

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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FOUNDER, CALASANCTIUS SCHOOL FOR THE GIFTED  
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Preliminary Edition  
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## Introduction

I would like to thank very much the people who have helped me to finally get the preliminary copy of my autobiography in print. It has been a long struggle indeed. It is not an easy task to write about the unfolding of one's personality. There are recesses in the subconscious, in the Shadow, which precludes full disclosure because of the danger of exhibitionism and Narcissism. Thus I will only touch upon those aspects of the development of my personality which are, in my eyes, most significant to my later years.

Thank you to Mary Ann Sanscrainte who did the initial editing and typing of this volume. Mary Ann, who has had four sons graduate from Calasactius, has been a cherished friend for many years. Thank you to Peter Forgach, who has since his graduation from Calasactius School in 1964, also been a very cherished friend. It was Peter who suggested that we put this manuscript on his computer and then send it on to George Csicsery, Class of 1965, a film editor and journalist in California for a final edit - but, we did not get that far. However, I will make sure that George receives a copy. Thank you to Bonnie Boswell, Peter's transcriptionist, for her time and efforts in putting this work on the computer. And, thank you to Martha Clother, my secretary of 20 years, who at the last minute was given the job by me of putting this together for printing in time to present it to you at the Testimonial Luncheon being held for me today.

This is but a small token which I give to you in appreciation of your years of love and support. I hope you enjoy it. Many, many thanks for so honoring me on this day. My warm regards to all of you.

Sincerely,

Father Gerencser

July 25, 1992

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## FOREWORD

One of my favorite authors, the late R.C. Zaehner, (Oxford Professor of Comparative Religion and Morals) has written a good many books on Mysticism. One of his books, which impressed me very much, entitled Concordant Discord, discusses the interdependence of mystical experiences. (Oxford at the Clarendon Press: Clarendon Press, 1970.) When a friend suggested that I write about my experiences and the background of my work in various countries, I reflected on various aspects of my life and personality and realized that "Concordant Discord" would be an apt title.

My life and personality are a rather complex amalgamation of discording factors, but somehow and in some way these factors represent some unity in their diversity. I am able to detect a very strong schizothymic factor in my personality - constant internal tension - which forces me to be creative and discontent with ready-made solutions and answers for life and the problems of life and individuals. Thus, I analyze my life and personality from the various discordant but, at the same time, concordant factors which were and are characteristic to my whole development and work.

I know that I am not a world-famous person and cannot write an autobiography in the sense of a Richard Nixon or Henry Kissinger (although I doubt whether or not their autobiographies have any great value), but neither does my life resemble the childish autobiography of Geraldine Ferraro. Maybe sharing my observations and experiences as a student of the History of Philosophy and Mysticism, theologian, psychologist, administrator, and teacher for many years and in several countries, as well as the founder of a school for gifted children will be interesting or rewarding for my friends and for those who are interested in the complexities of human personality. Thus, I decided to follow my friend's advice and write the experiences of my rather long life.

## CONCORDANT DISCORD (OR DISCORDANT CONCORD)

### CHAPTER ONE

In order to understand my life and the many-faceted aspects of my personality, I should make some remarks about the geographical background of my birth and family tree.

I was born in 1913 in Kolozsvár, which at that time was a part of Hungary and the cultural center of Transylvania. (Under the Trianon Peace Treaty it was given to Rumania. From 1940 to 1945 it was again under Hungarian domination. It was given back to Rumania after the Second World War.) If a country can be considered as a geographical and ethnic mosaic, Transylvania is very much a mosaic. Hungarians, Rumanians, Saxons (Germans), and Armenians lived together, sometimes in tension, sometimes in peace. Kolozsvár, my native town, was surrounded by a Hungarian population, interspersed with Rumanians. As I traveled back and forth throughout Transylvania, it was obvious that each valley represented a different amalgamation - a real Concordant Discord or, if you prefer, a Discordant Concord.

