegram to Mr. Joyce and no one else. I'll wait."

Finally after an hour or so, Joyce arrived and heard the story of the messenger who waited to give him the telegram. He called my father in.

"Sonny, my secretary tells me you waited over an hour to deliver this telegram. Why did you do that?"

"Sir, I do what I'm told," my father said. "I was told this was to be delivered to you and no one else, and I was prepared to stay all day."

"Sonny, how would you like working for me? You're the kind of person I'd like to hire."

My father took the job and doubled his salary to \$4 a week. He started sweeping floors. Then he stocked shelves and kept inventory. Then he became a salesman. Green Joyce was a clothing and notions wholesaler. He would sell hats, overshoes, coats, gloves, and other ready-to-wear clothing, plus buttons, ribbons, cloth, and everything else people needed to make their own clothes. He criss-crossed Southern Ohio on the train, carrying his sample case, visiting all his accounts. He would watch the weather. He'd tell his stores when a bad winter was coming, and advise them to stock up on cold-weather gear. He was very good at this.

Finally he became president of the company. From janitor to president – an American story...

Reflecting upon his vocation, Father Dan wrote:

The first thought I ever had about the foreign missions was when I was in the third grade at Holy Name School in Columbus, Ohio. A priest

came in and showed us a movie of missionaries in China. We watched this guy in all his priestly clothes walking along in a rice paddy. He had a big hat on, and he was surrounded by people planting rice in the rain. All I could think of was, after I saw that movie, “the one place in the world I’d never, never want to go is China or any part of the Orient.” The heat, the dirt, the poverty – it repelled me.

A college journalism major, Dan’s first priestly assignment as business manager and promoter of The Field Afar, his Maryknoll Society’s little magazine, seemed mundane, but with his efforts, circulation increased from 150,000 to 500,000 in less than four years. He learned the Korean language, and labored for over 20 years in South Korea, finally becoming Regional Superior for the Korean missions. From 1974 until 2001 he worked as a parish priest in Kansas City, Missouri and Overland Park, Kansas, serving as Spiritual Director of the Korean Catholic Community and as an active minister for Engaged and Marriage Encounter programs.

Father Dan wrote about his own father’s reaction to his decision to become a priest. He was very proud when his son got accepted to the Wharton School of Finance at the University of Pennsylvania. Then, after Dan turned down a scholarship in their MBA program, he did his best to not show his disappointment.

Years later, when we were able to talk freely together, he told me that my decision was the greatest disappointment he ever had. He and my mother were passionate about giving their children an education... He said, “When you told me about Maryknoll, it crushed me. I thought that going to China was the dumbest thing I ever thought of.” He told me this years later. Outwardly he supported my decision. And later he was genuinely happy at my ordination, and proud of the work I did in the order. But it was a different story when he first heard the news...

My mother was the happiest of all. She always wanted one of her sons to be priest. She probably wouldn’t have minded if all her sons became priests. The sad thing is that she didn’t live to see it. She died in October, 1943. I was ordained in June, 1945.

These words remind me of my Grandmother Nora, whom I called “Schotzie” (read more about her here). As a six or seven year

old child, I so enjoyed visiting their big house in Rutherford, New Jersey. One day she was expecting Dan to bring a large group of fellow seminarians home for dinner. Schotzie must have spent all day getting ready for their visit. She put out their best linens, and to be sure that nothing was disturbed, she also pinned little notes on the towels in the bathroom: “DO NOT USE.”

The seminarians arrived, and when they came back from washing their hands, they were dripping wet. My grandmother had forgotten to remove the signs!

Father Dan so enjoyed people and parties, and loved food. His boundless energy seemed to keep him from becoming obese. Sometimes, in intense conversations, he shared his own pain unabashedly, in a way that lifted up our own burdens. Father Dan had time for everyone.

Father Dan’s spirituality went beyond the bounds of dogma and ritual. He encouraged my love for the outdoors and all wild things. He told of a younger priest in Korea who had been doing some great things in his area.

