



The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



Twenty Something

Columnist Christina Capecchi reflects on facing 10-year class reunion, page 12.

CriterionOnline.com

August 13, 2010

Vol. L, No. 44 75¢

Giving hope and houses



Jim Simmons, left, and Tom Egold are members of a group of former Catholic high school classmates who have formed Hearts and Hands of Indiana, a grassroots organization that offers hope and the opportunity for a new home to low-income families in Holy Trinity and St. Anthony parishes in Indianapolis.

Classmates see Hearts and Hands ministry as another way to live out their faith

By John Shaughnessy

Every month, Jim Simmons gets to savor the smiles and the laughs of his former high school classmates.

Like most friendships that formed in high school, these guys have their stories to tell, stories of moments that still bind them together.

In the case of this group from the 1961 graduating class of the former Sacred Heart High School in Indianapolis, some of the smiles come from remembering the magical, undefeated football season during their senior year.

As for some of the laughs, they come

from a few of the memories that, well, let's just say they won't be sharing the details of those times with their grandchildren any time soon.

"We had an incorrigible high school class" is all that Simmons will say, flashing a look that is part mischief and part regret.

Still, the beauty of a life story is that new chapters can be added and new endings can be written. And right now Simmons, Tom Egold, Paul Corsaro, Mike Carson, Steve Rasmussen, Lanny Rossmann, Andy Shaver and other members of their group continue to author an inspiring grassroots tale of giving hope

and houses to low-income families in a struggling area of Indianapolis.

Another unforgettable victory

That story began in January of 2009, two months after Simmons organized the first of the monthly get-togethers with his classmates. After hearing about the successes that many of his friends had made of their lives, Simmons offered this telling assessment of how far his classmates had come:

"As I hear our stories, that's quite a bit of achievement and accomplishment in our lives. The nuns [from those

See MINISTRY, page 8

Vatican welcomes U.S. plaintiffs' decision to end abuse lawsuit

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—While underlining its condemnation of "the horror" of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy, the Vatican welcomed as "good news" the imminent end of a lawsuit against the Holy See in a U.S. court.

The Vatican spokesman, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, told journalists on Aug. 10

that "the Holy See is satisfied to hear the news" that a lawsuit in a U.S. court against the Vatican is being dropped by the plaintiffs.

Three men in Louisville, Ky., filed a motion on Aug. 9 requesting that a federal judge drop their case.

The men, who were abused by priests in the Archdiocese of Louisville, filed a suit against the Vatican in 2004 claiming it was liable for actions by bishops in failing to prevent sexual abuse by priests. They argued that the bishops who supervised the abusive priests were employees of the Holy See.

However, the men's attorney, William McMurry, told media outlets that because an earlier court ruling recognized the Vatican's sovereign immunity, he was going to drop the lawsuit. A judge must now rule whether the case can be dismissed, but lawyers for both sides told The Associated Press that it had virtually ended.

The Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act protects governments from being sued in U.S. courts. The law previously has been found to apply to efforts to sue the Holy See, exempting it from tort claims.

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court left standing a lower court ruling that will allow an Oregon man to try to hold the Vatican financially responsible for his sexual abuse by a priest if he can persuade the court that the priest was an employee of the Holy See.

By declining to take *Holy See v. John Doe*, the court left intact the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that said because of the way Oregon law defines employment, the Vatican is not protected under the Foreign

See VATICAN, page 8

Rapid growth forces Greenwood parish to expand quickly

By Sean Gallagher

GREENWOOD—SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood is young and growing quickly.

Founded in 1993, the parish now has approximately 1,300 households among its members. And it has more than doubled in size since 2003 when its current pastor, Father Vincent Lampert, was assigned to minister there.

A growing number of children in the parish has forced SS. Francis and Clare to move quickly in developing its school, which was founded in 2006.

Last year, the school had 118 students in kindergarten through fourth grade. This year, 183 students will be enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade. The plan is eventually to offer a Catholic education at the parish school through the eighth grade.

Because of the phenomenal growth of the parish, it planned a major expansion of its facilities. On Oct. 4, 2009—the feast of parish co-patron St. Francis of Assisi—ground was broken on a building project to add 14 classrooms, a cafeteria and an athletic facility.

See GREENWOOD, page 2



Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein leads members of SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood in applauding the parish's pastor, Father Vincent Lampert, on Aug. 8 for his hard work and ministry in leading the faith community during its rapid expansion over the past four years. Standing behind Archbishop Buechlein, from left, deacons Stephen Hodges and Ronald Reimer join in the applause.

Colorado artist created image of Mother Teresa used for postage stamp

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (CNS)—The commemorative stamp of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta being issued by the U.S. Postal Service bears a Colorado Springs postmark, so to speak.

The stamp was designed by acclaimed artist Thomas Blackshear II, who along with his wife, Ami, has made his home in the area for more than 16 years.

The 44-cent stamp featuring the founder of the Missionaries of Charity will go on sale on Aug. 26, what would have been her 100th birthday.

