

GOD'S RHODE ISLAND ROMAN

Reflections on the Life of Vincent F. G. McAloon,

Honorary Member of the Eastern Province of Brothers of Holy Cross



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Vincent McAloon was born on the 4th of March, 1910 in Pawtucket Rhode Island. He died at Dujarie House Infirmary at Holy Cross Village, Notre Dame, Indiana on 9th of May, 2002.

I shall attempt in the time given me to explain to you how this unique individual became such a beloved associate of the Congregation of Holy Cross, especially the members of the Eastern Province of Brothers.

Vincent Ferrer Gerard Mc Aloon was the third of five children, being preceded by an older brother and sister and followed by a younger brother and sister. He was named after his father who in turn was named after St. Vincent Ferrer.

As a youth Vince favored his father, who ran an undertaking business, still in existence in Pawtucket and on Block Island, a small vacation mecca twelve miles off the Rhode Island coast. Vince describes his dad as the quintessential gentleman. A devout Catholic, quiet, unassuming and sincere. A rock of tranquility in the often times turbulent sea of family affairs. His mother he respected and indicates in his autobiography that she was the boss in the family, referring to her as "the sheriff". Much of his youth was spent in avoiding the discipline this stern Irish Catholic matron imposed on her brood.

Early on in life, Vince grasped and clung to his religion, beginning the practice of attending daily Mass while still in grade school. Over the years his spirituality centered on Our Blessed Mother, whom he felt took a keen interest in him and protected him in countless ways over the course of his life. His other model for living the Christian life was St. Francis of Assisi who pointed the ways of poverty, charity, self giving, and hospitality-virtues that were to be the earmarks of his long life.

His primary education was at the local parish school and the local public schools. He bounced back and forth between them during those eight years due to the fact that he was expelled from each because of his habit, as he says, of desiring to be "the center of attention". More than once he refers to himself as "Peck's Bad Boy" (the forerunner of "Denis the Menace" of today's comic strips).

When he graduated from elementary school, Vince entered St. Raphael's Academy, a new school opened that year by the De La Salle Christian Brothers. Much of his first

year was spent in engaging in the pranks for which he had become famous. The result was that he was compelled to repeat his freshman year. To any who asked why this was so he informed them that he volunteered to stay back so that he could guide the new Freshmen when they arrived the following year. He remained at "St. Ray's" for two years and then informed his parents that he felt he had a vocation to the Christian Brothers and asked permission to join the order. His folks gave their consent and at sixteen years of age he left home permanently.

So, off he went to Barrytown, New York where he did his final two years of high school and his year of Novitiate. From Barrytown, he and his fellow scholastics moved to the order's house of studies at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. It was there that he did his first two years of his higher education. Later on in this talk I'll relate an incident wherein I was of some influence in reuniting him with an old acquaintance of his from his Washington days.

At the end of his second year of college, Vince became convinced that he was not to spend the rest of his life in the company of the sons of St. John Baptist De La Salle. He did not renew his vows and headed back to Rhode Island. When he got home he sat down with his dad trying to figure out what he was going to do. The elder Mc Aloon asked him if he would be interested in attending the University of Notre Dame. Vince jumped at the opportunity, but had no idea how this was to be accomplished. His father told him that he should go across the street and consult with their neighbor who might be able to pull a few strings in his favor. The neighbor was a woman by the name of Doctor Ellen Ryan Jolly who had recently produced a popular book entitled Nuns in the Battlefield, a history of the nursing sisters in the Civil War. Dr. Jolly was well known to Notre Dame, being the first woman to obtain an honorary doctorate from that university. She knew Father Charles O'Donnell, then its president, so she put in a call to him and asked that the school accept her young neighbor. Father O'Donnell told her that Vince should set out the very next day for South Bend. Thus began Vince's long association with Notre Dame and the Congregation of Holy Cross.

Without delay, Vince headed by auto to South Bend. Upon arrival at the campus he took up residence in Baden Hall. He turned the keys to his car over to the Prefect of Discipline. Student cars had to be garaged off campus and the keys were to be kept by the prefect.