One day he took me to visit one of his Buddhist friends – the first Buddhist monk I’d ever met. The guy was a college graduate; he spoke English far better than I spoke Korean. We had a wonderful conversation. At the end, I invited him up to my parish to give a talk on Buddhism, and he accepted. I happened to mention this casually to Bishop Pardy. He was stunned. He says, “You’re going to do what? You’re going to bring a pagan in to talk to your Catholics? Do you realize you’re going to endanger their faith? They might want to become Buddhists.” He forced me to cancel the invitation, which I did very unwillingly.

That goes to show you how my thinking had already changed. The Vatican Council had not yet taught a different approach to other religions. I had been taught in the seminary that Buddhists are atheists, that Buddhism was a terrible religion, the devil’s religion. They taught that in the seminary, and then I met some Buddhists and found them to be wonderful people.

Some time later a priest from the U.S. came over and gave us a retreat. He asked me to introduce him to a Buddhist monk. I took him to a monk in a hermitage nearby, a man who spoke English. I said,

“This is Fr. Fraser. He teaches theology in New York in America. He has a question.”

“Father, what’s the question?” the monk said. It is, “Are Buddhists atheists or agnostics, or do they believe in God?” The monk walked over to a dogwood tree in his garden. He put his fingers on the trunk of the beautiful tree and said, “For the Buddhists that is God.”

His love of beauty moved me. But of course he really didn’t answer the question. Or he answered it in an enigmatic Buddhist way. Buddhists don’t use the word, “God.” I think Buddhism is more of a philosophy than a religion.

About ten years ago, when he was ministering to the Korean community in Kansas City, Father Dan told me he was feeling very jealous because a younger priest was going to replace him. In his memoirs he relates the remarkable story of his replacement:

For many years I pastored a small congregation of Koreans in Kansas City. I had retired from Maryknoll at age 65, and at age 75 the bishop agreed to replace me as pastor of this Korean group. When I was approaching age 80 he finally did something about it. We found a priest in Los Angeles who was recruiting Korean priests to come to the US, and one of them came to Kansas City.

The priest’s name sounded familiar to me. Had I met his family somewhere? I asked. I’m from Chongju, he said. Your name is Park. Is the name Sylvester Park familiar? He said, “Yes, that was my grandfather.” And I said, “He was my catechist in 1956 when I first came to Korea.”

So there you have it. I went to Korea as a missionary priest and helped build up the Chongju diocese. Forty years later the Chongju diocese sends my catechist’s grandson as a missionary to the United States to replace me so I could retire

In 1997, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, our younger daughter Jackie wrote this to Father Dan:

As I look back at all the letters that you have sent us over the years, even your personal handwritten notes, there is one continuous

theme that I see. You are truly a man of God who touches people's lives with your words and interpretations of how God loves each of us and is alive in our hearts everyday. Father Dan, you have truly touched me with your many insights of how God works in us and through the people who come into (and simply pass through) our lives each day. You have made me believe that there is a reason we are here on this earth, and God's Will is why things happen. We may not understand our roles during many periods of our life, but if we keep believing and relying on our faith in Him, the answers will come and the rocks (and sometimes boulders) in our path will be pushed aside, and we will see that God is with us through it all.

Father Dan's name and return address were on the envelope. In past years, his Christmas letter never arrived so late. We opened it:

My younger sister Ellen was a school nurse in the Greenwood Lake area of New York State. She had cared for two generations of students, and, in 2005, she died suddenly and unexpectedly. At her wake and funeral, mourners lined up around the block in the rain, and filled the church to bursting. Father Dan remarked, "If you want a crowd at your funeral you have to die young. Older people outlive all their friends." Was he ever wrong! His funeral was the best-attended in memory at Maryknoll Seminary.

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We lost a dear friend and uncle this week. My late Dad's younger brother, Father Dan Schneider, passed away peacefully at Maryknoll, New York, where he was ordained a Catholic priest over 64 years ago. He would have been 92 later this month. As an 8-10 year old child, I remember visiting him at the seminary, feeding the pigs and chickens (in a sustainable farm on the grounds, now long forgotten), and, in a hedgerow next to the lawn, finding a Chipping Sparrow nest that was constructed entirely of horsehair. Dan was the first graduate of our High School to become a priest, and I swelled with pride at his first Mass in our little stone church in Rutherford, New Jersey. He spent years as a missionary in Korea, and I wrote letters to him, addressing him as something like "Tan-Ya Sawm Sin-Poo."