In Kolozsvár, which was later called Cluj, or Napoca (supposedly its name in Roman times), you could feel the diversity of the various ethnic and religious groups. The Hungarians were mostly Presbyterian or Catholic; some of them were Unitarian (Transylvania had the largest representation of Unitarians in the world). The Rumanians were Catholic, Byzantine Rite or Orthodox (separated from Rome). The Uniate Church was suppressed after the Second World War and their churches were given over to the Orthodox. The Saxons were mostly Lutheran. In some areas totally emancipated Jewish groups were present, although they were mostly destroyed under the Nazi-ruled Iron Guard (a Rumanian Fascist group) during the Second World War. The Armenians were Armenian-Rite Catholics. In addition there were some unusual religious groupings - one of them was called Sabbatarian. They were ethnic origin Hungarians who accepted the Pentateuch of the Old Testament and thus the Mosaic Law. The ethnic variety of Transylvania can be clearly felt by reading Paul Kovi's excellent books on Transylvanian cuisine. Catholics, Presbyterians and Unitarians were represented in two generations of my Transylvanian ancestors.

My mother, who was born in 1876, came from a Szekely family (Hungarians from the eastern Karpát Mountain area), but she was born in Banfyhunyad, the center of Kalotaszeg (a Hungarian town not far from Kolozsvár). My father, who was born in 1878, came from the opposite end of Hungary, Vas Megye, which is on the western border of Hungary. My maternal grandparents were teachers in an elementary school. My mother, who also became a teacher, was one of the first graduates from the University of Budapest, in Mathematics and Physics (in 1901, as I recall). My father came from a background of peasants (Hungarians) and shepherds, but he eventually worked himself up and received his doctorate in Hungarian Language and Literature. They met in Kolozsvár and married in 1908. My parents were both Hungarian ethnic background. They were self-made; both became teachers and eventually taught in Teacher Colleges.

I had two older sisters - the oldest, who is now deceased, would have been 76 in 1986; the other sister, who is 79-years-old, lives in Hungary.

I was only one-year-old when my father was drafted into the Hungarian Army. My mother was responsible for raising the three children until the end of World War I. My father seldom saw us. The war years were very difficult due to the constantly shifting front line and economic problems. My mother was able to cope with these difficulties. She was teaching full-time but was helped at home by my maternal grandmother and, as I recall it, a cook and maid, also from Transylvania.

I remember well a good number of childhood experiences. We had a very large bedroom - the three children slept in the same bedroom as our parents (only our mother after 1914). My mother had a very beautiful custom - when we were in bed she would read poetry until we fell asleep. I remember one of the poems written by Janos Arany, an outstanding Hungarian poet of the 19th Century, entitled The Child and the Rainbow. I found the original poem and quote some of the verses here, in a rather rough English translation:

Heaven was crying with one eye  
and laughing with the other.

And a beautiful double rainbow  
crowned all the eastern sky.

The beautiful rainbow on the dark cloud  
was admired by a little boy  
with blue eyes and brown hair.

Beautiful bridge to heaven,  
heavenly bridge, he thought.  
Maybe angels walk up and down there  
I would like to go to the rainbow  
A good boy will not be harmed by angels...

It is not far from me he thought,  
Just beyond the forest.

In the verses that follow, the little boy believes that he can reach the rainbow by evening and then he will be able to see heaven. He starts to go toward the rainbow, walking through the forest. He does not hear his mother's voice which is calling him back. He walks on the muddy road through the forest. Travelers tell him that he cannot reach the rainbow bridge, but he just goes ahead. Evening comes and the rainbow disappears. The little boy is desperate and collapses. An old hermit comes by and asks him, "Why do you want to go to the grave?" "You are too young."

Your desires cannot be reached  
The rainbow you seek is merely a figure of light,  
One ray from the eye of the sun.

It is merely a smile from the sun's eye,  
Which is reflected on the cloud  
And doesn't really exist.

He takes the boy's hand and brings him back to his parents. The last stanza reads:

The little boy frequently sees  
The beautiful rainbow

But when he sees it  
Tears start to fall from his eyes  
And he tells himself, with great sadness  
It is merely an empty picture  
Sun rays playing  
And not a bridge which connects  
Earth with the gates of heaven...

When I first heard this poem I was only two- or three-years-old, but from this early age I knew that my whole life would be a striving to reach the "rainbow", "the heavenly bridge", a beauty which can never be reached.

