



The Rev. William O'Hanlon

Irish priest marks anniversary

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By DEBORAH DAY

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Mama Cat would normally spring at the call of her Irish-tongued keeper, but on these hot summer days even the promise of a tummy scratch barely budges the poky feline.

She winces at her silver-haired friend and feeder, but promptly bounds after him when he threatens to leave.

The Rev. William O'Hanlon understands his fuzzy, gray companion's sluggish reluctance, though. He's spent all 40 years of his priesthood in Louisiana, plodding through the sultry summer heat.

This month marks his 40th anniversary as a Catholic priest. O'Hanlon will be honored Sunday at Holy Trinity Catholic Church where he has spent the past 15 years. Bishop William B. Friend will preside over 10:30 Mass, and a reception will be held from 3-5 p.m. at the Holiday Inn North, 1906 North Market St.

The small Louisiana town of Bunkie was first to be blessed by the services of O'Hanlon,

fresh out of Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans in 1949. The south Ireland native then skipped across the state, stopping for years at a time to serve as priest in more small towns. He came to rest in Shreveport at St. Theresa's Catholic Church in 1959 and has been here ever since. He joined Holy Trinity in 1974.

"He's very faithful to his church," says Pearl Beaudoin, O'Hanlon's housekeeper of 14 years. "He stays busy all the time. And he loves his cats."

Stray cats often visit the priest. His laugh lines turn upward as he shakes a box of cat food, noting that at one time 13 cats occupied the crawlspace beneath Holy Trinity. Now only two are "regulars," as O'Hanlon says.

O'Hanlon is also known for having an affection for roses. He occasionally wields his green Irish thumb in the yard of Holy Trinity and the grounds of St. Joseph's Cemetery where he is director.

"Talk about a headache," he chuckles. "It's one of those old cemeteries."

At Doctors' Hospital, O'Hanlon serves as

Catholic chaplain, another aspect of his occupation that supplements his busy schedule.

"You're on call 24 hours a day by right," O'Hanlon says, explaining that being a priest is not so easy. He lunges forward and presses his index finger to his desk accentuating "right."

O'Hanlon has also been involved in the restoration of Holy Trinity. He takes pride in the 60 stained glass windows the church boasts and is more than willing to tell the tales of five Catholic priests honored in glass who died during the yellow fever epidemic in 1873.

Born in County Cork, Ireland, O'Hanlon has returned over the past few years to visit relatives. He plans another trip to his homeland this summer "for the 40th anniversary, principally."

Though he loves his native Ireland, he says he could not live there.

"One of the principal reasons is the climate. The cold weather gets me.

"Besides," he says, "I've been here 30 years out of 67. It's my second home."