Happily, he was back in the USA to perform our marriage ceremony nearly 50 years ago, to baptize our first child (who is also his first grand-niece) and to be with us when we buried our youngest child. He

loved being outdoors, he loved cookouts, and he embraced us all in his love of life.

I'll never forget the time when Father Dan visited us when we lived in Dallas. We all drove out to a local park to roast hot dogs. When the charcoal had heated up, we reached for the franks— and realized we had left them home! Unflappable, Dan told the children how much he liked mustard sandwiches. We toasted the buns and spread them with mustard, and everyone thought they were great!

The arrangements for his funeral were uncertain, so we booked flights for a six day visit to New Jersey, planning to stay with my brother and his wife on Great Bay, not far from the Brigantine Unit of Forsythe NWR. As luck (or Providence) would have it, an Ivory Gull, a rare species from above the Arctic Circle appeared at a marina in Cape May. Since the funeral was delayed until the last day of our stay, we had time to find the gull. How Father Dan would have enjoyed our account of this synchronicity.

Rest in Peace!

Father Dan (L) with my late Dad at the church in Las Trampas, New Mexico. See this story about Dad. The two brothers often engaged in deep theological discussions over bourbon on the rocks:

2 Responses to “Saying Goodbye”

Ken Says: December 10th, 2009 at 9:46 am J. Daniel Schneider SCHNEIDER Father J. Daniel Schneider, M.M., born in Columbus, Ohio, died on Saturday, December 5, 2009 at St. Teresa's Residence in Ossining, N.Y. He was a Maryknoll priest for 64 years. Visitation and funeral will be held Friday, December 11 at 10:30 a.m. at Maryknoll, Ossining, NY. Ordained to the priesthood on June 10, 1945, Father Dan's first assignment was to The Field Afar, now Maryknoll magazine. He served as Business Manager of the magazine until 1949, when he became an assistant in Maryknoll's public relations. After studying the Korean language and culture at Yale University, (1955-56) Fr. Dan served as assistant pastor and pastor in two parishes in Korea. In 1958 he returned to the United States to serve as director of the Society's public relations efforts (1958-62). Fr. Dan returned

to Korea (1963-1967) to further his studies in the Korean language and offer pastoral service. He was named Superior of Maryknoll's Korea Region in 1967. Recalled to the U.S in 1972, Fr. Dan did mission education in St. Louis, Mo., parish work at St. Elizabeth Catholic Church in Kansas City, MO and ministered as team priest for Catholic Marriage Encounter and Catholic Engaged Encounter. Fr. Dan also served as spiritual director for 15 years to the Korean Catholic Community of the Greater Kansas City area, first at St. Elizabeth Church and later at Holy Cross Catholic Church, Overland Park, Kansas. Retired in 2001, Fr. Dan moved to Maryknoll headquarters in Ossining, NY. A graduate of St. Mary's High School, Rutherford, NJ (1935). He earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy, and banking and finance from Fordham University in New York City (1939) and entered Maryknoll. He is survived by his siblings, Jean Rogers of Rutherford, Joseph Schneider of Hillsdale, N.J., John Schneider of Powhatan, Va. and Jerry Schneider of Rutherford; and many O'Shaughnessy cousins. Memorial donations in Father Schneider's name may be made to the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, NY, 10545. Published in The Columbus Dispatch on December 10, 2009 Katherine Carnegie Says: December 13th, 2009 at 8:31 am Ken I am sorry to hear of the loss of your uncle, but I am sure that he is in a much better place and is keeping an eye on things from above. Here is a poem that I liked when my mother died it is by Henry Scott Holland.

Death is nothing at all, I have only slipped into the next room.

I am I, and you are you, Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by my old familiar name, Speak to me in the easy way which you always used.

Put no difference in your tone, Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together. Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.

Let my name be ever the household word that it always was, Let it be spoken without effect, without the trace of shadow on it.

Life means all that it ever meant.

It it the same as it ever was, there is unbroken continuity. Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight? I am waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, Just around the corner. All is well.

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWizvaFvu0k&feature=player_embedded