World War I ended in 1918. Eventually Transylvania was given to Rumania by the peace treaty of Trianon. My father was transferred to Budapest to become the president of a teacher's college. My mother was teaching in another teacher's college. These were very difficult times in Hungary (and in most of Europe). The various allied forces (French, English, etc.) occupied Hungary; the Hapsburg monarchy collapsed. At the same time Bolshevism extended its power over a great part of Hungary, t under the communist leader Bela Kun, a strange man who served under my father in the war. Eventually the communist regime partially collapsed under pressure from the allied forces and the Rumanians. The communist regime in Hungary wanted to make Bela Kun a national hero. From my studies of Hungarian history, from both communist and anticommunist sources, I am inclined to say that essentially he had a sinister influence on Hungarian history, in much the same way as Matyas Rakosi, the ruler of Hungary from 1948 until 1956. Rakosi, who was a Stalinist, was expelled from Hungary after Stalin's death, and died in disgrace in Mongolia, but this belongs to a later day...

The collapse of the communist regime in 1919 did not mean an end to Hungary's internal problems. It was a rather short-lived democratic period, with a universal secret ballot, and with a good number of political parties. My father became involved rather early in the Christian Socialist Party (today they were mostly called Christian Democrats). I remember some leading members of the party visiting our home (which was in the Teacher's College where my father was president).

My father was the first elected Member of Parliament from an eastern district of Hungary. After this short democratic period came the reaction of the landed nobility and their party. They restricted the secret balloting to the cities, but abolished in the country side. The number of parties decreased and the reaction of the landed nobility and of the higher hierarchy reinforced the antiland reform tendencies and turned back the Hungarian history to the feudalistic era. Hungary remained a monarchy (but the Habsburg King could not

come back) in which the head of the state was an Admiral (Horthy). It was an interesting turn of the history: country without sea was ruled by a former Admiral, and the country, officially still a monarchy, was without a king.....

The actual power was divided between the lower and upper house of the congress, and by joint ministers appointed by the governor of Hungary, but with heavy influence of the landed nobility and higher hierarchy.

But in spite of this situation, there were tendencies for a better representation of the Hungarian people. Later on I will make some remarks about my particular role in the fight for political change.

But now I return to my childhood:

I was never sent to Kindergarten (I still bless my parents for this), but had a chance to play and explore life around me. Another influential factor that I remember from my early years in Budapest was my parent's beautiful library, which numbered around 4,000 books. I spent a great deal of time among these books, and was very impressed by books about the world's navies (I still remember the pictures). We lived in an intensely intellectual environment, but the artistic factors were never neglected. I know I learned more from my parent's library than I did from the elementary school in which I was enrolled. This was a demonstration school, attached to the teacher college where my father was president.

After completing the Fourth Grade, my parents decided that I should take the entrance examination for one of the best schools in Budapest, the Gymnasium (secondary school) conducted by the Piarist Fathers. The unfolding of my intellectual life received a new impetus in this school. At that time, the secondary schools placed a heavy emphasis on Latin and Greek, but the Piarist Schools were especially famous for their excellent mathematics and science background. I enjoyed learning and still remember one of my intuitions. When I was 11-years-old, I started to learn algebra and was struggling to understand "A-B, X and V" and their relation to the number concepts of arithmetics. I just could not understand; I was totally desperate. Illumination suddenly came while I was looking out of the window at the college's garden. Intuitively, I understood the meaning of "A-B, X-V", and their numerical relationship and the whole area of mathematics was opened up for me. I still remember that after this experience I never had any trouble in learning even complex mathematics, including Integral and Differential Calculus. My picture was placed in the Secondary School Mathematics Monthly as one of the most outstanding mathematicians in Secondary School in Hungary. I merely record the fact here that I was always an "A" student and one of the best mathematicians in my class.

I was fortunate to have excellent teachers. They not only taught, but gave real enthusiasm to the material. One of them, Rev. Michael Pinter, Ph.D., came to the United States many years later and taught mathematics at Calasanctius School for several years. He died in 1984, when he was 90-years-old. Another, Rev. Sik Sandor Ph.D., a well-known Hungarian poet, taught Hungarian and World Literature, also impressed me very much. He later became a Professor at the University and after the war, Provincial of the

Hungarian Province of the Piarists. (It should be noted here that, at that time, more than half of the Piarist priests had Doctorate's of Philosophy or Theology, and all of them had Masters Degrees in serious disciplines, not education).