Shortly after his arrival, under the direction of the future Cardinal John O'Hara, Vince helped to form a chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul Society on the campus. It was then he used his Irish ingenuity to convince Father O'Hara that it would be a good thing if the group had a car available to them to carry out their mission. As it happened he knew of a reliable vehicle for just such purposes. Thus the keys to his car were returned to him to be kept in the headquarters of the Society and to be available to any of the members who might need it to transport food, clothing or other necessities to the needy of the South Bend area. Vince is proud of the fact that for the next two years the privilege of having access to his car was abused by neither himself nor any of the members of the Society.

It was during his undergraduate days at Notre Dame that he was inspired by a talk given by Fulton Sheen to found a branch of the Third Order of Saint Francis on the campus. Eventually the group, made up of students from both Notre Dame and Saint Mary's numbered some 60 members. Being a member of the Third Order was something that Vince cherished all his life. It brought him into intimate contact with, after Our Blessed Lady, his second greatest hero, St. Francis of Assisi, who became his spiritual model. From this point on he increased his dedication to the simple life, and a reading of his diary for the last ten years of his life, indicates how the simplest things in life brought real joy to his soul.

As a Senior Vince was housed in Sorin Hall, where his room gave him a clear and close view of the statue of Mary high atop the golden dome. He graduated in 1934 and wondered what life held in store for him. He applied for and received a scholarship sponsored by the Knights of Columbus which assisted a graduate student to pursue a course of studies an N.D. which Vince calls "boyology", a course of studies that investigated ways that were available to assist the youth of the country. In the 1935 scholastic year he lived in Lyons Hall; in 1936 Morrissey Hall was where he hung up his cap. The scholarship ran for two years, but Vince did not get a degree for his effort.

When the money ran out, he searched around for a way to spend more time at N.D. His appeals to Our Lady and St. Francis, brought him a unique opportunity where he was able to spend long hours of the day at the university library.

During this period of his life, he would rise early and head to the log chapel, where he would serve up to eight masses for visiting priests each day. From there it was a stop

at the Old College where the cook, gave him a breakfast to which only a lumberjack or a mendicant could do justice. Then off to the library to spend the day in reading - theology, literature, philosophy, history - all his favorite disciplines and each attacked as the mood moved him. Came supper time he headed for the cafeteria. He would pick up a discarded issue of the South Bend Tribune or the Chicago Tribune and pretend to be reading it. Actually, he was looking over the top of the journal, scanning the tables in the dining hall for scraps of food left by the students. When he spotted something worthwhile, he pounced on it and wrapped it in a napkin before the waiters could clear the table and he would be off to enjoy his feast. He said his favorite perch for this daily adventure was at Father O'Hara's table because it had the best overall view of the dining room. Of course he had to make sure that the President was not using the table himself. At night he slept on one of the back pews in the Chapel of Cavanaugh Hall. Before heading to the Log Chapel in the morning he went to one of the lavatories in Lyons Hall and washed and shaved.

During his work for the St. Vincent De Paul Society he had become acquainted with a resident of "Dog Town", a squatter's area just east of the campus. The person he knew was a woman by the name of "Grandma Tolman" who lived in a reconverted school house. Vince convinced her to let him sleep on the sofa of her simple living quarters. He, in turn, would bring her what food he could get by whatever means his wits could devise. Thus, for the remainder of his time doing private studies at N.D., he abandoned sleeping quarters in the chapel of Cavanaugh Hall for a softer place to rest his bones.

About this time he was befriended by a priest by the name of Phil Sharf, who suggested that he accept a position as a teacher at St. Bede's school in Peru, Illinois, a boarding institution run by the Benedictines. By this time he lived more like St. Francis than at anytime previously. So he was lacking in funds to get himself to the school and also the clothes that would be appropriate to the teaching profession. Father Sharf took him to Gilbert's in South Bend and had him properly outfitted, and bought him a rail ticket to Peru. By chance, the day he was to leave he received a wire from his father saying that he would be passing through South Bend on his way back to Pawtucket from an undertakers convention in Chicago and hoped he would be able to have a short visit with his son. Vince was to leave for Illinois an hour after his father's train arrived in South Bend. So on the station platform, the two held a brief reunion before they boarded their respective trains to head off in opposite directions. Vince was forever grateful to St. Francis that he could greet his dad in his new "spiffy duds".

