

## **DAYS IN THE TEXAS MISSION (1935-1945)**

BY FR. CULHANE, CSC

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When Fr. Burns, CSC was provincial, he had the practice of visiting Washington, the house of theology, in the months before ordination to discuss with the deacons what they would be doing as priests. When it came to my turn Father Burns wanted to know if I still desired to go to the foreign missions. I replied that I did. He replied that that decision rested with the Superior General and that if the General did not send me to the foreign missions, that he (Father Burns) would send me to Texas to work on the Mexican missions. I was to learn enough Spanish between then and ordination to be able to hear confessions in Spanish. This last was impossible because of all the details and the exams before ordination. Our class was ordained June 24, 1935. My first assignment was St. Helen's Church, Georgetown, Texas. I was supposed to take over for Father Frank Drummey who died the week before we were ordained.

I arrived in Austin with my companion, Father Philip Scharf, CSC. I was told by Father Joseph McGuire, CSC, President of St. Edward's University that I was not to live in Georgetown, since I was used to companionship in the seminary. I would ruin my priesthood by living alone. He would thus inform the Provincial. Instead I was to accompany Father Walter O'Donnell to Georgetown on Sundays, which I did. I was also to teach at St. Edward's.

That same autumn Father Angus MacDonald became sick. He had creeping paralysis. It became imperative to return him to the infirmary at Notre Dame. So I went with Father MacDonald a few Sundays to see where these missions were. When Father MacDonald left for Notre Dame, the two missions of Andice and Bertran were closed.

On January 6, 1936 the Rev. Alfred Mendez, C.S.C., who had grown up speaking Spanish, arrived to take charge of the missions. He was to succeed Father O'Donnell who was transferred to Sacred Heart Church, New Orleans during the previous Christmas holidays. It might be noted here that Father Burns had intended that Father Mendez teach at Notre Dame, eventually taking over the Modern Language Dep't. Father James W. Donahue, C.S.C., Superior General sent Father Mendez to Texas when Father Burns was in India on Visitation.

With Father Mendez's arrival a new era began for the Mexican missions of the Holy Cross Fathers. Some time before Father Donahue had informed Father Patrick J. O'Reilly, CSC, that he (the Superior General) would make up for the neglect of the past. He fulfilled that promise by sending Father Mendez, as well as being responsible for Father Culhane's arrival on the missions. There being no place to stay on the missions the two priests had to reside at St. Edward's and also to teach. The missions of Andice and Bertran having been closed when Father MacDonald left were now reopened. The two priests alternated the missions. For two weeks one of us would be at Georgetown while the other went to Andice and Bertran. Then for two weeks the one who had been at Georgetown would take the other two missions.

This arrangement lasted from January 1936 to January 1937 when Father Mendez was taken sick. He was to be off the missions until November. It was during their first year together that the two priests realized that a new church was imperative at Andice. Mass had been said in an old theater. When this was razed without notice Mass was transferred to the Mexican cemetery. Some years previous, Father O'Reilly had built a small open aired chapel there so he could say Mass at funerals. Mass was said there after the theater ceased to be. During cold and inclement weather Mass was said at the home of Juan Zavala. (A humorous note should be added here about the old theater.

We used the stage for the altar and the old ticket office was used for confessions. One Easter Sunday I opened the door to the ticket office to begin confessions, as I did so a very frightened chicken flew out. I saw three eggs on the chair and in my magnanimity I gave the eggs to a Mexican woman.)

Father Philip Scharf was sent to Texas to begin the Negro apostolate. He was assigned to this work and I to the Mexicans. Like me he was forced to stay at St. Edward's, but because he was a musician and an organist he was assigned to take charge of the choir at the University. He never did begin work among the Negroes. Later that fall Father Frank Weber was sent to Texas to begin the work with the Negroes. In these pages I have not mentioned the year and a half that I taught Catechism in the Martine home. It was because of my work there with the children and the adults that Father Burns on one of his visits asked Archbishop Droessarts for a church, which became St. Ignatius. (At this time, south Austin was part of the archdiocese of San Antonio)

In the months that we had been together both of us, Father Mendez and I, had written friends and relatives for help. When the church became a necessity we renewed our efforts. Father Mendez wrote to The Catholic Church Extension Society for help. They promised us \$1,000 if we would name the church in honor of St. Rose of Lima. Father Burns thought that he could save us still more money by sending Brother Jerome Steffes, C.S.C., as builder of the church. The church was to cost us an extra thousand dollars because of Brother. We had to buy him a second hand truck to go back and forth. (Father Weber paid half towards the truck as he would be using it after Brother was through. Brother also bought an electric saw only to discover that there was no electricity in Andice. Incidentally the saw was later stolen.

It was just before the building of the church was to begin that Fr. Mendez was taken sick. So it devolved on Father Culhane to have all the worries and headaches of the new church. From January until July 1937 I was alone on the missions. In late July Father Fred Schmidt, C.S.C. arrived

The Andice church was blessed by Bishop C.E. Byrne of Galveston in November 1937.

In the fall of 1937 Father Burns told me to look for a rectory so we could live on the missions. I was to rent a home if I could not buy one. Fr. Burns added that we could not do effective work for the Mexicans until we lived among them. Knowing Father O'Reilly's experience in buying property for a church I asked the McFarland family to scout around for a property.

It developed that the Gees who lived across the street from the church were moving to San Antonio. They owned two houses in Georgetown, one on Austin Ave., and the other in which they lived. Their house paralleled the church. The Gees had intended to sell this property and keep the house on Austin Ave. Or rather it was just the opposite they were going to sell the Austin Ave. house and keep the one in which they were living. The McFarland family approached Mr. Owen Sherrill the local real estate dealer to arrange the sale. When Father O'Reilly attempted to buy property for a church in Georgetown he tried to keep things secret. He was to tell me that he had an option on a piece of property on the main St. which was Austin Ave. The owner wanted \$600 and Father O'Reilly was going to buy the property. Somehow the word leaked out that the place would be for a Catholic church. The owner hiked the price to \$6,000. Father O'Reilly told me with a smile on his face the fellow is still waiting for me to buy.

With this new development Father O'Reilly asked Mr. Leonard Schneider, Vice President of the American National Bank to look for property. He did so, giving the impression that he wanted it for himself. He bought property from Mr. John Sharp (who lived up to his name). It was not until the deeds were recorded in the court house that Sharp and others found that it was for a Catholic church.

It was Bishop Byrne who told me when I moved to Georgetown to beware of Mr. Sharp in my dealings with him as he lived up to his name. At the time Mr. Sharp was the postmaster of Georgetown.

When the Gees heard that we were looking for a rectory they agreed to sell their own home and keep the other place. When all the negotiations for the sale of the house were complete I wired Father Burns for permission to close the deal. He wired back his approval but told me to hold everything in abeyance until Father Mendez arrived from Notre Dame to complete the deal. The Gees, the McFarland's, Mr. Sherrill and I had spent Oct. and Nov. working out details so that when Father Mendez arrived all he had to do was sign the papers.

On Dec. 17, 1937 Father Fred Schmidt and I moved into our new home. The new rectory cost \$2700 to which the

Catholic Church Extension Society gave \$500. It was very sparsely furnished. There was one bed, two chairs and the electric plate from the little room behind the church where Father Drummey had lived for a year. I was to occupy it about six weeks while negotiating the new rectory. Father Schmidt was staying at night with the Daniels. We had moved some weeks before from St. Edward's. The Sisters of Charity at Seton Hospital gave us a bed and sheets so one of us would not have to sleep in the floor. My aunt, Mrs. James Toomey sent us sheets, towels and blankets. One blanket that she sent us was made by Father Culhane's great grandmother. Sister Cor Marie, C.S.C., was the guardian angel of the new rectory. She said that every house needs a feminine touch. She gave us a dining room table with six matching chairs, a buffet, a china closet and dishes and also a picture of the Last Supper. She also gave us two handed painted scenes from Notre Dame, done by a Holy Cross Sister. Sister Cor Marie had the nuns and girls at St. Mary's Academy; sew drapes and curtains for the windows. When these were finished she, together with Sister Loretta Clare and Sister Monessa came and put them up. The Sisters worked all afternoon and I invited them to stay for supper. I should mention here that Mrs. Louis Lowe gave us an electric stove. . Until she did Father Schmidt and I used a small 6 in. electric plate that we had used in the sacristy. That was why I was able to invite the nuns to stay for supper. I went to the store for groceries. At first Father Schmidt would not eat as he said we were breaking outside relations and that no woman should eat in a priest's rectory.. After a few months we had to get rid of the electric stove as Father Schmidt often left the burners on all night. He would leave them on low, thinking that he turned them off. We then got a gas stove in the trade for the electric stove.

