

Msgr. Ed Pellicore

It was a cold, yet clear morning on January 4, 2000. The parking lot outside the chapel at Mayslake Village in Oakbrook, Illinois was patched with ice. The cars started arriving early, and soon the lot was filled with dozens of vehicles belonging to the family and friends of Monsignor Edward M. Pellicore. They had come to pay him one last visit – to remember the many accomplishments he had achieved in his 87 years of life and 63 years of service to his Lord as a Catholic priest.

The chapel itself soon filled with family, fellow priests, former parishioners, and friends of Monsignor Pellicore. In their rooms, residents of Mayslake Village turned on their television sets to view the ceremony honoring the priest who had lived with and ministered them for the past 17 years. Finally, Cardinal Francis George opened with a prayer to begin the Mass of the Resurrection.

Music provided by talented members of Monsignor Pellicore's family soon echoed through the chapel; the lyrics recounting the prayers that Ed may have made in his youth when he received his calling:

Here I am, Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

Following the opening prayers and readings selected by the family, Monsignor Kenneth Velo remembered his friend, Monsignor Pellicore, with the following homily:

It was an extremely quiet Saturday morning, in early April, in the late 1970's, and it was unusual because it was an extremely busy parish with all sorts of funerals and weddings. This particular Saturday morning, for whatever reason, there was no funeral. Standing outside of Monsignor's door, I shouted very loudly:

"There's a huge Italian funeral in church – who booked it?"

The chair moved. The door opened. Down the stairs ran Monsignor Pellicore into the darkened church. Walked all the way back to see if there was a hearse out in front – then came back through the church and walked much slower up those stairs to my room.

He looked at me and said: "Kenny. Kenny, you will pay. I don't know when, but you will pay – I'm telling you!"

Perhaps it was then that he changed his funeral plans and put me down to give this homily at this time of Christian burial.

Al, Ray, Pat, Arlene, nieces and nephews: we stand with you. We understand your loss because he was like a brother – like an uncle to us. We are being joined by other members of the Mayslake Village through the gift of television. Those people are in their rooms. For they

remember Monsignor Pellicore here in this chapel, in the dining room. He was a special part of this community.

There are “snapshots” that I’d like to share with you about Monsignor. A few that might tell us a little bit about who he was and what sort of person. He loved statistics – loved records. He kept the bowling averages, the golf scores. He could tell you who played at this particular game and who was with them in 1960 at this event. Loved statistics. He would have enjoyed the fact that he was the only priest to have died in one century and was buried in another.

I lived between two Monsignors (Monsignor Pellicore and Monsignor Cunningham) and every time a priest died who was older than Monsignor Cunningham, Monsignor Pellicore would walk from his room down to Monsignor Cunningham’s room and knock: “Monsignor, Father _____ died – you’re number 7.”

He worked tirelessly as the priest on the Priests’ Retirement Mutual Aid Association Board. There he spent time looking at different things and trying to help the priests prepare for retirement. He would see that their checks were sent and notification took place for those years that he served on the board. A number of times I called him to tell him that different priests had died so that he would know shortly after their deaths and he could make arrangements. I remember calling him one day and saying, “Monsignor, Father _____ died.” {Monsignor Pellicore}: “Yeah? When did he die?” I said, “Well, he died today, the 30th.” [Monsignor Pellicore quickly responded]: “He doesn’t get his PRMAA check.”

There was a moment where we had a healing Mass at St. Angela’s. It was a unique experience. It was supposed to take place in the convent chapel but large numbers had caused it to have to take place in the church. He called on his Wednesday night off to see what was going on. I told him that there were ambulances and a crowd in front of the church that would have made Lourdes look sick. He came home later on that night and walked into the Sacristy just after the three-hour Mass had ended. A woman was standing in front of him and was sort of slain in the Spirit and she just fell down and collapsed at that moment. He said: “We’ll have none of that around here – get up right now! No healing!”

