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TWO PRIESTS

Adirondack retirees still in ministry at 87

BY KATHLEEN LAMANNA

Thursday, July 9, 2015 5:00 AM

"Everybody needs a home," said Rev. Paul Cox, sitting in his cabin on the southeast shore of Lake George.

Father Cox and Rev. Nellis Tremblay were ordained in 1954. The former will turn 87 in November; the latter says he's "87 and a half."

"Half of our class is dead," added Father Tremblay. "The other half is retired like us."

The two priests bought the lakeside cabin in 1971, along with the late Rev. James Toole. Over the years, they remodeled the inside, knocking down walls that once divided four small bedrooms to create a larger living space.

Before they retired, the priests would spend every free day they could working on the cabin, making it home-ready. Father Toole, who passed away in 1992, "wasn't too handy with a hammer," recalled Father Cox.

In 1965, the Second [Vatican](#) Council announced that priests could retire at the age of 70, and would be mandated to do so at 75. "Up 'til that, they said we had to work 'til we died -- die with our boots on," said Father Tremblay.

Golf and more

In 1998, Fathers Tremblay and Cox decided to "retire" at 70 -- ostensibly to play more golf -- but, having moved to the cabin full-time, they continue to do their fair share of work for Adirondack local parishes.

Father Tremblay now lives in the main house, while Father Cox lives in an apartment above the neighboring garage with his Jack Russell terrier, Suzie.

Father Tremblay celebrates the occasional Mass at Sacred Heart parish in Lake George on Sundays. Father Cox is involved with "everything spiritual" at St. Cecilia's parish in Warrensburg and at St. Mary's in Glens Falls.

"He's incredibly generous with his time. He takes part in everything here at the parish," said Sister



FATHERS COX AND TREMBLAY at home with Suzie the dog. (Kathleen Lamanna photo)

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Linda Hogan, CSJ, parish life director at St. Cecilia's, about Father Cox's help. "He does what only a priest can do, but over and above that. His presence is important."

Sister Linda said parishioners feel comfortable when Father Cox is there, but "they're very protective of him. They don't want me to work him to death."

Known all over

After a couple of decades of service in the Adirondacks, "I'll go to St. Mary's and say, 'Man, these people are getting old,'" joked Father Cox. He visits people in the hospital every Tuesday, as well as those in a nursing home and people who are homebound.

"He knows everybody in Warren County," said Father Tremblay, who himself has stayed involved in many aspects of ministry at Sacred Heart.

"He has been a moving force in terms of mission and outreach," said Sacred Heart parishioner Torie Wattendorf. "He is the warm and welcoming face of Christ."

Father Tremblay plays a major role in an organization called Tremblay's Round Table. The organization is involved in keeping Lake George businesses open year-round, among other efforts. There are more than 3,200 beds in Lake George hotels; however, in the winter, most of them aren't used.

"I didn't choose it," Father Tremblay said about his involvement in the organization. "They threw it at me," since community members knew that Father Tremblay had been involved with housing issues in inner-city Albany.

"His warmth and his kindness and his loving forgiveness are so healing to the parish," said Ms. Wattendorf.

Father Tremblay is also involved in a group that attempts to connect people with common interests. "The U.S. is the loneliest place in the world," he declared. "This group gets three or four people with common interests and makes a support group."

The support groups can participate in anything from raising money to help soldiers with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to helping children learn how to knit and crochet.

In spare time

The two priests were also very involved in starting North Country Ministry, an organization formed in 1992 to act as a smaller level version of Catholic Charities in the Albany Diocese's northernmost areas. North Country Ministry assists people from Lake George, Warrensburg, North Creek and beyond.

"It's done a lot of good," said Father Tremblay, who believes that, at the time of its inception, North Country Ministry's teamwork by several parishes was a unique idea in the Catholic Church.

When Fathers Cox and Tremblay aren't ministering, they're usually out on the golf course or taking Suzie for a walk. Adirondack winters can be tough, but the two priests seem to be managing: "I don't mind the cold," said Father Cox. "We get a lot of snow, but not as much as some places. We don't do anything in the winter."

"We go to Puerto Rico every year in January," added Father Tremblay.

The priests keep busy with their community, attending birthday parties and wedding receptions. They sit by the lake and visit with neighbors.

"It's a home," said Father Tremblay.

"You can't just retire from priesthood. I couldn't imagine doing that," said Father Cox. "That's what we were ordained to do, not to play golf every day."

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Both Fr Cox and Fr Tremblay were my advisors. I was educated and married in the Church. Had 3 children and Husband of 27 years left his family and life for another. I always look to my priests from High school at VI for guidance. I have know you both for years. I was Sharon Coyne,a 16 yr old grad

Sharon A Gibbs 12/13/2020 10:51:00 AM [Report this comment](#)

Fr. Cox was a family friend for many years. He and his brother would come out to our camp on Burden Lake and take a swim and have lunch....the good old days....love to hear about all the good works he does, doesn't surprise me in the least...wish him the best..

Therese McCann 10/4/2019 5:35:00 PM [Report this comment](#)

I attended Nellis Trombley's first Mass at St. Alphonsus in Glens Falls 1954. I still have the holy card from from his ordination.

Paul Fenton 7/28/2018 5:18:00 PM [Report this comment](#)

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