Father Mendez, although nominal pastor of St. Helen's did not do any work on the missions except to help the priests when they needed help. He resided at St. Mary's Academy. After we had been living at Georgetown for some time Bishop Byrne wanted to know who was the actual pastor because he was corresponding with me, yet I was not the pastor. The Bishop said that if Father Mendez was to be the pastor that he had to live in Georgetown. He could not live in Austin and be pastor at Georgetown at the same time. Thus it was that I became pastor. Father Mendez basked in the accolades that were coming to both of us (he and I) from the Superior General, but he was never one to live on the missions, cook his own meals and live the rugged life that the priests were to live. Whenever Father Mendez or myself were praised for the work both of us readily admitted that we were reaping the harvest of all the hard work of those who went before us, especially Father Patrick O'Reilly, Father Walter O'Donnell; Father Angus MacDonald and Father Frank Drummey. Father Walter O'Donnell thought that we were two upstarts taking all the praise and not giving credit to the older priests who labored long and thankless as far as the Co+mmunity was concerned. We always made sure that the older priests received credit.

After the Christmas holidays of 1937 both Father Schmidt and I began in earnest the census work needed. We covered Georgetown and when we had finished the city we divided the outlying areas. Father Schmidt took all west of Georgetown, while I took all east. We spent the afternoons on census work and the morning recording the families that we visited. Through our efforts we began saying Mass in Rancho Blanco, in Liberty Hill, Leander and Jonah, in addition to Andice and Bertran. Speaking of Liberty Hill we found out from Father O'Reilly that Rancho Blanco was so called for the large white house of the owner near the road Route 29 at the junction with route 83. I said mass there for the Mexican farm hands from there and the vicinity, until the Mexicans moved. The firm, which grew cotton, was put up for sale. I held a kind of council meeting with the three brothers and their families who were working there. How much did they want for the land? About 300,000 dollars. How much did the land earn in a year? About 30,000 dollars. Well, you could pay of the debt in five or ten years. They were so scared of ownership and debt that the land was sold and they moved. I was so disappointed.

(Fr. O'Reilly told us that he used to say Mass around 1929 in Liberty Hill and gave us some photos of a First Communion Class in Liberty Hill. (These pictures were put in the archives of Georgetown.)

When the census work was finished in the above places Father Schmidt found that there were other Mexicans not being cared for in Burnet and Marble Falls. Soon Mass was being said in these localities. At Marble Falls Mass was said at the home of Anna Castillo, at Burnet at a hall on the town square.(Lions Hall). When this hall was closed to services Mass was transferred to the local theatre. This did not last long because Mass was always late because one of us had to come from another mission. So the owner claimed that he could not clean the theatre in time for the afternoon show. Because of so many places, we had to say Mass on Saturday. In all Mass was being said in 12 different places.

we began to live in Georgetown I did all the cooking and housework. The McFarland family did the laundry for us as well as for the church. When The altar linens were always immaculate. The different church societies were activated although



they existed from the inception of the church.

Due to our census work we would arrive home at different hours of the afternoon and evening, as a consequence our religious exercises were done privately. Father Schmidt insisted that we should have them together, but we could not make a definite time for the reason just mentioned. I agreed but it was a question of the time element. When Father Burns made his first Provincial visit to Georgetown at the new rectory Father Schmidt brought up the question of religious exercises. Father Burns insisted that we make them at 5 pm so both of us should make an effort to be there. He also stipulated that I could cook two meals a day but that the third meal should be eaten in a restaurant to get a balanced meal. The amusing part about the religious exercises was that Father Schmidt was the first to miss them. About a week after the Provincial visit exercises in common ceased as Father Schmidt never showed up after that. He had made his point with the Provincial.

The need for two cars was essential because of the vastness of the area covered by both of us. We had been borrowing a car from different ones. Father Schmidt wrote to his classmate, Father Frank Gartland at Notre Dame. Through the latter's efforts among the students, \$75 was raised for another car. Father Schmidt was to use this car. The first week that he had it, he had three punctures from cactus thorns. He had received these going in and out of ranches. Sometime after he had the car some fellow came to St. Edward's to visit a faculty member. The fellow had a trailer and when Father Schmidt heard about the trailer and especially when he found that the fellow intended to stay on at St. Edward's nothing would do but that Father borrow the trailer. He said that he could do much better work with a trailer. I told him that because of the terrain and going in and out of ranches a trailer would be most impractical. He insisted and went out with the trailer one morning. On the following Wednesday I had to go to St. Edward's to get some wine and hosts. Upon leaving the city I saw Father Schmidt passing me on his way into the city. He had his car but not the trailer. Late Saturday night Father Schmidt arrived at the rectory and told me that I would have to borrow a car for the next day. He went on to say that after leaving he tore out the backend of his car trying to get the trailer through a ranch gate. I told him that since it was his car that needed repair and that he had taken the trailer against my better judgment that it was up to him and not me to get a car. He called Mrs. Clarence Jones who loaned Father her car.

The next Sunday at mass, I did not preach. I told the people that I had a surprise for the Mexicans if they would stay after Mass. The surprise was that during the week I had made a list of all the families of the parish, including father, mother, and each child. This list I read off after Mass. I announced that as I read off a name the person so named was to say "present". That first Sunday there were 25 people at Mass. In a few weeks 250 were coming to Mass. Maybe they came just to hear their name read off and to say "present" but it had the desired effect, they were coming to Mass. I mentioned this to Bishop Byrne who heartily agreed with the practice. Just as suddenly as I had begun I stopped. They did keep coming to Mass.

Manuel Zavala was the leader of the Mexicans in Georgetown. He was the father of 11 children. The oldest girl, Lupe was the first Mexican to graduate from the Georgetown High School. He insisted that all his children get an education. Although Manuel was very faithful at Mass he never received the Sacraments. He was the type that would do anything for the priest. He made a Christmas Crib for me one year. One November his oldest son was married. Up to this time I had used every argument in the book to get Manuel to go to Confession and Communion. After the wedding I asked Manuel if his parents were still alive. He replied "No, they are dead." I said "I suppose you loved them very much". Manuel replied "Most certainly". I then said to Manuel, "Manuel when they were living you could show them how much you loved them. Now that they are gone why don't you prove that love and help them get to Heaven by going to Confession and Communion." He replied "Father I will" and he did. Many years later Manuel was to become active in the Cursillia movement.

Another whom I brought back to the church at this time was Mary Kelly. Her story is written up in detail under the history of the Georgetown church. Suffice to say here that her son was called "Cussin" Kelley and he must have received that type of language from his mother who was a holy terror when it came to flowery language. Mrs. Kelly came back to the church after 55 years.. Through her example three daughters, the son "Cussin" Kelley known as Henry, Henry's wife and two children, all entered the church.

When Henry and his wife celebrated their golden wedding anniversary I was able to get them a Papal blessing. They could not have been happier than if I had given them a million dollars.

Above I mentioned reading off the names of the families in an effort to get them to Mass. They came to Mass but very few received the Sacraments. One Lent I made a novena that they would start going to the Sacraments. The novena ended Palm Sunday. That particular Sunday the Mass was scheduled for 8 am. It was 10:50 before I could begin because of the large number of confessions. I had a second Mass at Andice that Sunday, there also there were a large number of confessions.

I was able to begin Mass just short of the dead line at 1:00 pm.

If I were to say that the Mexican people began to flock to church as soon as the priests took up residence I would be optimistic.

They were an indifferent group. They had been without a resident priest for so long and also because the Methodists were doing all in their power to win over the Mexicans. That they succeeded is attested by the church that they built before the Catholic Church was built. There was also quite a bit of immorality among the Mexicans. This form of spiritual cancer had to be cut out before effective work could be done.

We had been living in Georgetown about a year and a half when Father Schmidt began to stay away from the rectory at longer and longer intervals. He began living with Father Roach at Lampasas. Father Roach did not know Spanish so Father Schmidt began to work among the Mexicans in Lampasas as well as those in Burnet and Marble Falls. It was at this juncture that Bishop Byrne stepped into the picture once more. He called me to Galveston and told me that he was giving me Round Rock and McNeil. With these two missions there were now a total of fourteen attached to Georgetown. Since it was too much to care for Bishop Byrne transferred Bertran, Burnet and Marble Falls to the Lampasas parish. Father Schmidt was assigned by the Bishop to the Lampasas church.

In giving me the Round Rock and McNeil missions, Bishop Byrne told me that he was taking them away from the Oblates as he found out that they had Mass once a year and rosary every two weeks. He requested that I build a church within a year at Round Rock. This was Aug. 1959. He told me to write to Catholic Church Extension Society for money for the new church. This I did. They promised to give \$1,000 if I insisted on the name of my choice, but \$1,500 if I would name it St. William, as Bishop William O'Brien was giving the money in memory of his mother. The Mexican people of Round Rock were very disappointed that the church would not be named Sacred Heart. Many years before they had made a promise that if they ever had a church that it would be named Sacred Heart. When I informed them of the name their first question was "What about our promise?" I said that \$500 was \$500. It would take years for them to collect that amount of money. They finally agreed.

