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Return to
Zorc

outlook

BERLIN:

CITY OF STORIES

John:
This picture was taken
by my son (B. DAVID)
read his article
on Page 6



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**divine word seminary
duxbury, massachusetts**



Father Jim Doyle sat down at last, his head spinning with thoughts ever since he had opened the letter bearing the Provincial's official seal. He hadn't bothered to switch on the balcony lights or open any music, but just sat before the organ and thought. He breathed easier in the expanding silence, so different from the chatter that buzzed through the Chapter Room.

Mechanically his feet poised over the footpedals, feeling each one out, just as he had learned to do ten years ago. With one swish of his left hand eight of the deepest stops were opened on the first manual,

four for the second, and three for the third. The bellows whirred, the great pipes now trembling with expectation. Two years was a long time to have been out of practice, with Minor Orders and Ordination and all...But the familiar touch of ivory gave him confidence. Still he waited, waited till the silence grew so close about him that he could hear himself think. He had to start, now, with a smashing volley of G minor.

From the way the official letter lay folded on the music stand, as he played he could see the word Collegeville all too plainly written in crisp, neat letters across the top, letters which he detested, wished he had never seen. He was not mad at God, he told himself,

months afterwards. And now this. Two trunks still waiting to be unpacked, but again it was good-bye, Jim. He didn't like it; no, he never would.

Sisters Jane and Petrus, two of his high school classmates, had entered about the same time he did; was it because of him? Now they were here, they were so happy that he had come. They could never guess that he could play the organ as Sister Matilda had always foretold. How disappointed they would be when they found out that he was transferred. He hadn't seen the old gang yet, now all of them married, now waiting to see him. But he would never come. He was to make it up to his mother for the nine years he had been away; it

Organ Solo

nor at the General Council, nor at anyone in particular but at everyone and everything in general; anyway, it didn't matter. He did not hate, for he had been taught to conquer such failings. Years ago in Novitiate he had learned to be recollected, but he wasn't sure of himself now.

Ten years ago he had started out at the seminary at Collegeville as a new student among 355 or so seminarians. Now he couldn't go back. It was ironic--the only one of his class who had Collegeville full up to his Roman Collar. Long ago he had promised Sister Matilda that some day he would be back as chaplain to St. Joe's High, his Alma Mater and lifeblood. Nine years of studies had not changed his hopes one bit; then Ordination and final appointment to St. Joe's two

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would have to wait for another nine, or maybe still another.

He was panting--so fast had he been playing that beads of sweat ran down his cheeks, but he played on unawares. For a while Verdi's Requiem came to his mind, but he rendered it in triple time with blaring staccatos where soft legatos were meant to be played. Unrecognizable, unimaginable interpretation--but that's how he felt. After some time he would switch over to Beethoven or Brahms, then Verdi again as the spirit moved him--up and down the keyboard in intentional misinterpretation.

Life at Collegeville would be different. He hadn't really prepared himself to live the Common Life--to be just a number among thirty-three professors, each one a

specialist, each a recluse. Permissions would be hard to come by, comforts few, and personal contacts never. There each priest was not a teacher among men, but a teacher among teachers teaching teachers-to-be. Not to function as a shepherd of souls would in itself be most trying; there was no getting around it. And to top it off, it was generally known that once your name appeared on the faculty roster of such a reputable institution as Collegeville, it was as good as down for a life stretch.

"A religious isn't supposed to feel these things, and yet he does. This is obedience? This is detachment? Would that all despised this sham of a man as I now do and God must." After minutes of thus musing to himself, the faint red flame of the sanctuary lamp caught his eye and startled him into an awareness of where he was. But he could not stop, not till he had transposed Grieg back to a Major and ended at peace with God and at rest with himself. And little by little his music began to soften, though there was a trace of fury still trying to work its way through. At last the pipes sang forth in clear, sweet tones the "Te Deum." When the echo of the last note had died away, he resolutely switched the organ off for the last time, slid off the bench and onto the prie-dieu to pour out his soul to God in the tabernacle.

Too soon came a rush of serge from behind and a slight tap on the shoulder. Sister Petrus bent low and whispered, "Call from the Provincial. Better hurry." With a speed that was almost disrespectful in the Divine Presence, he flew down the flight of steps that led to the chapel proper. He noticed that the community of twenty-two Sisters filled the back pews, their gaze never leaving him for an instant, with eyes aglow and jaws

drooping in amazement. "My God, it must be time for First Friday Devotions. For all I know Father Provincial could've been trying to reach me for the past hour or more."

In no time flat he picked up the receiver at the principal's desk, first floor south. "I'd best not keep the Provincial waiting." So he quickly tried to catch his breath and compose his voice, then began, "Reverend Father Triscore? Sorry to keep you waiting. I suppose you're calling about my transfer?"

"As a matter of fact, I am. I've been hearing lately that you are a pretty valuable man at St. Joe's, and that your departure will leave a big gap. So I've decided to cancel your transfer."

"If it's all right with you, Reverend Father, I think I'd better go to Collegeville. I think that's where God wants me." He waited for an answer.

"Well, I think we can arrange it. Is that what you really want?"

"No, Reverend Father."

"But God does?"

"Yes, I feel sure of that."

"I understand. Well, we'll be waiting for you at Collegeville as planned. So long till then."

As he listened for the click of the receiver he could almost hear Father Triscore say, "What a wonderful religious that man is." But if he only knew. And Father Jim read the thoughts of the good Sisters; if they only knew what inspired his swan song. But no time to muse. It was his turn for Devotions and he was already five minutes late.

Rewards

"The world I fled, not for my sake but Thine,
As Mary fled the wrath of Herod's hand.
I heard Thy voice and then came here to find
Thee; yet found among Thy chosen band
More gifts than even Sheba could produce,
More joy than fury demons ever loose."

"I, too, who oft did in the temple pray,
Once by an angel fair received Thy call;
I answered, knowing not the gracious way
Thy multitude of gifts would on me fall.
Obedience performed in deed unseen,
The sign of Mother Chaste and Virgin Queen."

"As Mary's spouse my duties I performed;
The Lord was pleased; to me He did entrust
His only Son. I fed and clothed and warmed
Them both by work of hand as father just.
The daily vision of Thyself did fill
The life I lived most humbly in God's will."

"The things you've done for Me I will reward,
For though you give, you also shall receive;
More glory than have kings for you I've stored,
More joy than can the mind of man conceive.
Thy poverty and chastity for Me
The cause of happiness untold will be."

- Albert Singleton