When I was 12-years-old, my father died in the hospital after an operation. Some friends of the family claimed that he was killed of the ruling, upon the instigation, party of aristocrats. His name was mentioned as possible Minister of Education. It is difficult to say whether or not it is true that he was killed, but it is a fact that the return to extreme conservatism and rule of the feudal lords, along with the local political battles after the first relatively free elections after the war, were very harmful for the national consciousness. In recalling those years, I understand now why the feudal lords, the aristocrats, higher clergy, were not popular in 1922-26.

My father's death was a serious blow for the whole family. We were compelled to move from our apartment in the College, and my mother, who had given up teaching, was forced to go back to teaching again in order to support her three children. Luckily, because of my consistent "A" average, I was a full-scholarship student in the Piarist School.

Another lasting influence on my life, in addition to some outstanding teachers, was my involvement in the Scout movement, which was not a "sissy" organization in Hungary. We camped for three or four weeks during the year in different parts of the country. The so-called "study-trip" camps became very popular when I was 13-14 years old. As a young boy, I remember coming down the Danube from Austria and traveling a good part of the country either on foot, rowing or sailing a boat, and bicycling. My experiences with camping motivated me to introduce camping-study trips as an integral part of the Calasanctius School program in Buffalo, New York.

Another learning experience, for which I am very thankful to my scout leaders in the secondary school, was the custom of the patrol leader being responsible for cooking for the 30-40 scouts in camp. The patrol leader was changed every day, and if the food was not properly prepared he was "beaten-up" in a jocular but serious way. This not only taught me how to cook, but also how to depend on myself.

When I was 15-years-old, I had a chance to participate in the Scout World Jamboree in Liverpool, England. The memories of this exciting meeting of many nations are still vivid for me.

At 16, I was thinking very much about joining the Piarist Order. Dr. Pinter, the above-mentioned Mathematics teacher, was very influential in my decision. Eventually, I applied and was accepted into the Order, and started the Novitiate in 1929 in the Piarist House of Vac, north of Budapest. One of my great experiences in the novitiate was meeting with my Novice Master who was an excellent, older man, although not an intellectual. Through him, I became acquainted with the works of Teresa of Avila. I also started to read the books of St. John of the Cross, co-founder of the Reformed Carmelites.

They rejuvenated the mystical tradition in the church. These works influenced my future interest in Mysticism, that exciting dimension of religious tradition which surpasses rigid doctrinal "cubicles" and opens Christianity to understanding other religions as well. My interest in Mysticism never left me and my Doctoral Dissertation in Theology was related to Mystical Theology.

Otherwise, the Novitiate was a mixture of different directions. The Novice Master was a deep, devout man; the assistant Novice Master was a health fanatic - a totally different personality. Thus, the novitiate years enriched me with various experiences and gave me the opportunity to meet other novices (altogether there were about 24, from different parts of the country). These experiences further enlarged my horizon and helped me to understand other people better than before. After the Novitiate, I was sent to the Study House for secondary school members of the Piarist Order at Kecskemet, a large, mostly peasant town in the middle of the Hungarian plain. The school was demanding, and the accommodations for the clerics were rather simple and rustic. There was no central heating - during cold weather the rooms were heated by a coal-burning stove. (I remember explosions many times because of the low quality of the powdered coal.) During the winter, the sleeping quarters were so cold that in the morning I had to break the ice on my washbasin with my fist. In the long run, this was a good experience because I learned to endure hardship and difficulties in life.

At the secondary school, in Kecskemet, my work for the "Academia" required that I present a paper every year. There was a prize connected with the presentation. In the 7th and 8th Forms they were sizable papers. These later became the inspiration for introducing the Seminar Program at Calasanctius School. I was most impressed by a rather strange, but excellent history teacher, who used the "Geistechistory" method in teaching. I became

acquainted with Dilthey and Spangler at this time (1930-31). After graduating from the school and taking the "baccalaureate", maturity examination called *érettségi* in Hungary, an open, oral and written examination which was done in front of a committee from various parts of the country, I was transferred to the Kalazantianum, the central study house of the Piarists, in Budapest. Unfortunately, the communist regime took the building away from the Piarists after the Second World War and made it a part of the University of Budapest, a Marxist-Leninist Institute. The result was a strange degradation in the high level of intellectual dimension of University life in Budapest when compared to my study years.

