



Rev. John B. Mea

Priest Knows Each By Name

BY JOAN M. DEVLIN

Pastor's Profile

Father John B. Mea is a unique individual. He is a priest who has a phenomenal memory, and a warmth that gives him what he happily admits is "an affinity to people."

The Rev. John B. Mea (pronounced "Me") has been the head pastor of a busy and large Roman Catholic parish in Fort Edward since June of 1967. It is the only Roman Catholic church in the village, and has over 600 families as members.

Not only can the good father call most of these people by their first names, but he laughingly says, "I can usually tell where they sat at Mass — and which Mass, too."

He has been known to remember people years later and amazes everyone with this remarkable gift. How does he do it? Well, he explained part of it this way.

"I stand out in front every Sunday morning before the service, and enjoy calling everyone by name as they come and go. I'm successful most of the time," He estimates conservatively that he knows about "85 per cent" of his parishioners very well.

Father Mea is a dynamic man, but in a gentle way somehow. Soft-spoken yet firm, he said he always knows his own mind. "Since I was in the eighth grade, I wanted to be a priest, and never changed."

Born in Little Falls, New York, he felt, upon thinking

back, that perhaps he was greatly influenced by the priest of his hometown parish there, which was St. Mary's Church of Little Falls.

Although he was an only child, he says his parents were very happy with his decision to enter the priesthood.

Father Mea attended Niagara University and St. Joseph's Seminary, Dan- woodie, Yonkers. He was ordained June 3, 1944 at Albany.

Obviously, he is a happy man who has never had any regrets about the path he has taken. His experience includes teaching, as well as working on the Marriage Court for the Albany Diocese. He has also worked on the Diocesan Group Program, a fund raising job, but says he definitely prefers the role of the parish priest which he now holds.

"I just love the contact with people," he said, "which this job requires."

After his ordination, he served St. Mary's Church in Hudson Falls for four years and was then sent to St. Teresa d'Avila in Albany as administrator. Six years after that, he went to Blessed Sacrament Church in Albany, and then to St. Patrick's Church in Johnstown.

His first call as full pastor was in North Creek, where he served four years in a town where he has many relatives on his father's side. Still, he says, "When I came to St. Joseph's Church here in Fort Edward, I came back home."

Father Mea has an assistant parish priest, the Rev. Francis Cherniawski, with whom he works very well, and who has served St. Joseph's for ten years himself. A native of Poland, Father Cherniawski has some difficulty with the complexities of the English language, so that Father Mea does all the preaching at the three Masses on Sunday and one Saturday Mass, except for vacations or illness.

Father Mea's constant companion and protector is his Shetland sheep dog, Torie, a beautiful animal who resembles a small "Lassie." When asked about his hobbies, if any, the priest laughed and said, "Well, Torie sort of walks me. Indeed I love to walk, and also play golf when I can, for one day a week in the summertime."

He enjoys his job so much, which is a very demanding and busy parish, that he said he "doesn't travel much, but likes to stay around here."

A very fine ecumenical relationship among the other churches of varied denominations is present, too.