“Her humility and compassion, as well as her respect for the innate worth and dignity of humankind, inspired people of all ages and backgrounds to work on behalf of the world’s poorest populations,” the Postal Service said in announcing the stamp last December. It also noted that Mother Teresa was named an honorary U.S. citizen in 1996.

During his long and varied career, Blackshear has designed roughly 30 stamps for the Postal Service, painting everyone from civil rights activist Rosa Parks to boxer Joe Louis.

“The thing about a stamp is that, because it’s going to be reduced so much, you have to design it in such a way that it’s instantly recognizable. It has to have that graphic quality,” Blackshear said.

Using photographs of the late nun, Blackshear painted three different portraits of Mother Teresa and submitted them to the Postal Service’s art committee.

Although the stamp was just one of many projects that Blackshear has done for the Postal Service, some aspects of Mother Teresa’s life distinctly resonate with the artist—in particular the idea that God has a specific mission for each person. A member of New Life Church in northern Colorado Springs, Blackshear said that his Christian art is not only a career, but a calling from God.

“It’s more than art—it’s a ministry,” he told *The Colorado Catholic Herald*, newspaper of the Colorado Springs Diocese. “There have been many times that I’ve heard that a painting that I’ve done has influenced or affected people in ways that are not the norm.”

Growing up in Atlanta, Blackshear showed artistic talent at an early age. He won a scholarship to the Art Institute of Chicago, later transferring to the nearby Academy of Art. Upon graduation from art school, he went to work for the

greeting card company Hallmark, launching a successful career in commercial artwork.

His focus eventually turned more toward sculpture and fine art. He designed a popular line of African-American sculptures called “Ebony Visions,” with which he is still involved. Much of his artwork has been reproduced by Lenox Co. for plates and other collectibles.

It was when he started painting Christian themes that Blackshear said he found his true mission, however.

“Back in the late 1980s, God had someone approach me about doing Christian art. That’s when everything kind of changed. I did this painting for DaySpring greeting cards called ‘Forgiven.’ That’s probably the most well-known painting that I’ve done,” Blackshear said.

The painting depicts Christ with his arms around a modern-day man who holds a hammer in one hand and a spike in the other, illustrating that even though one’s sins nail Jesus to the cross, his mercy is always there, Blackshear said.

Other Christian-themed paintings by Blackshear include “Coat of Many Colors, Lord of All,” a picture of Christ in a robe made up of flags and fabrics from around the world; “Watchers in the Night,” which depicts a guardian angel standing over a sleeping boy; and “Night in Day,” a painting of a black figure wrapped in a brilliant white cloak.

Blackshear said that “Night in Day” came directly from a vision given to him by God.

Over the past several years, Blackshear said he had struggled to come up with new ideas for paintings. Last summer, however, he was inspired to go on a 40-day fast at the urging of a friend.

Once the fast ended, he got a wealth of fresh ideas, sparking a new line of Christian-themed paintings that he tentatively calls “Wings” because angels are featured prominently. Blackshear said he hopes to have five new paintings done by the end of the year.

When the Postal Service announced it would be issuing a stamp of Mother Teresa, some groups protested the decision on the grounds that a government agency should not be honoring a religious figure, but Blackshear dismissed the criticism.

“Look at what the woman did. There is nobody in the 20th century that comes close to the kind of life that woman



This stamp with an image of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta will be among the subjects depicted on U.S. stamps debuting in 2010, the U.S. Postal Service announced on Dec. 30, 2009. The portrait of Mother Teresa was painted by artist Thomas Blackshear II of Colorado Springs, Colo., and will go on sale on what would have been her 100th birthday on Aug. 26.

led, and all the people that she helped. So why in the world would they make a big stink about something like that? It’s ridiculous,” he said. †

VATICAN

continued from page 1

Sovereign Immunities Act from potential liability for the actions of a priest who Doe, the unidentified plaintiff, said sexually abused him in the 1960s.

The case will now go back to U.S. District Court, where Doe’s attorneys will attempt to prove that the late Andrew Ronan, a former Servite priest who was laicized in 1966, was a Vatican employee at the time the events took place.

Jeffrey Lena, the U.S.-based attorney for the Holy See, said in a statement on Aug. 9 that the Louisville lawsuit had “always lacked merit.”

“This development confirms that, contrary to what the plaintiffs’ lawyers repeatedly told the media, there has never been a Holy See policy requiring concealment of child sexual abuse,” he said.

“The theory crafted by the plaintiffs’ lawyers six years ago misled the American public,” he said.

“That the case against the Holy See always lacked merit does not mean that the plaintiffs themselves did not suffer as a result of sexual abuse,” said Lena. “But bringing this case only distracted from the important goal of protecting children from harm.”

Father Lombardi said despite the good news of the case’s almost certain dismissal, the Vatican in no way was “minimizing the horror and the condemnation of sexual abuse and compassion for the victims’ suffering.”

