



The Shrine of Saint Joseph Stirling, New Jersey



A Homily given by Father Stephen Quinn S.T.
after the wake service for
Father Cajetan McDyre S.T.
at the Shrine on July 14, 2004

Bishop Rodimer, Fr. Austin, Fr. Peter, Monsignor Brown, all our dear Shrine of St. Joseph family, and all the dear friends of Fr. Cajetan. It is with deep love, esteem, and appreciation for my friend Cajetan that I speak these words here this morning.

First of all, I want to share a story with you. Fr. Austin, our General Custodian, was conferring the Sacrament of the Sick on Cajetan, perhaps a week or ten days ago. We were all there in the room circled around his bed. By that time Cajetan's voice was weakening and it was difficult to hear his words. We had to lean over to hear what he was saying. And we would say, "Would you repeat that again, please." When Austin came to that part of the ceremony when he imposed his hands on Cajetan's head and called down the Holy Spirit, in a loud and clear voice, Cajetan cried out, "Wow". The Holy Spirit had arrived, and I'd like to think that from that moment on and through the course of those final hours, and as he went up, straight without stop, into the arms of his friend Jesus, who brought him to the Father, in the Spirit, that Cajetan was saying "Wow" and "Wow" and "Wow" again. All that he was about, it seemed to me, is contained in that **"Wow"**.

For me -- for us -- I think he has been a special treasure, marked as he was by a unique simplicity of heart, by a humility of spirit, by self-effacing love.

Early in his life, just after his graduation from high school, he traveled from Germantown, Pennsylvania to New York City to meet Dorothy Day. A young man perhaps seventeen years old, he was captivated with and wanted to align himself with the Catholic Worker and with the spirit of Dorothy Day, with working with the homeless and abandoned, with seeking peace and justice. Dorothy, in her wisdom, saw another, deeper call in him. She arranged for him to speak to one of our priests, Fr. Joachim Benson, to learn of our young Community and the ideals and charism of our Father Judge.

She wanted Cajetan to find a place where his zeal for souls and outreach for the abandoned, where his compassionate heart for the poor, could find expression in imitation of Jesus, the Good Shepherd whom he loved.

So it was that in 1936, twenty years old, he traveled to Holy Trinity, Alabama to enter our novitiate. It was there, in that year, that I was completing my own novitiate, which had begun in 1935. And it was there that I met this man for the first time. It was there that our friendship began.

Over the years that followed, Cajetan remained always gentle, humble, gracious, kind, compassionate, a shepherd of souls, ever poised to do the good and thoughtful act of kindness. His spiritual life was deeply Scripture-infused, much of which he knew by heart. He was fluent in French and read daily in French the Scriptures and Fathers of the Church, especially Augustine, for whom he had a great love, especially Augustine's writings on the Psalms. He studied at length the Holy Scriptures and made them his own. He studied at length the writings of our founder Father Judge. He quoted often 1 Corinthians 2:8, "If the rulers of the world had known, they would never have crucified the Lord God."

Cajetan himself knew the crucible of suffering; it would fashion him and change him and help him grow. His last illness must have been a tremendous burden for him. It rendered him immobile and dependent, him who was always so active, so fully alive, so fast of step, so quick of mind, so large of heart, so eager to serve whomever, wherever, however.

Burning super high-octane fuel from early morning, from 4:30 A.M., throughout every day. Father confessor, short order cook, spiritual counselor, ace dishwasher, patient listener, scratch golfer, deep spiritual homilist, man extraordinaire, crossword puzzle expert, always gentle, gentle, gentle.

What a joy to acknowledge and love such a man, such a priest, such a friend. What a friend with whom to travel through life. He reflected the image of God, of the Good Shepherd, with an apostolic, missionary heart. Like Christ's, Cajetan's compassion was without measure. In all the years I knew him, from 1936 on, I never heard a word of complaint. I never heard him express an uncharitable thought. I never heard him make a judgment about anybody.

For Cajetan, this Eucharistic action here this morning, the ultimate in table fellowship, was the great joy of his daily life. Bread broken and shared that is the Body of Jesus and the cup that is Jesus' Blood. All done in response to Jesus' invitation, "Do this in memory of me."

Someone has written that in the beginning of life we are what we are given then to fulfill our life we are called to be responsible for others. Yes, to be what we have been given is good, but how much better to give what we have been given and to do it graciously, freely, abundantly, with abandon, throughout life. How rich, how full, how gracious, how generous has been the giving without measure of our brother Cajetan over the long span of the years and even in the midst of his own trials and crosses. How generous with our brothers, our sisters in the Cenacle, with our beloved Sister Servants of Jesus whom he loved and appreciated for their presence to the end, with our dedicated laymen and women who staff our Shrine. We all came to know him. We all knew that he gave and he gave and he gave of himself. Cajetan, cast in the mold of our founder Father Judge, in his own words and own ways described the style of giving of this distinguished man of God. To have a wisdom that is without price, to be a priest ardent for the things of God, to be known by the sick, especially the poor sick, to have a name familiar in the homes of the poor and lowly, to be a light in darkness, to proffer the Bread of Life, to have a tender heart for the stricken, to be a Good Shepherd, to welcome the stray sheep, to qualify in meekness and humility. This was our brother, Cajetan.

So my dear Cajetan, we yield you into the welcoming arms of the Good Shepherd, burdened as we are by our loss. But we will continue to claim you as our friend, as our wise counselor, as our confessor, as our friend, warm and gentle, always present, still among us in your spirit, in the example of your life.

We express our gratitude to you, my dear brother, as we celebrate you in these words adapted from your favorite, St. Paul, "For our part, from the time when we first heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the members of the Church, we have never stopped thanking God for you, and recommending you in our prayers." (Ephesians 1:15-16) Yes, we give thanks to our God each time we remember you, Cajetan.

We make our prayer with joy. So full a part have you taken in the work of the Gospel and in our lives, so blessed are we through you. May your soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, by the mercy of God, rest in peace.