I was registered in the Theological Faculty of the University and eventually took courses in the Philosophy Department. I studied Oriental languages (Hebrew and Aramaic in order to understand the Bible). Classes were held mostly in Latin in the Theological School. My memories are very deep and strong about some of my professors in the Theology and Philosophy Departments. One of them was Professor Anton Schutz, the Professor of Dogmatic Theology and a member of the Piarist Order. He was a remarkable man, writer, and lecturer. He came to the classroom without any notes or papers and lectured in excellent Latin for the full period. He taught me how to organize my thoughts by putting an outline in my mind. Later, this enabled me to talk for hours as an instructor in various colleges in the U.S.A., as a teacher in Hungarian secondary schools, and as a retreat master in Germany after the war, without using any notes or script. I remember that for the *Licenciate in Theo* I was able, in the form of a review, to recite by heart a rather difficult dogmatic theology text which was filled with quotations from Scripture and Theologians, without opening the textbook even once.

Another professor who opened up new horizons for me was Professor Kecskes, Professor of History of Philosophy. Through the textbooks written by him, I became acquainted with Indian, Chinese and Japanese philosophy. At that time, regular teaching of Oriental Philosophy was not in vogue, either in the United States or in Europe. The restricted worldview of European thought was like a straight jacket on most of the people.

Another great experience for me was the Seminar Program. Each Professor selected 10-12 of the best students and they could use a special library and seminar room. They came together weekly to discuss selected topics. This program assisted me in presenting Seminar papers (research papers) and exchanging ideas with other similar-

minded people. The specialized library for the Seminar Program was open to members, and we could ask to order any new books in any language, to enrich our knowledge. In the same way, the Piarist Order library was also very rich, although this was the period when Rome, in the spirit of "integralism", wanted to suffocate free research. Luckily, the Piarist Priests never cared about these restrictions in the spirit of their own enlightenment. A third professor who made a deep impression on me was from the Philosophy Department of the University, Professor Julius Kornis, a psychologist and political scientist who eventually became the head of the Hungarian Upper Chamber (Senate). He also was a member of the Piarist Order and was an excellent, inspiring teacher, and seminar director. Two other professors with outstanding credentials were Dr. Endre Ivanka, historian of the late medieval times, and Dr. Bela Brandenstein, a prolific writer in Philosophy.

I should mention two more significant experiences from my years at the University. Topics were announced yearly for presentation to the University's Philosophy Department. One year the topic was Cardinal Pazmany's philosophical writings, and another year, The Early Years of St. Augustine. Mine was the prize winning work for both years. Winning the prize was not as important as the fact that I was introduced, through my research, not only to the life of Cardinal Pazmany, an outstanding Bishop and writer of the Hungarian church in the 17th century, but also to the very exciting period in the life of St. Augustine when he left Manicheanism, slowly converted to Neo-Platonism, and eventually converted to Christianity. The first award-winning work assisted me in writing my Doctoral Dissertation in Philosophy in 1937, and the second one contributed not only to my understanding of Neo-Platonism, but also early Christian Mysticism. Thus, this paper was helpful for me in writing my Theological doctorate, "The Meaning of the Religious State (A Study in Mystical Theology and Psychology of Religion)". This was published in book form in Budapest in 1938 (186 pages). The Doctoral dissertation written in 1937 was published under the title, "Pazmany, the Philosopher. A Study in the History of Philosophy in Hungary", published in book form in Budapest in 1937 (136 pages).

This very intensive studying, writing & preparing for two doctorates was very demanding. Usually, I got up around 5:30 in the morning to participate in the community prayers and mass, attend classes and seminars during the day, and work on my dissertations at night. I retired around 2-3:00 a.m. This schedule was possible only because I learned to

do room exercises and, eventually, basic Yoga postures. I made my doctoral examinations (written and oral examination) for the Ph.D. in October 1937.

The Ph.D. was awarded to me with the Highest Honor (Cum applausu). I received my doctorate in Theology in June 1938. My major was Fundamental Theology.

My time had to be scheduled very carefully. I usually spent 30-40 periods in the various courses of Theology and Philosophy Departments of the University, and used a great number of books from the University and Seminar Libraries. At that time, I learned to read in English, French, Outside of German, Latin, and Classical Greek. The six years spent at the University were not only very enriching, but also an eye opening experience.