After a two year stint at St. Bede's he was asked to take on the task of the National Field Secretary to the Third Order of St. Francis. He traveled the country by car, depending on the hospitality of Franciscan monestaries and other religious houses as he visited high schools and colleges encouraging students to live their faith by establishing branches of the Third Order. During this time he volunteered to go to Jamaica to substitute in a high school there for a nun who had come back to the States to do graduate work. While there on weekends he assisted the local Jesuit priest by traveling by mule to the outlying districts of his parish, reading scripture and preaching to the natives.

World War II had already broken out and Vince received a two year deferment due to the fact that he was a member of the Third Order. However, in the middle of the conflict he received a message with a facsimile signature of F.D.R. instructing him to report for military service. So, off he went.

Army life was not Vince's cup of tea, but he made the most of it. He tells the story that on the troop ship to North Africa he catechized two G.I.s in the faith, one a Jew and the other a Presbyterian. Several months later after the liberation of Rome he ushered them to the Vatican and arranged for them to be baptized at St. Peter's, then to a confessional for their first Confessions, out to the sacristy where they found a retired bishop who gave them communion and confirmed them, all in the space of 40 minutes.

Much of the war on the trek up the Italian peninsula he was a Chaplain's assistant, setting up the times of confession, getting all ready for the celebration of the Eucharist, and playing hymns at the services on a small portable organ that was part of the chaplain's kit. and, where possible, assisting those soldiers in need. Thus much of his spare time was spent in reading letters to and writing letters for his illiterate soldier buddies, of which there were several in his unit.

At one point he was threatened with court martial by one of the officers. It seems that it was the army habit to take the bread that was not consumed at the daily mess and have it made into bread pudding for the following day's meal. Somewhere near Livorno his unit was encamped not far from an orphanage run by nuns. They came and asked him if there was any food that could be given to their charges. Vince, immediately thought of the leftover bread. He reasoned that the troops did not take the bread pudding that was supplied them, so he thought it would be O.K. to take the bread to give to the nuns to feed

their hungry brood. A good idea, charitable and in the spirit of St. Francis. However, the powers that be were not amused and thus the threat of military discipline. His immediate penalty was to dig a new latrine for his unit, which ditch was dubbed "McAloon's Memorial"! He escaped a more serious penalty by being transferred to assist a chaplain in another unit.

So it went with him through Italy and into Germany. Not long after the end of the war he was sent to France to be repatriated. His ship to New York left from Marseillaise. The most precious souvenir he brought back with him was a little wire-haired terrier that he had adopted early in his travels in Italy. Against all regulations he got Allegro, the dog's name, onto the ship in France and off the ship in America. His greatest problem was getting Allegro into his family home where he was not sure how the beast would be received by his mother, "the Sheriff". Not to fear, St. Francis, the great lover of animals, softened the heart of that formidable woman and the two became great friends. Allegro remained with his mother until he died of old age.

A book that made a tremendous impression on Vince was Hillaire Belloc's The Path to Rome, in which the author recounts his pilgrimage on foot from France to the Eternal City. 1950 was declared a Holy Year by Pope Pius XII and the Vatican did encourage any hearty soul to make a walking journey to the center of Christendom, assuring those who made the attempt a plenitude of indulgences and graces. Vince was convinced he was called to do this and he was especially attracted to the idea of following in the steps of his beloved model, Saint Francis, who often made his way from Assisi to Rome and back during his lifetime.

His plan was to travel from New York on a Portugese steamer to Lisbon. From there he would walk to Fatima, to visit Our Lady's Shrine. Thence across Portugal and Spain to Barcelona to beg passage on a ship to Genoa. From the city of the birthplace of Columbus he would hike to Assisi, trying to time his arrival with the Feast of St. Francis. He would end his journey with the final leg "a piede" to Rome. It was his intention to travel with no funds in his pockets and to stop at monasteries (preferably Franciscan) and beg for food and overnight lodging. Where no religious houses were available, he would stop at any house or farm along the way. He carried with him a letter written in Latin by Father Thomas Plassman, O.F.M., the President of St. Bonaventure University in Olean, New York, which explained that he was a Franciscan Tertiary making a Holy Year

Pilgrimage to Rome and asking that he be extended hospitality. He also carried a paper, also in Latin with the formula for Confession. Thus equipped, he set off for Europe.