Those were stories, those were “snapshots” of Monsignor Pellicore through years that I knew him and you knew him. He was, yes, a character. But more than anything else, he was one who was surely very human, and yet, extremely holy. His holiness was not very much of piety or of a religious sense, but a holiness that truly allowed him to understand who the Lord was in his life and shaped everything else because of that.

Monsignor Edward M. Pellicore was called to serve the Church of Chicago on April 18, 1936. As a member of that class, he lived that calling out for 63 years of his life in various parishes and special places where he served as priest and pastor. But there are other “snapshots”. And if we think of photography as capturing images or light on negative, then we would be well to look at the Gospel, to look at the readings of today and see who this man, Monsignor Pellicore, was. They were chosen by the family.

We see in that reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah the understanding of the relationship of God and His people, the humility of being called, and the mission of the person who was sent. Edward Pellicore knew his mission. There were no minced words – he spoke clearly and plainly about the Gospel message to those who were entrusted to his care. He toiled, he worked – he worked physically and spiritually to help continue the Kingdom of God. People from the parishes in which he served remember him on a ladder, with a hammer, or searching for the janitor – looking at all the different ways that he had to work and serve the Lord. But they remember him most of all through his presence as he stood with them in moments of sorrow and times of loss – just as he was with them in moments of great joy.

We look at the reading from Peter and we see the wonderful attribute of gratitude that is expressed. Peter talked about the wonderful gift of faith that was received and the difference that took place in one's life because of that faith. Monsignor Edward M. Pellicore was one who always showed his gratitude, his gratefulness to those around him, who did something for him, or were part of his life. He was a grateful person, but most of all grateful to the God who called him to priesthood, to the Lord that gave him family, friends, and faith.

We see in the beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew the wonderful attributes and the wonderful words that Matthew uses to describe what the kingdom of God will be like and who would be part of that kingdom. Well, Monsignor Pellicore surely lived that out each and every day of his life. Didn't he proclaim the message of Matthew's Gospel to the people of Our Lady of the Angels in 1936 as he told them of God's kingdom? Later, as they lost sons in the war or experienced the loss of children in the fire he was with them to tell them of God's kingdom. To the people of Holy Rosary -didn't he tell them about the wonderful aspects of forgiveness and reconciliation? Didn't he comfort them? Didn't they see his single-heartedness – his purity of heart all the moments he was with them from 1937 to 1952 or later as pastor from 1966 to 1968?

Or to the people of Lawndale, the people of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, those who were down-trodden, those who perhaps were ostracized, those who were poor, those who found themselves on the margins of life as he proclaimed the Gospel and told them of their goodness and of the love that God had for them. Whether that be in the daycare center where he worked or all of the different programs that he participated in. In these efforts, he showed them who God was and how that same God would welcome them to a special place.

Or to the people of St. Angela in good times and in bad – whether in the auditorium, in the office, in the pulpit, in the church, on North Avenue, on Division, on the streets where they lived, Monsignor would always proclaim the Gospel and comfort his people. He was single-hearted in his devotion to the Lord and gave of himself totally – completely.

It's hard to believe that he's been here seventeen years at Mayslake. Many of us thought that he really wouldn't be able to live through retirement, thinking that he would perhaps wear out not having the things to do that he had earlier in life. And yet, these were happy years, fulfilled

years, years where he was one with the people of Mayslake. Quasi-chaplain, a resident, he was pastor to you and to your families.

This day we remember the life of one who served the Lord for 63 years. And what one gift did he bring to us? The example of basic faith -a faith in a God who never let him down; a faith in a God who he served so well for so long. He was one who worked tirelessly for the Gospel and for that reason we gather around a simple altar to give thanks to the God who gave us Monsignor Edward M. Pellicore.

There will be something missing from priests' funerals in the future. At the end of Mass, Salve Regina is always intoned. ("Dagger", Ed Pellicore, "Dag", Father Pellicore, Monsignor Pellicore) had a unique style of singing and made an unusual contribution to the choir of priests who would sing that particular hymn. Now, he joins the choirs of angels in praising God forever. Amen.