I was very fortunate in having the opportunity to study in two departments and under some excellent professors, as mentioned before. This was basically a very problematic period for the study of Theology. The "integralist" tendency in Scripture and Philosophy studies collided with the new development in Scriptural studies and the new horizons in Philosophy. I also experienced this dichotomy among my professors. For a while, I had a very naive so-called Thomistic philosophy professor, and a rigidly antimodernist Scripture professor. Luckily, this was counterbalanced in the Theology faculty by the above mentioned Prof. Schutz and Prof. Kecskes, and my professor in Semitic Languages, who were definitely not antimodernist. It is good to remind those who are not acquainted with the recent history of the Catholic Church that, especially since Pope Pius X, who was basically a rigid-minded tyrant, the spirit of inquiry in the Catholic Church was almost fully suffocated. (Pius X was eventually canonized. I could never accept his sanctity, and even when saying Mass in Church dedicated to Saint Pius X, in Buffalo, avoided calling him a saint). My period in the Theology departments was still under the spell of the antimodernistic integralism during the reign of Pope Pius XI (+1939), and even later under the superstitious belief in Fatima of Pius XII (1+1958).

Luckily, as noted above, I had the opportunity to study at the philosophical faculty of the University, which was not under the spell of the Roman "integralism". Added to this were the Piarist Study House library and the Directors of the Study House who were not concerned with the Roman "integralism". Despite the various prohibitions on Rome's part, (e.g. prohibiting the reading of newspapers, and permitting only strictly-speaking theological journals) the Piarist Library was open to any kind of intellectual challenge. One

of my later books about the role of enlightenment in the Hungarian Piarist past was born from my experiences and from the study of the History of the Hungarian Piarist Province. (The Philosophical Movement of the Enlightenment and the Piarist Order in Hungary, Budapest, 1943, 47 pages.) An excellent summary of the modernist problems was published in the Journal of the American Academy of Religion in December 1985. (Gabriel Daly: Catholicism and Modernity, p. 773-796).

As indicated above, my main interest during my University years was studying, learning, and writing. However, during the last two University years, I participated in the so-called "Oreg Cserkesz" (Old Scouts) movement as the leader of a group of "Olds Scouts" of the Piarist School in Budapest. This group work resulted in many lasting friendships: and eventually involvement in a political movement which wanted to rebuild Hungarian society from the roots, instead of from the above-mentioned aristocratic, landlord-directed system of an outdated feudalism. The movement was organized in the spirit of Christian tradition and was named after the outstanding and genial Bishop Prohaszka, who was forced aside partially because he was suspected of modernism and also because he was not favored by the aristocrats because he was for land reform. (One of his books was placed on The Index - the list of books prohibited by Rome - upon the instigation of some "integralist" Jesuits.) The name of this group was, "Prohaszka Munkakozosseg" (Prohaszka Work Group).

I also became very much involved in the Hungarian Folk music Movement (Bartok - Kodaly), and in the so-called "Folk Movement" which was working for the reform of society from the Hungarian viewpoint of the peasantry and from their traditions. At this time, I realized more and more that the majority of the leadership in the Church and in politics was in the hands of German and Slovak background Hungarians.

The German background group was especially responsible for the country being taken over later by mostly German ethnic-background Nazis. Most of the Bishops were German or Slovak origin, as well as most of the superiors in the Piarist order. I organized protest groups among the Piarist clerics in the Kalasancianum. This caused serious problems and difficulties for me during Fr. Sebes' (German origin) Hungarian Provincialate. He wanted to dismiss me from the Order, but I had made my Solemn Profession, and he could not do

this without my consent, which I did not give. On the other hand, Fr. Zimanyi who was an excellent and dynamic man, who was Director of the Study house, was fully on my side. I do not go into details about the internal problems of the Hungarian Piarist province at that time. I merely mention that these problems were basically connected with the tendency on the part of Rome (the so called general of the order) the Hungarian province had only a loose connection with the General, had a semi-independent state. The General wanted to change this semi-independent state and wanted to force the Roman methods on us. Basically it was a power struggle between the two tendencies: centralization and keeping the traditions of the Hungarian province. Eventually the centralization became stronger, especially after the II World War. The other problem was certain groups in the Hungarian province who wanted to introduce the Roman interpretation of the so called "vita communis" "community life", which would away any financial responsibility from the individual and force everybody in the same mold. In the Hungarian tradition the individual members of the province had a small salary to cover their clothing and other personal expenses. The majority of the Province was not enthusiastic toward the extreme tendencies of the central Government of the order.