On the voyage to Lisbon he was befriended by a Mr. Foley, a Brooklyn native also on his way to Fatima. He explained that Vince would have difficulty being allowed to land in Portugal if he could not demonstrate to the authorities there that he had sufficient funds to maintain himself during his stay. Foley offered to lend Vince a money belt with \$3,000.00 in it so that he would not be turned back by the customs officials. Once safely beyond the point of entry the two Americans rendezvoused in the terminal's mens room where the money belt again exchanged hands. But his walking tour did not begin here. Foley invited Vince to travel by bus to Fatima with him at his expense. So it was that the walk to Rome was delayed.

In Fatima Vince stumbled upon a Father Cirrincione, an old friend of his from Rochester, New York. The good priest took him to a monastery of the Consolata Fathers who happened to be in need of an English speaking person to assist them with their correspondence in that language. Vince agreed to give them what aid he could, but made it clear, even after he was offered a permanent position, that he could not stay as it was his goal to reach Assisi by October 4th, the Feast of St. Francis.

In mid August he was set to begin his trek. However, a Carmelite priest forbade him to do so because he would have to travel through sparsely inhabited areas of Portugal in which there was little hope for food and shelter. He took Vince to the railroad station, bought a ticket to Madrid for him and waited on the platform to make sure our traveler stayed on the train.

From Madrid he started walking north, penniless, to the port city of Barcelona, and it was then that he first experienced the "Franciscan Perfect Joy" described by St. Francis from an event on one of his pilgrimages. One night Francis knocked at the door of one of his own foundations. It was opened by the Porter, who took one look at the shadowy traveler and slammed the door in his face telling him he was not welcome. According to St. Francis this was perfect joy to be rejected as Christ was rejected by his own. Vince experienced rejection at more than one friary, being told that the Superior was not available or that the house was full. On the trek he found that the hospitality of the Capuchins far outdid that of the Friars Minor. Once, having been rejected by the Superior of a friary the

Brother Porter took him aside and pointed out the Capuchin house a few blocks down the street. Vince was warmly received there.

By now it was getting toward the middle of September and he knew that he would not reach his goal of October 4th in Assisi by walking along the coast. He tried to get work on a ship sailing to Genoa, but met with no luck. So he went to the American consulate and sent a wire to his brother asking him to purchase a ticket on a ship going from Barcelona to Genoa. His brother obliged him and thus he sailed for Italy. Since time was getting short Vince's brother also sent him a train ticket from Genoa to Assisi. Thus he was able to arrive in the city of St. Francis on the eve of the feast.

After joining other Friars for the traditional festivities in honor of their founder, Vince at last set out on foot from Assisi to Rome, traveling the same roads used by St. Francis. He tried to do thirty miles per day. One evening as he was walking along he was stopped by two members of the Carabinieri, the elite unit of the Italian Police. He explained that he was a mendicant pilgrim on his way to Rome for the Holy Year. He displayed his passport to prove he was an American citizen. They insisted that he ride with them to the local diocesan seminary for lodging. Like Belloc before him when offered a ride, he "trailed one foot out of the jeep and touched the ground at regular intervals." The remainder of the trip to Rome he did on foot.

Vince had fallen in love with Rome when he had come there with the American forces during the war. It was his intention to settle permanently there. Through the good offices of his friend Msgr. Walter Carroll, a priest from Pittsburgh attached to the office of the Secretary of State of the Vatican, he got a job working for the USO in Rome. After a couple of years with the group he was asked to go to Okinawa, Japan temporarily as the Head of the USO operation there.

After his duties were finished in Okinawa, he returned to the States where he learned that the Brothers of Holy Cross had established a boarding school in Rome for American students. He looked upon this as a gift sent by God. He immediately contacted Brother Loyola Christoph, the Headmaster, and sought a teaching position which he got. He booked passage on the ship to Naples that the Brothers were traveling on, but, as luck would have it and in the tradition of religious communities, the Provincial had supplied an extra Brother to the faculty of the Rome school, Notre Dame International. Brother

Loyola told him that he would not be able to hire him. Vince set sail with the Brothers anyway, hoping that some type of work in Rome would come his way. On the Atlantic crossing he jokingly threatened to throw the Brother replacing him overboard!