(Note: Of the Kelly family, only Mrs. Mary Kelly was there during my time at St. Helen's, 1935-40. She was elderly.. She died about 1943. She claimed that she had driven cattle up the Chisholm trail from San Antonio to Lampasas. It could be possible.

Every First Friday, I took her communion where she lived on a street S.W. of St. Helen's. This one particular Friday, I couldn't get to her home because of a funeral next door. When the ceremony was finished, I told her about my difficulty because of the funeral. She said: Another Mason gone to hell. She said this right after communion.)

I mentioned that the mornings were spent by the two of us transcribing census cards. We also wrote letters of appeal. Sometimes we would spend the whole morning at our desk. I was in one room, Father Schmidt was in his room. Every so often I would hear him get up at his desk and walk to my room, look in, then return to his desk.

I did not like it so I got an old newspaper and had it on my desk. Whenever I heard him get up from his desk I would grab the newspaper and pretend that I was reading it. When he left, down the paper would go.. It was not long after this that I was accused by higher superiors of spending all my time reading newspapers.

Another time I was accused of breaking the holy rule by going to the movies. I had noticed that in my rule book this particular rule was underlined. I asked Father Schmidt about it and he told me that he had put it there to remind me that I was breaking the rule. I told him that that might be alright for priests who live at Notre Dame who have every diversion needed and opportunities for relaxation. I went on to say that if the Superior General or the Provincial lived our kind of life that they would find relaxation in movies. He admitted that he was not interested in movies.

One time Gunga Din came to town. He said that we both should go and see it as it was about India and both of us wanted to go there. We went. During the course of the movie three men were fighting the Indians on a flat roof when other Indians climbed the opposite wall and on over the roof. They were creeping up on the three men when Father Schmidt yelled out in the movie house "look out behind you". Later I was to tell him that he could not convince me that

he was not interested in movies after the way he yelled

It was easy to promise the Bishop that I would have a church built in a year's time. The question was property. I had gone to the Walsh brothers who owned the lime kiln and was told in no uncertain terms by one of them, either Pat or Mike, that the Mexicans did not need a church. Go some where else. I looked at other property but it was either not for sale or the people refused to sell. After many fruitless days looking for property I went to Austin to see the Harrison - Wilson Real Estate Agency. I told them my problem and they promised to do what they could. The next afternoon a Mr. Plournoy called to say that he had property, 18 acres, but I had to take the whole piece or none. It was owned by a colored woman in El Paso, who had been born and raised in Round Rock. She inherited it from her father when he died. Later I found out that the Walshs tried to buy this property but the woman refused to sell to them. When she found that the church wanted to buy it she was willing to sell it to the church.

When I heard about 18 acres I was imagining a price in the \$50,000 to \$40,000 bracket. When Mr. Flournoy said \$250, I said grab it. When the Walsh brothers heard about it they were furious. The Walshs were all fallen away. Pat had joined the Baptist church, Mike had joined the Methodist church, Will the Lutheran church. Jim lived in Austin but did not practice his religion. He had a heart attack and Father Wm. Schriner was called and gave him conditional absolution and Extreme Unction. Catherine was the only girl and the only one of the Walshs who remained a Catholic.

(Occasionally, maybe twice a year, I would go to the office of the Walsh brothers and ask if I could phone Seton Hospital in Austin. The looks and reception were frigid. One of them would point at the phone and leave the room angrily.)

The church was about three quarters finished around April 1940 when Father Mendez informed me that I had to be careful, that Father Joseph Houser wanted my job. Some time later Brother Lambert came to see me and very confidentially told me that I would do wonderful work among the Negroes. I did not think much of these rumors until the obedience's came out that summer and I was transferred to Negro work as assistant to Father Frank Weber. I discovered that Brother Lambert was pushing for my job on behalf of Father Houser. Because of Brother's close friendship with Father Donahue I was the one to go. Some time before Father Mendez had snubbed Father Donahue and since I was a close friend of Fr. Mendez I became the scapegoat. Father Mendez could not be changed because of his appointment to San Jose at the request of Archbishop Droessarts. As I said I was made the scapegoat and the excuse was that I was always "bawling- out" the Mexicans, which was not so.

Fate played into their hands as I was taken sick with the flu and complete exhaustion. I spent a long time in Seton Hospital because my sinuses were infected and the flu settled in my lungs. Fearing that I had TB, the doctor ordered me off the work for rest and a more regular life. While I was in the hospital Father Houser said Mass in Georgetown, Round Rock and McNeil. When I was assigned to Holy Cross Church, I recalled Brother Lambert's words.

During those early days in Georgetown, as I mentioned, I did my own cooking, housecleaning and janitor work. As soon as Father Hauser took over, Brother Lambert provided him with a housekeeper. (Note: In longhand by Fr. Hauser. In 1941, Fr. Donahue, knowing the hard life in the St. Helen's Mission, wrote to ask if I wanted a housekeeper. I said, Yes, but we could never afford one. He said, no money needed. She will arrive by train at such and such an hour on a certain day. She was living in an old folk's home in Chicago, sewing for her room and board. She arrived and said, "Money is never to be mentioned between us". So she never received a cent. After I left St. Helens Mission for St. Edwards in 1943, she remained. Eventually she became Fr. Ed Bauers cook in Austin. I was appointed to San Jose Mission in 1948, and she came to be our cook in about 1950. She died about 1959, aged 73, and was buried at Assumption. Now for the janitor and handyman, Antoine Morales. He needed hospitalization soon after my arrival at the St. Helens Mission in 1940. After about two weeks, Sister at Seton Hospital phoned me to say at Antoine was well. I picked him up, drove him to his house on a farm south east of Georgetown. The house was empty. A neighbor informed us that Antoine's wife left with a Protestant minister. Antoine was about 60 years old. I brought him to the rectory, expecting to let him sleep in the office. Then I recalled our shed in the back yard. I said, it is yours as long as you want. He stayed there about 6 months after I left in 1943.)

Before I leave this work about the missions, I want to add that In 1939, Fr. Edward Bastien, OMI, was named pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe chun Taylor, Texas. I went over to meet him and ask him how they were able to get the Mexicans to Mass and the sacraments. He said that they didn't. In the course of our conversation, we discussed ways and means to entice the people to church. The idea of a convention was conceived. We decided to have a convention each year during Easter time. We invited the Mexicans from Taylor and Georgetown. Our plan was to have a communion Mass and breakfast at 8:00 am, a solemn high field



mass at 10:30 and a meeting at 1:00. The meeting would close so that we could have a procession of the Blessed Sacrament at 3:00. The evening was to be given over to entertainment. It was an immediate success, so much so that other pastors asked to join. In a few years it was diocesan wide. (NB In longhand by Fr. Houser. I attended the first four conventions. In 1940, I was saying mass at St Helens church and St Williams Church because Fr. Culhane was at St. Edwards on sick leave. Fr. Bastien was the originator. After the convention mass, the three sodalities took turns using the hall at Guadalupe, one hour each. Then there was a general assembly out of doors, weather permitting, to hear the results of Sacra Corazon, Our Lady of Guadalupe and Hikal de Maria. Then a fiesta was celebrated.).

When I left, only the finishing touches were to be done to the church in Round Rock. It had cost \$2700 and \$1500 of that amount had come from the Extension Society. I was begging the rest of the money. When I was forced to leave because of illness there was just \$500 due on the church. Father Houser told everyone that \$1200 was due on the church and that I left no money in the bank. The church was dedicated that fall and Father Houser took full credit for it. My name was not even mentioned nor was I invited to the dedication.

(NB. In long hand by Fr. Hauser. All of this is interesting news. In January, 1940, Fr. Culhane was given a long examination by a doctor in Austin. The doctor said that he though there was small spot on his lung, and if so, it would heal by itself with rest. Fr. Culhane was told to live at St. Edwards and rest. Since I knew Spanish, I was sent (never asked to go) to Georgetown on Saturday afternoons to say Sunday masses at St. Helens and the new St. Williams. I followed this schedule from January to June, when the doctor said he could not see the spot and possibly one was never there. Then I received an obedience to work at St. Edwards. Fr. Culhane was transferred to San Jose Mission in Austin.).

When I moved over to St. Edward's, Father Patrick Haggerty was President. He was succeeded by Father William Robinson, C.S.C. Boarding as we were, we did not attend the Community religious exercises but made our own privately. Father Robinson insisted that since we were members of the Community we had to attend religious exercises. I was willing to do so but Father Mendez claimed that if we complied with Father Robinson's request in this regard that it would be just another step until he would take complete charge of the missions. He also claimed that we were distinct from the faculty because we were just boarding there.