“Justice toward victims and the protection of minors must be goals that remain a priority,” he said.

“Nevertheless, it is positive that a six-year-long case alleging the Holy See was involved in charges of covering up abuse—[charges] which also had a strong negative impact on public opinion—has in the end been shown to be grounded on a baseless accusation,” he said.

In the dismissal motion, McMurry wrote that an earlier

court ruling recognizing Vatican immunity meant the plaintiffs then had to proceed on the argument that U.S. bishops were officials or employees of the Holy See.

However, “the grant of jurisdiction was so narrow that it’s meaningless,” he said.

Also, the claim of one of the plaintiffs was voided because he was involved in a settlement against the Louisville Archdiocese in 2003 and, therefore, could not seek a claim from the Vatican.

The motion said that in the other two plaintiffs’ cases, “the bishops in question are deceased and further discovery regarding the bishops’ actions is believed to be impossible.”

A lawsuit still on the books in Wisconsin states that top Vatican officials knew about allegations of sexual abuse by Father Lawrence Murphy at St. John’s School for the Deaf near Milwaukee. But in an earlier statement, Lena said the Vatican “knew nothing of his crimes until decades after the abuse occurred.” †

MINISTRY

continued from page 1

Sacred Heart days] are up in heaven saying, ‘Can you believe what these clowns have done with their lives?’”

Then Simmons offered a challenge to his friends: “You know, fellas, the Lord’s been good to us. We need to think about giving back.”

Enough people agreed, but the question still remained, “What’s the best way to do that?”

The answer came a few days later when



Catrina Rush beams as Tom Egold gives her the key to a home that was purchased and renovated by Hearts and Hands of Indiana. Rush and her two sons were chosen this year for the first home bought by the organization, which Egold serves as the president.

Egold went to a funeral and saw Father John McCaslin, the pastor of Holy Trinity and St. Anthony parishes in Indianapolis.

The two men had known each other at St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis when Father McCaslin was an associate pastor there and Egold was president of the parish council. As they talked after the funeral, Father McCaslin told Egold about his vision to revive the struggling areas of his parishes by forming an organization that would buy and rebuild homes for low-income families—an approach that he viewed as a form of evangelization. He asked Egold if he could help.

The former Sacred Heart teammates had their new challenge. Within months, they formed Hearts and Hands of Indiana, an organization that has taken root in the neighborhood around Holy Trinity and St. Anthony churches. It led to another unforgettable victory.

On a day in late May of 2010, a single mother named Catrina Rush and her two sons moved into a home that had been purchased, gutted and rebuilt by the former classmates and teammates.

It was an emotional day for Rush, who recalled the phone call which let her know that she and her sons were chosen for the organization’s first home.

“I was driving on my way to work,” she said. “I pulled over so I would not crash into someone. I was very happy. I started crying. I couldn’t believe it was happening to me.”

She pays a monthly mortgage payment that is significantly less than the amount she previously paid in rent.

“This experience is unbelievable for me,” she said.

That feeling is shared by the members of Hearts and Hands.

“When Catrina moved into the house, it was very emotional, the fulfillment of a dream,” recalled Egold, the group’s president. “There were people who told us it couldn’t be done, that we were crazy. Well, that may be true. But we did it. And we’re going to keep trying to make a difference in people’s lives.”

‘All we have is a gift from God’

As the members of Hearts and Hands continue to buy and renovate homes—and search for the right kind of families to live in them—Father McCaslin smiles at how the effort has brought together people from different walks of life.

“We’re just trying to build up the community of St. Anthony and Holy Trinity,” he said. “Much of this is about connecting people from different parts of the city. Many of them are from the Class of ’61. Their passion has been incredible.”

He also sees their work as a model that could be of great help to the Church, especially during difficult economic times.

“We’re entering into a very creative and very fruitful time in the Church,” Father McCaslin said. “We have a lot of gifted and talented people who are retiring.

If we can tap into their experience, it could be a special time for the Church.”

It’s already another special time in life for the members of Hearts and Hands, many of whom will mark the 50th anniversary of their high school graduation in 2011. Their short-term goal is to make four houses a year available to low-income families. Their long-range plan is to create a business model of their organization that can be used by other groups across the country.

“We’ve been given another chance to live out our faith,” Egold said. “There’s the old saying that the more you give, the more you receive. It’s happened through Hearts and Hands. We’ve learned a better understanding of the spirituality of stewardship. All we are and all we have is a gift from God, and we have to give back.”

It’s the kind of statement that would have made the religious sisters at Sacred Heart High School smile.

Simmons was partly thinking of those sisters when he noted with a touch of humor: “We’re trying to even up the ledger for when we meet up with St. Peter.”

He turned serious when he added, “We all believe so strongly in our faith. We love what we’re doing.”

(For more information about Hearts and Hands of Indiana, visit the Web site www.heartsandhandsindy.com or call Tom Egold at 317-535-1535 or Jim Simmons at 317-784-9443.) †