Once in Rome he got a job at the reception desk of a small hotel near the Vatican. One day he happened to run into one of the Brothers from Notre Dame International School who asked him if he knew of anyone who might be in need of a teaching job as there was an opening at NDI. Vince jumped at the opportunity. He went to the school and immediately got the position. This was in 1955. He remained at the school until it closed its doors and the property was sold in 1991.

During his years at Notre Dame International School he was teacher, counselor, assistant librarian, telephoneista and all around jack of all trades. When not working at the school he devoted himself to founding and maintaining the Notre Dame Hospitality Center in downtown Rome, a place of welcome, relaxation and hospitality to the alumni of Notre Dame and their families and friends. When the quarters of the Notre Dame club were no longer available he moved the operation to the Ristorante Scoglio Di Frisio, a well known eatery run by his close friends, the Russo family. He also served for many years as the Commander of the American Legion in Italy and later was designated as chaplain of the same group.

While he lived in Rome for many years he maintained an apartment in an eight floor walk up. This area was sacred to Vince, and no one, not even visiting family members, ever crossed the threshold. Sometime in the mid 1980s he was forced to leave his apartment, his "digs" as he called them, as the owner was selling the building and Vince could not afford the rent the new owner was asking. He was able to obtain quarters in one of the apartment houses that boarded the football field of Notre Dame International. One day he asked me over to his "digs" for a drink. The apartment building was somewhat in the style of the present Generalate of the Congregation of Holy Cross. About five stories high, each apartment of generous proportions, bordered with spacious terraces. The apartment belonged to someone else who did not use it, except for a few weeks a year when they had to come to Rome. I told Vince that it was a beautiful set up. He said to me, "I don't live here, I just look after the place for the owner. I live in the maids quarters. Come, I'll show you." He led me into a small area off the kitchen. It contained a room no larger than we had as novices at Rolling Prairie. Simple cot-like bed, a small writing table,

a straight back chair and a hot plate. Next to it a lavatory, all white tile floor to ceiling with a commode, a sink and a shower head sticking out of the wall. When the shower was used everything in the room was drenched by the spray of the water! A truly Spartan set up, worthy of a follower of St. Francis.

He stayed there a couple of years and finally, when the number of boarding students at N.D.I. declined to such an extent that a portion of one of the dorms was left empty, he was invited by Brother Joseph Umile, the Headmaster, to move to quarters on the campus. Thus from 1986 until he returned to the States in 1991, he made the school the site of his "digs".

Vince was a tremendous asset to the school. He always made himself available to those in need - students, faculty, parents and visitors. He used his connections both in the city and in the Vatican, to assist all who sought his help. One of the highlights of his year, an event in which he took tremendous pride was the annual St. Patrick's Day party that he hosted, originally for many seasons at the Scoglio di Frisio and in latter years at Notre Dame International School. He would bedeck himself in as much Kelly green he could find and give an Irish greeting to one and all with a raised glass of what he termed "a wee touch of the creature".

Like many others, he was convinced that garlic was the secret to longevity. Another faculty member, Brother Bernard Klim, also was a devotee of munching a couple of cloves of garlic a day. When he was living at the school, Vince always attended Morning Prayer and Mass with the Brothers. For obvious reasons the chair between Vince and Brother Bernard was avoided by the other members of our community. The odor of sanctity in our small prayer room could be overpowering!

One of the most touching events I attended when I was stationed in Rome was the surprise 80th birthday party that was held in his honor. The display of affection accorded to him by the religious and lay faculty, the Italian staff and the students and their parents was a touching tribute to him.

When it came time for him to return to the States, the Provincial of the Eastern Province of Brothers, Brother John Gleason, now the Vicar General of the Congregation, assured Vince that the Province would assume the responsibility for his care for the

remainder of his life. He offered him accommodations in any of our community houses. Vince chose his favorite place, Notre Dame University, and was delighted to accept the third floor "tower" room over the main entrance to Columba Hall. Once again he was close to two places dedicated to Our Lady, the magnificent statue atop the golden dome and the grotto at which he spent many hours in prayer.

His life back at Notre Dame was not an idle one, even though he was an octogenarian. He took up duties as a volunteer giving tours of Sacred Heart Basilica and the Log Chapel. More than one innocent visitor was admonished to "get rid of the gum" or to "doff the hat" before they entered the sacred precincts. According to a diary that he kept during those years one of his pet peeves was the fact that people did not attend the weekend liturgies in their "Sunday best" as most of us did in our youths. Particularly irksome to him were the cantors and lectors at the Mass who did not appear in jacket, shirt and tie for the men and skirts for the women.