The practical thing for us to do was to get a rectory. We tried several times but were not successful. Across the street from San Jose church lived a negro preacher. We tried to buy his home but he would not sell. Parallel to the negro's home was a vacant lot owned by two elderly women. They would not sell that piece of property because they did not want it to be used for the Catholic church. As things developed a family on Newton St, across the street from the rectory of St. Ignatius were leaving for the North to do war work. We rented this house for about two years. One spring while Father Mendez was again in Puerto Rico the agent to whom we paid the rent came to inform me that I would have to move as the family was returning from the North and needed their home. I wrote immediately to Father Mendez to tell him of this new development. I then went out to see Father Robinson to see if he had a room available. He said that I could live at St. Edward's but not Father Mendez. It was a delicate situation, he being in Puerto Rico and I in Austin. I wrote and told him of Father Robinson's decision. It was fortunate for me that I did it by mail.

When Father Mendez returned he began to live at San Jose Tourist Courts. Later he was to buy a garage apartment. He complained bitterly to me that each time he went away something developed and it was always something that I was to know nothing about. This garage apartment was one of the properties that he had bought. He was living in the apartment and I was at St. Edward's. The apartment was overrun with cockroaches and we soon named it "Cucaracha Row". It was not long before rumors began to circulate that we had trouble and could not get along with one another. When I heard of these rumors I immediately packed my belongings and went to live with him. I told Sister Remegius of the Baby Home about the cockroaches, she gave me a powder that the hospital used, and in no time there was not a cockroach around the place.

As for meals I did most of the cooking although we did eat in restaurants several times a week. One particular place where we ate frequently was the Tip-Top Cafe. The cafe was across the street from St. Edward's. The cafe had a Mexican chef and his wife, they lived in an apartment behind the cafe. They told us many times that they were too busy to come to Mass. On one occasion as we were sitting there eating out meal the chef came out to talk with us. The subject of Mass came up. The chef said, "Look Fathers, when I was a boy and a young man I was in everything at Guadalupe Church, whether it was plays, jamaicas or fiestas, I was the main cog. Then I. worked for the Lord, now the Lord has to work for me." Father Mendez replied, "You are going to live to regret those words." They came true. Soon after he started his own tamale business. The more

The previous Dec. 14 we had the dedication of the three churches. San Francisco was blessed at 11 am. by Archbishop Lucey. The dedication was followed by Confirmation. Santa Cruz in Buda was blessed at 2 pm. and San Jose at 4 pm. These two places also had confirmation after the dedication. Although as I said I stayed on at Holy Cross I worked on the Mexican Missions. Many days I spent at San Francisco. Steve Botello and I chipped the beams before staining them to give them a rustic effect.

During my stay at San Jose my mother died July 17, 1935. I stayed home with for six weeks but as she remained stable, I returned to Austin. Six weeks later she died. During the six weeks that I was home I stayed all day with my mother as the rest of the family were working. One day she asked me to write her will. She said that she was giving me \$200 for our missions. I told her to make it out to the Catholic Church Extension Society stipulating that it be sent to San

Jose. I told her in that way she would be considered a benefactor of the Society. About two weeks after I returned from the funeral, maybe it was a little longer, the check arrived. Father Mendez said

"Here's that check from your Mother". I never saw it nor do I know what became of the money.

Whenever I would ask him about finances he would say "we are getting by". He would tell me nothing. One day when he was away on one of his many trips a woman called asking for him. When I told her that he was away she asked me to get a plumber and fix a leak in her house. She added that Father Mendez owned the house. Since I could not see why I should be calling a plumber for some place I knew nothing about, I called Jose Rocha to see if he knew any thing. He replied that he did and that I was to know nothing about the properties Father Mendez owned. Jose went on to say that he was collecting the rents. On his return I told Father Mendez about the episode and wondered about owning property. He glibly remarked that it was money from his uncle's estate and that he (Father Mendez) was executor of the estate. There were a lot of stocks and bonds and that this money for the property came from the estate. This particular uncle lived in Evansville, Indiana. I could never understand why either of his two brothers, with their business acumen, were not made executors.

### **A year at Holy Cross Church**

I was to spend one year at Holy Cross Parish presumably to get my health back. I can sum up that year by saying that it was a case of a saw and hammer man against a non saw and hammer man. Although I did help Father Weber at times I was not made out to be a carpenter. It was some months before I realized that the bacon, ham, and eggs that we had for breakfast came from St. Edward's. Each day Brother Lambert would bring down what was left over from the meals at the school and we would have them the next day. I might add here that it was the only time in my life that I had to eat such things as heart, kidneys and junk that Father Weber liked and he was the cook.

The high light of my year at Holy Cross Church was the opening of Holy Cross Hospital. I was made available to the Sisters when they arrived By train and did a lot of driving for them. One week end we went to Beaumont where the Sisters were to receive a collection taken up in one of the churches. On several weekends the Sisters went to various churches in the Galveston diocese to take up collections.

I was master of ceremonies when Bishop Byrne came to bless the new hospital. Dr. Hammond was the principal speaker, being a member of Holy Cross Church.. Sister Consolatrix JC was the first Superior and Sister Celine the first staff doctor. Incidentally she was the first nun to practice medicine in the United States. She specialized in obstetrics. She was slated to go to China, but when the Sisters accepted the new hospital she was sent to Austin. Due to her specialty she was to render invaluable aid to Negro and Mexican mothers. She started a pre-natal clinic, something unheard of among such people. The expectant mothers came to the hospital for check up. Sister would charge fifty cents for each visit. This fifty cents would go towards the \$55 that was charged to the mothers for five days in the hospital when the baby arrived.

Two of the domestics working in the hospital that first year were Pearl and Olivia. Pearl was Catholic but Olivia was Baptist. The next year Olivia became a Catholic, eventually becoming a nun. She was the first vocation from Holy Cross Parish. When she was professed as Sister Ann Maria she returned to Holy Cross and spent many years at the hospital.

Pearl was very inquisitive, always wanting to know what illness some man or woman had. The only time she did not



inquire was a maternity case. One day they brought a Negro woman to the hospital to have her leg amputated at the hip. The day after the operation Pearl stopped me in the corridor wanting to know what they did with the leg. I replied "Oh didn't Father Weber tell you? We had steaks for supper last night and he is now boiling the bone for soup." With that I went on my way. That afternoon Sister Celine stopped me and said,

"Father something very strange happened this morning. About ten minutes after you left Pearl got deathly sick and had to go home." I innocently asked "What happened?" Sister replied that she did not know. One thing I did know that it stopped Pearl asking questions about the sick.

One day Sister Celine somewhat shocked asked me "Father what am I going to do? That young girl in maternity is only thirteen and when I asked her who was the father she replied that it could be any one of three fellows. I told Sister that she was now in the South and she was jolted to be shocked at such morals

### **San Jose Church**

Having spent 1941 at Holy Cross Church Father Mendez asked for me and I was transferred to San Jose Church to work with Father Mendez. Because he had no rectory and was living at St. Edward's Univ. Father Mendez asked Father Weber if I could stay at Holy Cross Church. It was during this time that my father died, Sept 3, 1941. I went home for six weeks because he was so sick. After returning to Texas I was back only a few weeks before he died.

It was not until Dec. 1941 that St. Edward's had a room for me and on the last day of the year I moved my things to St. Edward's. Having settled at St. Edward's, I became more or less a secretary as it fell to me to record the names of all those who had been confirmed. I also counted the Sunday collections and took the amount to the bank each Monday. In the early part of January Father Mendez left for two weeks. It was the first of many trips that he was to take. Two of the four Christmases that I spent at San Jose Father Mendez was visiting his family in Puerto Rico. Although he did good work he was the type that had to keep moving. He was very restless and made many trips north to beg. After each of these trips he would boast that he topped all previous collections in a certain church. During my years there I also did some preaching, but I had to combine preaching with my vacation. I preached in Rutledge Mass, which gave me a chance to visit relatives in Worcester Mass. I preached at Abington Mass. This gave me chance to visit Stonehill College. As Fr. Frank Gartland and Fr. Harold Riley were in the Boston area at the time, they made sure that I had a good time while there. It was while I was in the Boston area that Father Mendez called me to go to Minneapolis to preach. The following week I went to Lawndale Minn. At other times I preached in Iowa at such towns as Albia, Georgetown and Ottumwa.

One time when Father Mendez was away the Sisters and I were getting the children ready for their First Holy Communion. We thought that it would be nice to have a procession adding a little pomp to the ceremony. The first Communion was to take place on a Sunday. Father Mendez arrived home on Saturday and threw out all the extra ceremonies. The children were all muddled as to what to do. It was the nearest thing I saw of seeing Sisters cry. After the Mass he had his picture taken with the Communicants and took all the credit as the picture appeared in the diocesan newspaper.

