Home and Away

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Recommended Citation
At St. Joseph High School in Edmonton, Spiritan Father Michael Troy has been active in the school for so long that he has a gymnasium, and basketball and soccer tournaments named after him. This is in addition to the three-year-old school in the city’s Southside that also bears his name.

“His presence is always felt,” says Leo Turcotte of Father Michael Troy.

Turcotte, the principal of St. Joseph’s High School, says the best way to describe Troy is as an “icon.” And although the school does have a lay chaplain on staff, Turcotte jokes that “when it’s time to call on someone near God in stature, we have Father Troy.”

Turcotte has an endless list of adjectives to describe Troy — charismatic, energetic, committed, selfless and positive. In addition to his regular Thursday visits to the school, Troy is “here at the drop of a hat when we need him, whether it’s for a function, Mass or whatever,” says Turcotte. “It’s important to have a priest in the school. It’s a way of identifying our Catholic identity.”

Although he retired from teaching in 1983, it never seems like Troy left the school.

“I’m so active in the school because they ask me to,” says Troy, who celebrated his 89th birthday in October. “The students and staff, they’re my friends.” Not only are they his friends, but the students past and present keep him busy with graduation ceremonies, weddings and the baptism of their children.

“I’ve even buried some of them,” says Troy.

Troy is also active with the Holy Childhood Association for the Archdiocese of Edmonton. The association raises awareness of poverty in Third World countries by encouraging students in the Archdiocese to pray and make their own donations to their counterparts in countries like China, Malaysia and Sudan.

Priests like Troy will continue to be in the hallways of schools like St. Joseph’s and in the bleachers cheering for the football team at one of the high schools in Edmonton. He hopes that students come to see priests as more than people who “bless things.”

“How do we keep the Catholic identity of our schools when there are no priests in the schools?” says Troy. “Priests should get involved in the school. That’s important for Catholic schools.”

Troy also has his own selfish reasons for being so active in the schools. The kids keep him young and on his feet.

“I learn from the kids,” says Troy. “They say to me, ‘What do you have to worry about anyway?’ So I don’t.”

An extract and reprint from Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association “The Catholic Dimension” Fall 2006 issue, with permission.
Libermann Medallion

On 9th November 2006 Fintan Kilbride was conferred with a Libermann medallion in his room in the Palliative Care unit of Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto. His wife Kenise, his two daughters, son-in-law and two grandchildren were present at the short ceremony.

The medallion is awarded to those whose lives best exemplify the missionary vision of Francis Libermann and Fintan was a very worthy recipient.

He was professed as a member of the Spiritans in Ireland in 1945, and ordained to the priesthood ten years later. He served as a missionary in Nigeria from 1946 to 1970 and was flown on the last plane out of Biafra before the country fell to federal forces. During the civil war he distinguished himself by his involvement in relief services for children suffering from Kwashiorkor. He survived a crash of one of the relief planes.

He came to North America, married in 1973, taught in Neil McNeil High School in Toronto from 1975 until 2002 where he reinforced the Spiritan presence, vision and missionary outlook. After his retirement he continued his involvement with four different humanitarian movements assisting the poor, and especially the children in central and south American countries.

His work with Craig Kielburger in “Save the Children” from the very inception of the movement was of a very hands-on nature and he spent many months in Jamaica, Haiti, Nicaragua and other countries working on the building of schools. He founded Students Crossing Borders to involve young people in these projects. His life reflected the Libermann ideals. On December 21, 2006, Fintan passed away peacefully. The attendance at his funeral and the tributes in the media were some measure of the quality of his life. The Libermann medallion of which he was so proud was engraved with the inscription, “60 Years of Spiritan Service”.

New Doors for St. Joseph’s Church

In a ceremony on October 20th, 2006, new doors were blessed and installed in St. Joseph’s Church, Highland Creek, Ontario in honour of Fr. Peter Fleming, CSSp R.I.P., the former pastor of the parish.

The ceremony was conducted on Peter’s birthday by Fr. David Okenyi, CSSp in the presence of his fellow Spiritans, of Pam Canham and her committee who conceived and financed the project and of many other parishioners. All seven doors have large glass windows and admit a far greater measure of light into the church and narthex than existed before.

Also Bob and Ruthann Thropp who befriended Peter during his ministry and vacations in Florida have put a plaque bearing his name on his favourite tangerine tree, from which he liked to pluck fresh fruit for his breakfast.

Ruthann writes “The tree is thriving as are our memories of our dear friend. He will always remain in our hearts and prayers.”