During his Columba Hall days he continued his life long practice of rising early and spending an hour in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Office and liturgy with the community were a must, rosary at the grotto, weather permitting, off to do his volunteer work, and finally a late supper over the hot plate in his room late in the evening. He did not eat dinner with the other members of the house as the meal was served too early. He clung to the dining habits of his forty years in Rome and ate around eight o'clock, a much more civilized time to do so.

Ever on the alert to pay homage to both Our Lady and to St. Francis of Assisi he records in the diary that he began in 1992, a project that was very dear to his heart. On the 14th of February he learned that the Order of Friars Minor were closing one of their facilities, that at Mayslake, Illinois. Through a contact with one of the Franciscans there, a Brother Herbert Rempe, he learned that they were looking for a home for their Portiuncula Chapel. Alarms, bells and fireworks were set off in Vince's imagination. What a grand gift for the sesquicentennial of Notre Dame University for a Portiuncula Chapel to be erected on the very spot on the campus that had been the site of a similar edifice built by Father Sorin.. I believe that the location was on the level area of Columba Hall's lawn that faced the Grotto. (This chapel was razed after Sorin's death and the bricks were used in the construction of the field house). He set about the task with enthusiasm and sought the approval of the provincials of both the Indiana and Midwest Provinces,

Father Carl Ebey and Brother Thomas Moser respectively, as well as the Rector of Sacred Heart Basilica, now Bishop Dan Jenky. Both Provincials said they would have to get approval from their councils. In the meantime, using a vast network of friends he had built up over the years, he began to gather promises of funds to pay for the project. One former student, now head of his own construction firm, offered the possibility of moving the structure via helicopter from Illinois to South Bend. Each step in the progress of the project is recorded until June 17 when he reports that Father Ebey was not able to convince his council of the worthiness of the project. Vince's comment on this disappointment was typical. He writes: "At holy hour this a.m. it dawned on me that Our Lady is not asking for a physical Portiuncula (as with Christ and Francis) but to come to the rescue of her NOTRE DAME! 'My school is in danger of losing its Christ-Centered being!' I see now and dedicate myself to assist in turning-it-around, back to Christocentric. NO OTHER WAY!"

Among the honors that were accorded to Vince over his life, three stand out. On the feast of St. Bonaventure in July, 1971, he was made a member of the Order of Friars Minor in recognition of his 35 years as a member of the Third Order of Saint Francis. Few other men, among them the late Cardinal Richard Cushing, have been so honored.

In 1976 the University of Notre Dame Alumni Association awarded him the Sorin Award for his 25 years of voluntary service at the Rome Hospitality Center. Vince often called this citation as his "Eagle Scout Award".

Finally on March 28th, 1998, at the stroke of a pen, Vincent Ferrer McAloon, S.P.Q.R., Secretary of the Notre Dame Class of 1934, was formally made an honorary member of the Brothers of Holy Cross, Eastern Province, with all the rights and privileges thereof.

When his health deteriorated to the extent that he needed professional care, he was moved to Dujarie House. On March 29th of this year Vince suffered a stroke which left him partially paralyzed and with difficulties in speaking. He died on May 9th. His wake and funeral took place at Sacred Heart Basilica and he was buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery as close to his beloved Notre Dame as possible.

I like to think that legions of the heavenly hosts that welcomed him home included the two young soldiers he converted on the troop ship crossing the Atlantic during the dark

days of World War II; certainly Mr. Foley of Brooklyn who helped him on his journey to Fatima; and the countless alumni and friends of Notre Dame whom he helped at the N.D. hospitality center in Rome, not to mention the countless students at N.D.I. who were the beneficiaries of his wit and wisdom; his many associates among the Franciscans and Holy Cross; the father he loved and admired so much and his spouse "the Sheriff"; all crowded behind a smiling Virgin Mary with St. Francis at her side. Now he knows the true meaning of "Perfect Joy"-- to be welcomed by his own.

Before I leave I would like to share three brief episodes in my relationship with Vince.

