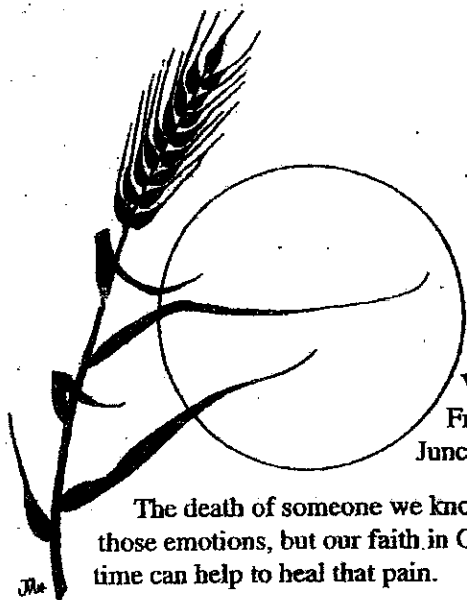


# Hand Hand

October, 1998



**A**men, amen I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.

John 12:24

We send you this special issue of *Hand in Hand* to inform you that Fr. Lawrence Murphy died on August 21. He had lived in Boulder Junction, Wisconsin, since he left St. John School for the Deaf in 1974.

The death of someone we know can bring forth many emotions. It is not always easy to sort out those emotions, but our faith in God can help us to face the source of any pain. And the passage of time can help to heal that pain.

Bishop Richard Sklba spoke at the private funeral held for the Murphy family at Holy Cross Cemetery. We hope those of you who knew Lawrence Murphy may find comfort in the bishop's words which began with a reference to the passage from John's gospel printed above. The bishop said:

"As any grade school child knows, seeds carefully placed into the soil don't really die at all — the seed's outer cover becomes too narrow, too contained, and new life begins. As first graders we placed seeds into glass containers, then watched wide-eyed as the mystery of new life began ... first the root down into rich soil ... then the new leaves ... and finally the plant reaching upward toward the light.

"Lawrence Murphy put his roots deep into his family. To be a priest in one's own family is a wonderful but also very unique experience ... celebrating not Advent or Lent or major holy seasons as such, but always present for family gatherings. Uncle Larry was at christenings,

graduations, weddings, family events of all sorts — giving gifts, watching families grow, offering congratulations or sympathy. You knew him in his laughter and sorrow, in good health and on difficult days.

"His entire priesthood was devoted to the deaf community. When I first met him in the autumn of 1960 — at St. Mary's in Elm Grove where he was a Sunday help-out — he talked about St. John's. He loved the school and its community very much. He did so much wonderful work for the youngsters and staff.

"But not everything he did was good. I say that not to offend or hurt, but because it's true. Painful

accusations were made. They surfaced again in recent years, with increased bitterness. I don't know the whole story, but I do know that the amount of damage became clear and that Father Murphy was in the process of writing letters of personal apology. The matter hadn't yet been resolved when he died.

"So to protect your grief from disruption and to respect your sorrow, this had to be a very private funeral. I can't tell you how badly I feel about all this, for I knew Larry for almost 40 years and liked him very much.

"I have a theory about the last judgment for each of us ... only a theory, but one which gives me much comfort and hope. I do not believe the last judgment will be when all our secret sins are revealed to the whole world. In fact, I suspect that it is a bit arrogant to think that the whole world is even interested in anyone's secret sins. No, I believe the last judgment will be that time when God reveals fully to each of us who we really are. Finally we will understand the decisions we have

made throughout life; we will understand how we chose to live life and will comprehend the impact of our choices.

"It is at that final judgment, I believe, when we will hear God clearly calling us by name ... *we will most humbly hear our own name as we never heard it before, and we will rise to claim this deepest identity.* God will forgive us and embrace us and bless us forever.

"Thus, when we commend someone we love to God's embrace, like the seed that doesn't really die, we take comfort and hope in God's gift of new life. As we come together this morning, we believe that our good and gracious God has called Larry by name, inviting him now to claim that identity he forged in the choices he made throughout his life — may God grant him peace."

— Bishop Richard Sklba  
August 28, 1998