I returned to Georgetown in the early part of August, 1945. After I had settled down I was called to an Irish family who lived a few doors below the rectory. They were from New York and the daughter's husband was an officer at Fort Hood. While he was stationed at Fort Hood the family lived at Georgetown. The girl's mother was sick. The mother was bitter at Father Mueller because he failed to bring her Holy Communion on the First Friday. It was the first time she had missed since receiving first communion. She was never to see another First Friday as she died. I gave her all the last rites. The body was taken to New York for burial.

I had no assistant and so until late October or early November I was alone on the missions. One Sunday morning I had two late Masses, one at 9:00 and the other at 11:00. I decided to stay up real late so I could sleep late the next morning. It seemed I had been to sleep just a short time when I heard a pounding on the door. I looked at the clock. It was just 6:00. Father Rupp was at the door. He said that he arrived at 4:30 and as everything was dark, he asked the mail man where to find the church. The man brought him to the church. Neither Fr. Rupp nor the mail man knew where to find the rectory. So he laid down on the table we had reserved for Bingo. Around 6:00, Miss Purl, the old

maid school teacher came out for her paper. Father asked her where to find the rectory and it was after this that he was pounding on my door.

I told Father Rupp that I had no word of his coming. All I had was a letter from Father Steiner saying that he would send someone down soon. Father Rupp told me that Father Steiner called him and told him to get down to Georgetown as soon as possible. I did tell him that he was welcome as an assistant.

During those months I had arranged my schedule so that I could say mass at all the missions. In addition I was teaching catechism at Georgetown, Round Rock and McNeil. At Andice, the older people taught catechism to the youngsters. Each summer the Sisters of Holy Cross had been coming to teach catechism for two weeks.

Father Rupp could cook, so we alternated that chore. Since he did not know Spanish, I had to do all the preaching. On Saturday night we had confessions at Georgetown and on Sundays before each mass. We alternated hearing confessions. Father Rupp was very scrupulous and it was not long before people began to complain about being kept so long in the confessional. I had spoken to him about it and was told that it was not of my business, Confessions were his responsibility. One day Mr. Herbert Jones asked me to speak to Father Rupp about confession as he had kept Mrs. Jones in the confessional so long that she had fainted. The Jones were an elderly couple who had retired from business and took up residence in Georgetown. I told Mr. Jones that I had already spoken to Father Rupp about confession and was told it was none of my business. I added that Father Rupp goes to their house to play cards so if an opportunity arose that he could bring up the subject. About a week later he told us that he spoken to Father Rupp saying that he had gone to confession in every state of the union and even in foreign countries, and had always left the confessional with peace of mind. When he went to confession to Fr. Rupp he left without peace of mind. He said either all these other priests were wrong or Fr. Rupp was wrong. Fr. Rupp replied that all the other priests were wrong. (This remained a difficulty for Father Rupp.)

One day Mary Ickes jokingly told me that the next time she went to confession to Father Rupp that she was going to bring a lunch. Besides keeping her for 45 minutes in the confessional, he gave her a penance of three Rosaries to be said immediately.

When Fr. Mueller was pastor he bought a large tract of land adjoining the church property. The new property extended north to the alley and west from the church. There was a house on it and the Ickes family rented it. Mrs. Ickes promised to cook our main meal as Father Burns injunction about eating the main meal in a restaurant was still in effect. So we had this meal in the Ickes home for several months. We stopped going there because the meal was always the same: A small piece of steak fried hard, some mashed potatoes and a salad

Mr Ickes was a painter and a paper-hanger and I had him paint and paper two room in the rectory. Mr. Ickes was anything but handsome or a thing of beauty. The same could be said of Mrs. Ickes. James Daniel and myself used to have plenty of fun with the two of them because Mrs. Ickes was extremely jealous of Charley. If he had to do any work at the home of a widow, Mrs Ickes would keep calling him to be careful. She was going to make sure a widow didn't steal him from her. Charley eventually gave up apinting and paperhanging and got a job as a orderly at the Veterans's Hospital in Temple. One week he came home and after Mass, James Daniel and I teased him about how handsome and spry he was and that it must be due to working with those beautiful nurses. Mrs. Ickes did not like it. One Sunday Charley did not come home so James told Mrs Ickes, "Why should he bother with her when he had all those beautiful nurses at Temple." Later James told me that he and his mother were having breakfast in the café when he saw Mrs. Ickes getting on the bus for Temple.

In the meantime, I was having trouble with Fr. Rupp and his scrupulosity. Time and time again I would ask him to take it easy but it was to no avail. During Holy Week we had scheduled Holy Hours, one at Georgetown and the other at Andice. I was to take the Round Rock Holy Hour since it would be in Spanish. Both hours were scheduled for 7:30 pm. About 7 pm two sick calls came in. A group from Andice came saying that Antonio Rivera was very sick and would I come. As I was talking to them, a family from Round Rock came saying their mother was very sick. Since I knew where Antonio lived and since it was very difficult to describe to someone especially at night, I told Fr. Rupp to take the Round Rock call and I would take the Andice call. Before leaving I went over to church and saw Mr. Jones kneeling there. I asked him to take Holy Hour announcing to the people that the fathers had sick calls. When I got to Andice I found that someone had taken Antonio to the doctor in Georgetown. Later Fr. Rupp informed me that he did not give the woman any sacraments because he thought she was not sick enough.

On Holy Saturday I was to have services in Georgetown and Fr. Rupp in Round Rock. He took Mr. Jones with him to act as server. The services were to begin at 7:30 but Mr. Jones informed me that they did not begin until 11:00 as Fr. Rupp was making sure he had everything. Holy Saturday afternoon Father Rupp kept pacing back and forth, from room to room wringing his hands. I asked him if anything was bothering him. He replied that he was worried whether or not he had dipped the Paschal Candle two or three times. I tried to laugh it off by saying to him, "We all make mistakes, if that is all that is worrying you. Holy Week is difficult because we do it only once a year."

Earlier I mentioned that Fr. Steiner sent me to Georgetown to get the Mexicans back to Church. Both of us worked at this by visiting families and reorganizing the societies. Father Rupp took charge of the Hijas de Maria (Children of Mary). I had the Guadalupeans. We organized a society for the boys and young men which I modeled after the Juventud Catolica that Father Mendez and I had at San Jose. The men were organized again being called the Sagrado Corazon.

There were more American Families in Georgetown than when I first came in 1935. The war brought them. While some like the Jones, were retired, many of the new families were Czechs from Granger and from Corn Hill. Because they were all good Catholics we visited them but concentrated our attention on the Mexicans. Shortly after my return I met a family and I asked them if they were German or Bohemians. For months after that the wife would not speak to me. I asked various people what I had done wrong. They told me I had called her a Bohemian and she was Czech. I did not know the difference.

Later I apologized to her but I could never become a real friend because she had a loud mouth and was the great "I am" in her own estimation. Her husband was very fine but the children were like the mother, bold and brassy. The eldest boy was the type that one wanted to slap each time he spoke. One day he said to me, "Father, you do not say Mass right, you do not know how to say Mass." I had to control my voice when I asked, "Why do you say that?" He replied, "Father Curran says this or does that and you do not." During one summer the Sisters were at Georgetown for summer school and the family had us out for dinner. After the dinner the children had several games they wished us to play. I had to play some games with the oldest boy. I deliberately let him beat me then when he said, "Gee, Father, you are so dumb you can't play any games." I quit playing with him.

When the obedience's came out in 1946, Fr. Rupp was returned to Notre Dame for studies. He was succeeded by Fr. Thomas Curran. That was the year that Bishop Graner came from India on a visit. I was told that he went down the community list and picked several fellows who had the fourth vow, for India. Among the group was Fr. Curran and Fr. Vince Delavy. The morning after the obediences came out Father Delavy and I were having breakfast at St. Helens. Fr. Delavy had been sent to the Mexican missions the year before and was promised by Fr. Steiner that he would remain on



the missions. He went to Mexico for a few months to learn Spanish and was helping me while Father Rupp was on vacation. That morning at breakfast we were discussing the obedience's when he said, "I bet any amount of money that Tom Curran will not go to India. He will manipulate it some way to get out of going." Whatever the reason Father Curran did not go to India and was sent to St. Helen's as my assistant.

It was the beginning of a few years of trouble for me. Some years before Father Steiner informed Fr. Mendez and myself that he did not know what he was going to do with Tom Curran as he was my number one trouble maker. Father Steiner told us that he would send him to Pearlinton, Mississippi and forget about him. He was still at Pearlinton when Bishop Graner had selected him for India. Shortly after he arrived in Georgetown he informed me that he had permission to go to Mexico to study Spanish. He left without asking me for cent of money. In fact during the next few years he was with me he never asked for money and never handed in a cent. He always had plenty of money to spend.