The first took place in the middle of the past decade. I was working for the Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware as administrator of Marydale, a Senior Citizen housing project. I was in the habit each weekend of attending the Saturday Vigil Mass at the Cathedral of St. Peter in downtown Wilmington. The Rector of the Cathedral was also the Vicar General of the Diocese, a worthy priest with whom I became good friends. Every couple of months I would communicate either by letter or by phone with Vince and in one of my letters I mentioned the clergyman, Msgr. Paul Taggart. Immediately I got a note back from Vince saying that while he was living in Washington, D.C. many years ago he had known a seminarian from Wilmington by the name of Taggart who used to do street preaching as a part of his study of homiletics. Could my friend be the same person?

The next Saturday evening, after the Vigil Liturgy, I went into the sacristy and greeted the good Monsignor. I said to him, "I am going to mention a name to you to see if you recognize it." "What is it?", says he. "Vince Mc Aloon", says I. "Vince McAloon", he fairly shouted at me. "Is he still around? I remember him well, but have not heard from or about him in decades." I brought him up-to-date on Vince's history and said I would do what I could to reunite them. While living at Columba Hall, Vince came each year to our Jubilee Weekend at St. Joseph's Center in Valatie, New York. That year he extended his stay in the East by a few days so that he could come to Wilmington to pay a visit to his old friend, the former street preacher, now Msgr. Paul Taggart. I felt honored to have been able to have engineered their reunion.

While we were in Rome during a period of about three and a half weeks at the Christmas holidays, the school became as quiet as a tomb on the Appian Way. Students

and faculty were away and the Italian staff worked shorter hours. It happened that on one occasion the only three of us who stayed at the school for this period were Brother Bernard Klim, Vince and myself. One day Vince came to me and said that, as he was walking around the grounds of the school, he came upon a plastic bag that had been tossed over the fence onto our front lawn. He came to the conclusion, I don't know by what means, that the bag contained a bomb. "What should we do with it?", he asked me. "Stay away from it.", says I. My answer was not good enough for him. He called the American Embassy in Rome and asked their advice. He came back to me with the information he had received, to wit, if he brought it down to the embassy they would examine the contents of the bag to determine how serious the situation was. Then he said. "If I could get someone to drive me to the embassy I could sit in the front seat holding the bag and would jump out and run in and have it inspected. Or, I could drive to the embassy and someone could go with me and hold the bag and run in with it to have it inspected." Notice, he said "someone" expecting me to volunteer for one of the jobs. Neither had any appeal to me especially driving through Rome traffic with a possible explosive device either in my lap or right next to me! Another call was made to the embassy which advised him to put it in an out of the way place, with a heavy object over it until the Headmaster returned. So the bag was placed near the garages with a wheelbarrow over it. Brother Joe Umile, our fearless Headmaster, upon his return unveiled the unwanted object to find a rather stale seasonal Christmas crustata in the bag!

Finally, this episode which took place again during one of the Christmas vacations. One of the attractions of the Brothers' Rec Room at Notre Dame International School was the fact that there was a small fireplace along one of the walls. During the cold, quiet evenings I used to set a fire in it and delighted in spending the solitude in watching the flames dancing on the hearth. Along about eleven o'clock Vince would return from the Scoglio and the two of us would have a touch of the creature while he told me stories from his past. One night he came in with a crockery jug of "Tellemore Dew", an excellent Irish whiskey that had been given to him by the father of Mark Kennedy, one of our students. Mr. Kennedy was the Irish ambassador to the Republic of Italy, to Turkey and to Lybia. Vince told me he had the creature since the previous St. Patrick's Day and was waiting for the proper occasion to uncork it. The time to do so had arrived. So the two of us, over the next three nights, by the glowing embers of the cheery fire, managed to do justice to the creature.

To conclude, I invite you dear historians, to join me sometime before the end of the conference, to pay tribute to my good friend and an honorary member of the Brothers of Holy Cross, by saluting his memory with “ a touch of the creature”, a wee dram of Tellamore Dew. I know Vince would approve of this gesture will return our salute!

Sources used in writing this paper:

Just One of Her Loyal Sons, the autobiography of Vincent McAloon.

The Diary of Vincent McAloon for 1992.

Adventures of a Franciscan Layman, Daniel M. Madden (cover story in the Catholic Digest, October, 1972.

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My own personal reminisces.

B.R.G., c.s.c.