

# Salute to the new monsignors

In this Year of the Priest, it was touching to see a number of priests recently honored with the title of Monsignor. All are honorable men worthy of the honors.

In this limited space, I obviously can't speak of all of them, but I would like to say a word about a few of them.

First, Monsignor Armstrong who went from monsignor to ... monsignor! Most of us are unaware that there are various "grades" of monsignor. It's something like gasoline. Monsignor Armstrong went from extra to high test or premium! For his valiant and faithful service to the parish and to the world as the rector of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen for 25 years, Monsignor Armstrong was worthy of more than just an upgrade. For such service, he was worthy of canonization!

Father Jarboe, his successor as rector of the Cathedral, was also named monsignor. Again, a title to honor a priesthood well lived, as well as an honor to the position he has accepted. Whether he will also serve as rector for 25 years remains to be seen. I doubt if I will be around to see if this happens. Mortality does have its downside!

Of all those named monsignors, none touched me more than that of Father Ed Miller. I can't think of anyone who deserved the honor more. Ed has been an outstanding pastor of St. Bernardine's parish since he was 29 years old. When Father Ed arrived at the parish, the mailman said to him: "I thought this parish was closed."

As Ed said later: "If the mailman thinks you're closed, you're in trouble."

Resurrection, not death, has been the theme of Ed's pastorate. St. Bernardine's has been a beacon of hope for West Baltimore, and the entire city - "The home under the dome."

At a time when parochial schools are closing, Monsignor Miller has reopened St. Bernardine's School. At a time when many city parishes have dwindled in numbers, St. Bernardine's has grown! Ed has been a singular advocate for the urban church, and his work in evangelization has inspired parishes throughout the country.

My admiration for Monsignor Miller is more than just a 'professional' admiration. Ed and I have a unique distinction of being the only two priests who survived together 12 years of seminary! In 1959, 110 students entered as freshmen in high school at St. Charles College in Catonsville (now Charlestown). Of those 110, only 6 of us were ordained! (That's not exactly an efficient 'feeder system'. Today the minor seminary is no more!)

The whole process consisted of six years at St. Charles - high school plus two years of college, then the last two years of college at St. Mary's Seminary on Paca St. (also closed) and the final four years after college of Theology at St. Mary's Roland Park. Of the six of us ordained out of the original 110, one is among the faithful departed - Father Blair Raum, and two are among the departed faithful - men who have left the active ministry. The sixth priest, Father Bob Aubrey serves as a priest in the mid-West.

My final salute is to Monsignor Hannon. I have known Jim since he was a boy. His brother Andy was a good friend in grade school, at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and Andy was a classmate through eight of those seminary years until he left to marry after college.

The best way to describe the Hannon family is that they were 'salt of the earth' - wonderful people. Kindness was always a hallmark of their parents, and of Jim, Andy, and their sister, Pat. St. Paul in his letter to Timothy speaks of the Spirit who makes us "strong, loving, and wise." That sounds like the Hannons to me!

In saluting all the Monsignors, I'm aware of how limited any worldly honor is. As Monsignor Miller said so well: "The only honor I really want is to hear the Lord say: 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'" That's the only honor that lasts forever. That's the only honor that really matters.