Shortly after he left for Mexico I received a letter from Steiner wanting to know who gave Fr. Curran permission to go to Mexico as he had already refused him. We found out later that after Father Steiner had refused him permission to go to Mexico, Father Curran had written to Father Cousineau the Superior General. Father Cousineau, presuming that Father Steiner had previously given permission, granted the request.

Once again I was alone, taking care of all the missions. This went on for six months when I received another letter from Father Steiner asking me what Father Curran was doing in Guadmalala and went on to say that he had ordered Father Curran back to Georgetown. I heard nothing more until one morning I was cutting grass in front of the rectory when our friend drove up with Emmet Cervenka. Mr. Cervenka lived in Round Rock but attended mass at St. Helens. Fr. Curran became a good friend of the Cervenkas and after that they were friendly to me but very very cool.

After his return, Father Curran was very bitter towards me saying that "I had squealed on him". In reality, I knew nothing except what the Provincial had told me. He became a social butterfly and was out every night until 1 or 2 am. At the time we had a 7:00 mass and an 8:00. Because of his "nightlife" I gave him the 8:00 and many times I would have to wake him up in time for mass. He had charge of Hijas de Maria and he became very popular with the people. As his popularity continued and increased, mine decreased. I went out of my way to make things pleasant for him and in return I received a letter from Father Steiner saying that he had received several anonymous letters saying that I was continually scolding the people and always "bawling them out." I replied that I did not do any more "bawling out" than any other pastor. It was at this time that I developed colitis and the doctor said that it was due to extreme nervousness. It was aggravated more when I found out that a meeting had been called by Father Curran of the people of the parish. When I asked why I was not informed, I was curtly told that it was called to discuss my actions. All this was around the time I had received Father Steiner's letter.

Real trouble began when a young divorcee, her two children and her parents moved to Georgetown. She came to see me about being baptized a Catholic along with her two children. I hesitated at first because she was young, pretty and a divorcee. She told me that she had taken instructions on three different occasions but never committed herself. I questioned her and she did know the catholic doctrine. I had warned her that should she become a catholic she could never marry again. She emphatically told me that she would never marry as she had enough of it and was through with marriage. With these assurances, I went ahead and baptized her and her two children.

From then on the assistant was at her home a couple hours a day giving her instructions. Protestants in the town began to suggest something else. Two old maids across the street timed the visits and soon I was told that they saw my car parked at her home a couple of hours each day. I told them it was not myself that was staying there. As time went on the woman began going with a Catholic boy and became pregnant by him. I told them that they could never marry in the church and that people would soon start talking when they saw her condition. I said that they would have to do something as both were living in the same city and everyone knew that they were running around together. They went off and got married civilly and later claimed that I told them to do so. Maybe I did say something to that effect but the fact remained that they did get married civilly. They separated after the baby was born. Some time after this took place, the girl came to see me and wanted to go to confession and get straightened out with the church. I hesitated at first knowing what she had done. Then I asked myself "What would Christ do?" I thought of Mary Magdalene and the Samaritan woman along with St. Peter and went ahead and heard her confession. The whole parish was shocked when she went to Holy Communion. I mention all of this because she was reconciled with the church. The boy had moved away. Shortly after this, when she had been going to mass and communion regularly, I found that her birthday coincided with Fr. Currans so I decided to have a surprise party for both of them. It was not much of a surprise because the people told Father Curran. The party was about as frosty as the icing on the cakes. The party was in the early part of November.

During the following January Father Steiner came to Texas for his Provincial visit. When he came to Georgetown, I went in first for my interview and then Fr. Curran went in. Almost immediately I was recalled and Father Steiner asked me about the case, stating the scandal I had caused. I could have defended myself and told of the scandal caused by the assistant but I kept still. I did explain to Father Steiner why I had given the woman the Sacraments, saying that at the time I had asked myself "What would Christ have done?" The gist of the visit was that the three of us had it 'hot and heavy' but I made no accusations against the assistant. Finally Fr. Steiner said, "Next summer I am going to make a change and I know now who it will be." That summer Fr. Curran was changed.

It also happened to be the summer when all the members born in the east had a choice of going to the new Eastern Vice Province or staying with the Indiana province. Of the eight members down here in Texas who could have gone East, Father Curran was the only one who chose the East. His first assignment in the new Eastern Vice Province was Chile.

During and after my reading of Canon Catta's Life of Father Moreau, I have been amazed that priests could do such things as they had done to Fr. Moreau. I was to find that Fr. Mendez and myself could have the same things done to us. Both of us, along with Fr. Schmidt, who came in 1937, worked long and hard for the missions. We took up the census, gathered funds for the churches we built and the balloon of popularity that we received from Fr. Donahue was soon to burst. The whispering campaign began with Fr. Mendez. He was accused of all sorts of chicanery, so much so that the Assistant Superior General, Fr. Kelly, came to Texas to investigate. What had happened to all the funds that Fr. Mendez had collected? What about the homes that he owned in Austin plus many other things. Father Mendez was removed from the missions. Later he was to collect funds for the new Moreau and later still was to become bishop. Then began the campaign against me, that I was always bawling out the people. I had always written out all my sermons but that made no difference. Because I was such a good friend of Fr. Mendez I had to go.

After our departure, Father Edwin Bauer was named Procurator of the Missions. He was pastor of Holy Family Church in South Austin. Soon the whispering campaign started against him, he was accused of taking money from the missions and could not account for \$10,000. He was removed from the job of Procurator. I do not say that Father Mendez and I were entirely innocent but in his case he did spend a great deal of time gathering funds and he did own some homes but he did his work and did

not neglect the missions. In my case I did say things about the Mexicans missing Mass, but what priest on the Mexican mission did not do the same. The charges were so out of proportions to what either of us have or had done. As I showed above, I had one assistant who worked against me and his successor did the same.

Two other events should be mentioned here that occurred during these troublesome days. One day when I was over in town Father Curran came looking for me, he had a Mr. North with him. I presumed that he was a friend of Father Curran's and was in financial difficulties. Over a period of several months he borrowed around \$2,000. When there was no way of collecting it, I went to the District Attorney, Mr. Robert Purl. He wanted to arrest Mr. North and collect the money. The fellow was picked up and put in jail. While still in jail, Fr. Steiner came for his provincial visit. He had heard about the case from the pastor at San Jose. It was then that I learned that someone was reporting everything I said or did in Georgetown to the pastor in San Jose. Fr. Steiner told me to drop all charges. Much to Mr. Purl's regret I told him to release this North character.

For some time the Mexicans in Round Rock had been complaining that a Baptist Minister was visiting homes, inviting the people to come to his church. He was offering ice cream and candy to the children if they would come to Sunday School. When more and more complaints were coming in, I went down to the public school on Sunday night. Huddled around the preacher were several children to whom he was teaching a hymn. I waited around and finally told him that these were catholic children, that if he wanted to evangelize anyone to go to the non-believers, not to Catholic Mexicans. Some time later someone sent me a copy of the 'The Baptist Standard'. There I was written up under the title "It can happen here". It stated that I broke up a religious service. It was blown up all out of proportion to what actually happened. It was not too long after this that the chancellor of the Dallas diocese wrote asking me what had happened. I was the "bete noire". If the fellow was having a service, it was a strange kind of a service.

This preacher was an American. The Baptists went ahead and built a church in Round Rock even though it had no members. Later he was followed by Mexican preacher whom I met. After several months in Round Rock he suddenly left and the church was closed. He lived next door to Amado Rubio. One day I asked Amado what had happened to the preacher. The preacher had told Amado that he was being forced to leave by the bishop in Austin. I told Amado that the Bishop did not even know the fellow as around. Whatever the reason only one family joined the church, but these had never come to our church, except that the children had been picked up for catechism. They moved away and some months later the county health officer came to be asking where the family lived. Two of the girls had venereal disease and were under treatment in Taylor and had not shown up for further treatment.

The new assistant assigned to Georgetown was Rev. James Donnally, CSC, who was being transferred from St. Charles Boys Home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Before he came I asked him to gather some funds for a new car as we were really in need of one. When he arrived he not only had a new station wagon but also a setter pup. The dog is written up elsewhere under "Dogs in Georgetown". Fr. Donnally told us that he had gathered enough money and went ahead and bought the car.