In my last year of studies, I had my practice teaching (for three weeks in the Budapest School of the order) and take my teachers examination. Only after this was it possible to receive the Subdeaconate, and eventually I was ordained Deacon and Priest in June 1938. I was then able to start my work as teacher in one of the Piarist schools of the Hungarian Province.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MY WORK AS APIARIST TEACHER IN HUNGARY: IN DEBRECEN, KOLOZSVAR, NAGYKANIZSA

After ordination, I was transferred to Debrecen for the 1938-39 school year, a town near the Hortobagy "puszta" which is called the Calvinistic Rome by the Hungarians (Calvinism is close to Presbyterianism, or rather to the Puritans in English History). At that time, Debrecen was a town with almost 100,000 inhabitants, mostly peasants and small

landholders. A very famous college and secondary school are located there, and the most important Calvinist Bishop (superintendent) resides there. The Piarist Fathers' secondary school, which was well-known, was founded there in the beginning of the 18th Century. Rev. Joseph Batori, Ph.D., from Budapest, was the director of the school in 1938. He came to the United States in 1950, and was the first superior of the American Branch of the Piarists. He taught in the Calasactius School in 1950 and again in 1965. He was not only a dedicated man with new ideas (he opened the first commercial high school in Debrecen, under the Piarists), but he also had definite leadership qualities. Unfortunately, his Rector made the rather large community's life somewhat tense (as I recall, there were more than 20 Piarist teachers and more than 1,000 students). I was assigned to teach Religion and eventually, a course in Psychology-Logic to the seniors. I taught 8 groups of students on 8 different levels. Each class had 30-50 students, ranging in age from 11 to 17-18. (With the exception of some private girl students, this was an all-boy school). This was my first full-time teaching experience.

It was not an easy assignment. The boys in Debrecen were not quiet, submissive boys. In fact, they were quite the opposite, but I learned how to keep order. I might mention here that, in my long career as a teacher, I never had a discipline problem. Even if my classes were large (which was mostly the case), I developed some practical methods to get the whole class to accept my authority. Before entering a new class, I memorized the name and seating order of all the students. A teacher should know that the students want to test a new teacher on the first day of school to see what kind of person he is. Some children usually want to cause a ruckus after the usual greeting from the student body when the teacher enters the room. My method was to call the disruptive student by his name; I already knew all of them. This immediately had an enormous impact. I am inclined to believe that names have a "magic power". By giving names to things they belong to us and have meaning. It was very true in this case. The students felt that I knew them, and realized that I did not need to use physical punishment or raise my voice in order to maintain order in the class. I immediately started my explanation of the assigned topic for that day and the student's eyes were riveted on me. By following this method throughout my rather long teaching career in various countries, I never needed any strong disciplinary measures and I never needed to notify parents about their children's behavior. I am still convinced that if

a teacher cannot teach and maintain order with a small group of children (the classes are really small in America), he or she is not fit to be a teacher. It should be noted that sometimes the classes I taught had 50-80 students, not 10-15 as in most American schools. I have never accepted the notion that a low teacher-student ratio is the sign of a good school. Only good, well-prepared, dedicated teachers, a properly selected student body, and cooperation between teachers and students create a good school. Essentially, a good school is not a building, but dedicated teachers and interested students.

In addition to teaching (usually 18-20, 50 minute periods, per week), I was very deeply involved in the "Rover" Scout Program (Eagle Scout) for older adolescent boys. In the spirit described in Chapter One, I developed the camping-study trips for them. Camping-study trips were a great eye and mind opening experience for them. During my two years in Debrecen we traveled, mostly on bicycles, not only in the vicinity of Debrecen, but also to the Karpatian Mountains, which were given back to Hungary in 1938 (present day Karpat Ukraina). In order to make the weekly biking excursions more meaningful, I connected them with the "regos" movement. We visited villages around Debrecen, as well as places further away, and on Sundays presented singing and dancing recitals for the local farmer (peasant) youth or groups. We usually used one of the Catholic schools as a base. It should be noted that the Catholics around Debrecen were mostly Uniate Catholics (belonging to the Byzantine Rite), not Latin Rite Catholics. The Hungarian Byzantine Rite Catholic Church was at that time the only surviving Uniate group in Eastern Europe. The priests were mostly married with families, and their parishes were very cohesive center of the Hungarian language (the Mass was in Hungarian). I made many very good friends among the Byzantine Catholic Hungarian clergy. One of them, who eventually came to Canada and the United States, worked very closely with me in the scout movement and eventually taught in the Calasanctius School.