Father Donnally was no stranger to Texas having come to St. Edwards as a Theologian. When he was at St. Eds I had invited him out a few times for supper. After his ordination he spent six months with Fr. Mendez at San Jose. His first Sunday in Georgetown he told the people that none of the missions were run right and that he would do something about it. He was forever writing begging letters. On one occasion when he was with me Johnny Lujack, the all-American from Notre Dame signed a contract with Chicago Bears for \$100,000. Father Donnally told me to write to Lujack for



\$10,000 since we were both from Pennsylvania and both graduates of Notre Dame. That was how he operated. Each time the Notre Dame Alumnus came in, he would read through it, see what alumnus might have money, then write to the fellow.

In the January following his first Christmas in Texas, Father Mehling, the Provincial came on his annual visit. I went in to him first, then Fr Donnally. A few minutes later I was called back to hear Fr. Mehling ask me if I had stolen the Christmas collection from the Bishop. He told me that Fr Donnally just told him that I did not turn in the collection to the Bishop. Fr. Donnally then went on to say that he had announced it from the pulpit that all money was to go to the Bishop. I answered that it was not in the announcement book and showed it to Father Mehling. It all came back to me. I remember saying that I would sent the other mission collections to the Bishop but keep the Georgetown collection. Jim Donnally had no sense of humor and was very naive about believing tall tales if they sounded in any way truthful.

A few days before Christmas one year Aparecio Acuna was attempting to get a few extra dollars for the holidays. He together with Manual Zavala and another man were cutting wood on the Schneider Ranch west of Georgetown. Manual said later that he noticed that the saw was loose and told Aparicio about it. Aparicio said that he did not have time to stop and fix it as he had to cut so much wood. The saw was a large band saw run by a motor and mounted on the back of a truck. Suddenly the saw flew from its cradle and cut Aparicio in half. The undertaker came about 2 pm to tell me. The accident happened at noon. I went over to see the Acuna family.

Due to the condition of the body there was not embalming. The family wanted to keep the body over Christmas to give the son a chance to drive from El Paso. Christmas Eve morning the undertaker came to the house to ask me if I would persuade the family to bury the body as soon as possible because it was beginning to smell up the undertaking parlor. I went over to the family. At first they reneged because Carlos had not arrived from El Paso. I told them that if they did not have the funeral that Aparicio would get up and go to the cemetery himself. We had the funeral that afternoon.

That Christmas Eve was one I shall never forget. When word circulated of Aparicio's death his very good friend Don Edwardo was so stunned he had a heart attack. I had this funeral also. Between the funerals I was trying to hear confessions and to decorate the crib. I was not making much of a success of the crib. I received not one bit of help from Father Donnally. I went over and told him to get off his fanny and do some work. He was too busy writing to friends telling them how busy he was. After supper that evening I went to Round Rock for confessions. The crib was still as I left it. It was around 11:00 when I got back. No one had done anything to the crib in the meantime. James Daniel and his mother came to church and seeing the condition of the crib, decorated it themselves. Father Donnally did not lift a little finger to help in any way.

The McFarland family always had the priests for dinner on the big feast days as well as other times. Christmas dinner was always at their home. One Christmas Father Donnally said that he would not eat with the McFarlands, that since we were working with the Mexicans, we should eat with the Mexicans. The Escobeda family lived in Leander and were among the poorest families that we had on the missions. He told them that he would eat dinner with them. Mrs Escobeda relayed the message to the patron who gave them a turkey to entertain the priest. It must have been the first time that she cooked a turkey or I should say tried to cook it. The bird was too big for the oven of their stove. Fr. Donnally said that there was one fork, one knife and one spoon at his place. They had to sit on orange crates for chairs.

That night Father Donnally was about as sick as anybody could get. He had it coming out both ends. I told him that I had no sympathy because I had warned him about eating in such surroundings.

That was the last time he ever ate under such conditions, especially a Christmas dinner.

### The Cancer Scare

Each morning we arose at 6:00 am because I had mass at 7:00. We served each others mass. One morning as I awoke I heard a frantic cry: "Father Curran, Father Curran, come quick." I did not know what to expect. There was Father Donnally sitting on the side of the bed in his shorts. He was pointing to a blister about the size of a half dollar. He said: "What is it? Is it cancer? I had relatives who died of cancer." I looked at the thing and said: "That is a blister bug bite." Nothing would do but that Father dash down to Seton Hospital to see a doctor. He had to wait three hours or more before a doctor was available. Finally Dr. Terry Watt was free. Father Donnally showed him the blister. Dr. Watt said, "I do not know what it is." Father told him what I had said. Dr. Watt replied, "That's just what it is." I had tried to tell Father Donnally that cancer does not come that quick but he was convinced that it was cancer.

During the years that I was in Georgetown, I became good friend of the John Heyman family. Mr. and Mrs. Heyman had one son, Joe. Mr. Heyman told me that as a boy in Killeen, the family was catholic. They had to go to Temple for mass. One day while John was still a boy, the father died. Father Heckman came over from Temple and had a graveside service. Because he did not preach at the grave, the family became incensed and left the church. They joined the Church of Christ. Years later when John was old and dying I visited him many times but there was not any hope of bringing him back to the church. On one of my last visits I had him repeat after me a perfect act of contrition.

When I first became acquainted with Heyman's, John traded in horses and had a livery stable. He was also the local dog catcher. Joe the son began coming to the rectory and became close friends with the priests. During my second tour of duty in Georgetown I gave instructions to Joe and he was baptized Catholic. He later joined the Knights of Columbus in Austin. Joe was a fellow who could turn his hand to anything, he was an expert mechanic, electrician and artist. He fixed up the statues in the church for me. Father Donnally became attached to Joe and took him everywhere. I did not pay too much attention to this as Joe was always nice to me. I still went to their home for meals.

During the summer of 1951, I was completely flabbergasted to be assigned to Gibault Home for Boys in Terre Haute, Indiana. It was a bitter pill to swallow after 16 years on the mission, especially as I knew Gibault had been a Refuge Peccatorum (Place for Sinners) for fellows who could not get along anyplace else. At the most priests stayed there for a year or two, no more. I stayed for eight years. Just before leaving Georgetown Joe Heyman came to house and said that he had a confession to make. He said that despite our friendship that he and Father Donnally were doing their utmost to destroy my influence in Georgetown. He went on to say that Father Donnally had three bank accounts of which I was to know nothing. Father Fred Schmidt had been made pastor in my place and I told him about the three accounts.

Although stunned by the news of the transfer I was glad in a way. The previous six year were hectic years for me. I had two assistants who could not get along with anyone else and it seemed to be the attitude of the provincial to send them to Culhane. Later I was to learn that all the shenanigans that Father Donnally pulled were reported to the provincial who just laughed at them. During the eight years I was at Terre Haute I would return to the missions each summer to replace the different priests when they went on vacation.

### San Jose Again

When the obediences of 1959 were announced I was reassigned to San Jose Church as assistant

to Father Joseph Hauser. Before going to Texas I wrote the Provincial saying that I regretted going to San Jose as assistant as I would be a casualty next year as was everyone else who went there. Father Mehling wrote back saying that I should not have that attitude. I knew what I was getting into because I knew Fr. Hauser and how he had schemed and planned to get my job years before. Father Hauser always made sure that he was "in" with the Provincial and this was especially true with Father Mehling. Father Hauser and he were good friends and Father Hauser could do no wrong. Almost every year while Father Mehling was Provincial, his assistant was changed. (Note: Fr. Hauser. Fr. Mehling and I had been good friends all through the seminary. On his visits to Texas, he stayed at San Jose because I was superior of the Missions. It came about this way. Fr. Mehling said that the General Council approved the formation of a District of Texas. I consented to accept the appointment, only to find out that Fr. Mehling intended all our places in Texas be included. I pointed out how humiliating it would be for St. Marys, St Edwards and St. Ignatius to be under a superior who was pastor of a mission. He admitted he did not realize that. He gave in to my begging and made the district consist of all the places we then considered as missions, excluding the three places we mentioned above. We, on the missions were a close-knit group, certainly in my memory when I returned to San Jose in 1948. We met monthly at one another's missions until finally Steiner Lodge became the common meeting place. It was out of these meetings that there developed the monthly meeting we now have among our religious in Texas.) It was the old, old story that the pastor is always right and the assistant always wrong. Fr. Hauser never did any work but to hear him talk he was the most overworked priest in the community.

Celia was still alive when I returned to San Jose but died of a heart attack that year. When the school year began I said the mass at 11:30 for the school children. Father Hauser had his mass at 6:30. After Celia died, although I could sleep in I was always awake and had breakfast ready when he returned from Mass. Daily I left the house at 7:40 to pick up the school children, returning about 8:45. At 3:30 it was the reverse when I took the children home.

The grounds were terrible so I decided to clean up the place. It was amusing to me that if I started a section of the yard and did not finish it I found a Mexican finishing the job the next day. Father Hauser never said a word but it was obvious that he was noticing things. Even though I do say so myself, the grounds were soon presentable.

I was given several marriage cases to work on. One couple had a very difficult case. I worked on it for a year did not get all the papers. Father Delavy who succeeded me, finally was able to get them married. Another case I had was impossible to bless. The fellow was a Protestant and had been married before by the church when he married a catholic. After the divorce he married a Catholic. The couple told me that four years before Fr. Hauser said that he would investigate. The next time they heard anything was when I came to check up on the marriage. On one occasion he had a Nuptial Mass and the blessing for disparity of cult marriage. He claimed the bride wanted it.

Each Saturday morning we had catechism classes for the public school children. It was my job to pick up the children and later to return them to their homes. After several months I noticed that these children did not go the sacraments. I mentioned this and one Saturday we had confessions for the youngsters.

Father Mehling came to Texas for his annual visit. He stayed at San Jose. This particular year he remained about 10 days. The three of us would breakfast together, sometimes lunch and sometimes dinner but most of the time the two of them would be gone. It was one time we got good meals as Mrs. Mary Riley, one of the Irish gypsies cooked the meals. Father Mehling visited everyone in the community but not once did Father Hauser say: "You take him today." At night they would be out to 11:15, 11:30 and later. Just for the fun of it I listed the movies showing in town. Some months later



Fr. Hauser would mention casually that he had seen a particular movie. It was one of those showing at the time the provincial was in Austin. The day came for him to leave. He was to leave at 4:15 from the house. At 4:10 he said: "I had better see Tom officially since I haven't talked to him." He gave me all of five minutes and I told him nothing.

My prediction came true. I was transferred at the end of one year. My new obedience was St. Charles Boy's Home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I was to learn later that "I did not do the work." The real reason was same as before, jealousy. Above I mention how he schemed to get my job in Georgetown. When he got it I had been in the process of finishing St. Williams in Round Rock. Five years later when I returned to Georgetown I found in the account book a note saying that I had left a debt of \$1200 and no money in the bank. Such a preposterous thing was impossible because the church had cost \$2700 and \$1500 of that amount had come from the Extension Society. I had been paying for things as we went along. Friends of my parents and others had card parties and benefits for the mission so that when I left Georgetown only \$300 was still due on the church. I would have had that paid off if I had not become sick from the flu and complete exhaustion. I was in the hospital for six weeks. (Note: From Fr. Hauser. In 1948 I was in my second year at Christ the King College in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. The East was to become a vice province. All who were not from the territory could vote to stay or not to stay. I so voted. Fr. O'Toole, assistant provincial made the visit. He asked me if I would say "yes" to accept San Jose in Austin because they wanted to change Fr. Mendez. I answered, "Send me wherever you wish". I never like to ask for a place. Fr. O'Toole insisted: "If you will go to San Jose, you must say yes, because Fr. Steiner told me to get a direct answer from you." So I said, "It looks as though you would like to send me there. So in that case, I will say yes. Now whatever problems I face, will be the doing of the Holy Spirit since I am not asking to be sent there." When the obediences came out, mine read-Pastor of San Jose Parish, Austin, Texas. I never asked to be sent anywhere. I left that to the Provincial.)

Later he wanted San Jose Parish and to got it. Again he claimed that there was no money in the bank. He was always playing the martyr. He did away with every vestige of Fr. Mendez's and myself at San Jose. He sold the old church, the old San Jose Church. When he announced that he was building another Church, some of the original members of the church offered \$1500 for the old church to be kept as a memorial. Instead he sold it to another Mexican for half the price offered by the others. The ones who offered the \$1500 were friends of Fr. Mendez and myself. The first thing the new owner did was rent the church to a Protestant Mexican group who intended to evangelize the Mexicans of San Jose. When Father Mendez and I were at San Jose we could boast that there were no Mexican Protestants in South Austin. (Note: Fr. Houser. Louis Calderon, SR. bought the old church for \$7000 with permission from the bishop. His relatives rented it.)

The new property obtained by Father Houser was originally bought by Fr. Edwin Bauer when he was pastor of Holy Family Negro Church in South Austin. (Note: Fr. Houser. The property was bought by Brother Lambert who told me that he hoped to have a clinic there for the Mexican and Negro people. At the Bishop's request I had asked the Provincial of the Holy Cross Sisters if she could accept it as a missionary work. She had no sisters available. On my way north the Bishop asked me to visit and appeal to the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis in Springfield, Illinois. The provincial said when I get two sisters available I will send them. The Bishop said, that is only one of many wants.) It was Father Bauer's plan to build an old people's home for the Negroes as there was no such place for them. The plan never materialized because not enough Negroes joined the church. The church itself was finally closed. Fr. Houser obtained this property at the price of \$1 for the transfer of title. (Note: Fr. Houser. I never paid a \$1 for it. The bishop made a gift of it to San Jose in 1953.)

1960 was our Silver Jubilee Year. Father Houser told me to take my vacation early. The class was having a reunion and silver jubilee celebration at Notre Dame. I was able to attend and was

deacon for the solemn High Mass that we had. Two days before the celebration at the close of the annual retreat the obedience's came out and I was transferred.

Returning from my jubilee celebrations Father Hauser and Father Weber took their vacation together. Later I found out from Fr. Housers brother that the two priests went to Alaska for vacation. (Note: Fr. Houser. Fr. Weber and I studied tourist brochures for Alaska and Hawaii. We were permitted to travel on vacation to any place in the states. Both of our parents were deceased. The two states mentioned are expensive and therefore out of keeping with poverty. The end of the line for us was Seattle. For each of our four days in Seattle, we drove from our \$5 Hotel room to say mass at the cathedral. Each morning we were invited to the rectory for breakfast. Our last day there the auxiliary bishop came in. We were introduced and told him we were celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He said, "Why don't you go to Alaska?" We answered that it was too expensive. Not so, he said. Go to Seattle University and ask for Father so and so. He has spent his life up there and can tell you where to stay. We went. He told us. We parked the car at the airport and bought round-trip tickets, allowing ourselves a week up there. St. Ann's Hospital in Juneau was our destination. We went with hope.)

So ends my years on the Mexican Missions. Although three years later I was to return to Texas I was not to work on the missions except where I was needed.

#### A Sick Call

One Sunday on my return from Andice, Father Mendez told me that we had a sick call. It was about 10 or 12 miles in the opposite direction from Andice. In those days the country roads were not paved and old times can remember the condition of some of those roads. The first few miles were bumpy but not too bad. The second road had parallel ruts caused by wagons. It had rained for several days causing these ruts to be soft and deep. We discussed the situation and decided to take our chances. Father Mendez was driving and said that if we could stay on the ledge between the ruts we might be safe and get to the ranch. I directed him so that the wheels of the car would be on the ledge as we hoped. Easing our way we did manage to avoid the ruts. At the entrance to the ranch our problem was to reach the gate. The family lived aabout three quarters of a mile from the road. Leading into the house was a lane we in Texas call "black gumbo". When wet this gumbo is like glue, it sticks to everything. Father Mendez thought that by a sudden twist of the steering wheel we could avoid falling into the ruts. The weight of the car plus the soft shoulders of the ruts caused the latter to give way and there we were in the ruts.

For a good half hour we did everything possible to get out of the predicament. All we succeeded in doing was moving forward or moving backward. In the meantime we could see the family standing on their porch watching us but they did not come forward to offer help. It was useless to try to get to the ranch on foot because of the gumbo and it was impossible to leave the car in the middle of the road lest another car come along. Finally we decided to return to Austin and attempt to make it the next day. We hope the road would be drier. Since my class schedule would end before his the next day, father asked me to make the call. The next day after class I took a student with me, arriving at the entrance to the ranch, I told the student that I would walk to the house and that he should try to turn the around so we could return to Austin. After a few steps I felt as though I was walking on stilts in that gumbo. I did reach the house and gave the woman the last rites. When I came out onto the porch I found the student had driven right up to the porch. He said, "Father, if I made it in I can make it out." With him doing the driving we started all too soon we began to skid and to slide. We managed to keep going until the treads of the tire filled with mud and we lost traction, we became stuck, we could no longer move forward or backward, we began to sink deeper and deeper. The father of the sick woman came with his sons to help. They were of little help.

Looking about I saw some mules in a corral and asked the father to get them to pull us out. The father said that it was too cold and too wet for the mules to work. A short distance away I saw a cornfield with some dry stalks still standing. I went over and began to pull the stalks. The father remonstrated that I could not do that. I said it was either the mules or the stalks since we could not budge the car. Placing the stalks against each wheel I told the student to try to move the car. The stalks gave the car the traction it needed and we were able to get to the road. We did not bother about the ruts in the road this time because we knew we were safe. It was close to two hours that we spent on that farm with sick call and the car. I might add as a final note that the woman recovered.