My involvement in the various movements, which were studying the problems of the peasants and migrant workers, became deeper during these two years. This gave me an opportunity to visit several times with one of the leaders of this movement, Peter Veres, a peasant and farm worker, who wrote excellent books on what can be done for the people of the "earth", the Hungarian agrarian workers. Peter Veres, who after the war in 1946 and

before the Communist takeover, inclined somewhat toward the left (but never a Marxist), was a minister of the "Peasant Party" in the government of Bela Varga and Zoltan Tildy.

In 1938 and 1939 I made some very enlightening trips, first to Slovakia, where I visited the remaining Piarist Houses (four), and a reopened school in Trencin. I deepened my acquaintance with an excellent Hungarian movement in Slovakia and participated in their conventions. Their publications expressed a view which I shared - uniting the land-locked people, the peasants, with the intellectuals. Their publication, the "New Life", was issued in Kassa (Slovakia) and Budapest. Eventually, I became Coeditor of this monthly journal. The publishers and the members of the group around the journal expressed the same view as was expressed by the Prohaszka working group. I maintained contact with several members of the group after the war and while living in the United States. My other rewarding tour was connected with Rumania, not only my native land, Transylvania, but also Old Rumania, Bucharest, and the Southern Karpatian Mountains. My main interest was in helping to build a bridge between the Hungarians and the Rumanians. I became optimistic about this possibility, but eventually extremist movements during the last year of World War II in Hungary and Rumania thwarted my hopes.

The influence of Hitler and the Nazis was increasing in Hungary but it was not complete until 1944, when the Nazi party assumed power, in spite of the resistance of Count Teleki, who committed suicide in protest against German troops. I posted a statement on the bulletin board at the Debrecen Piarist School warning about the danger of the German Nazis and their Hungarian supporters (who were mostly German-origin Hungarians). I experienced some resistance because of my statement, and one Piarist faculty member even accused me of being in the hands of the Jews. As already indicated, this was an explosive period in Hungarian history.

In 1940, I was transferred to Kolozsvár, my native town (Northern Transylvania was given back to Hungary). Since this belongs to political history, I will not discuss the details). The Piarist Fathers were in charge of their old school. (In the period between the two World Wars, the Rumanian government permitted the operation of some Hungarian schools.)

The Piarist Fathers were in charge of two schools, one in Kolozsvár (Hungarian speaking), and one in Temesvár (Rumanian language). The majority of teachers in

Kolozsvár were lay teachers. A boarding facility was attached to the school and the students came from all over Transylvania. On the whole, they were 18-19 years old and in the higher grades. They mostly came from "Szekelyfold", the eastern part of Transylvania. As in Debrecen, I taught Religion and Psychology. It was an impression that the students liked me and profited from my teaching. A former Kolozsvár student, who is now a physician and working in Hungary, wrote a letter to me in July 1986 which states in part:

"You taught me a deep love for the Hungarian people, including their virtues and their faults. While in the scout group at the school, you also taught me to use a bicycle and later on a motorbike. We were together to teach and to make sociographic measurements in the villages around Kolozsvár. You instilled in me a worldview built upon the Christian agape (self-giving love) - respect toward the freedom of the individual, and respect and tolerance toward those who have different worldviews.

I remember that you asked a student, who came to the Piarist School for religious instruction, if he believed in God? The student responded, "No". You were not scandalized! Instead you praised him because he was honest. You demanded some actual knowledge because the religious studies was a compulsory subject, but the unfolding of faith should come from the student's free will. I may now write that that same former student has become a believer....

I was the president of the Majlath Circle (a Catholic University group) and I became unacceptable to any university in Transylvania. I escaped to Budapest and became an M.D. in 1950".

....signed, Arpad Kovacs, M.D.

As the writer of this letter indicates, outside of teaching, one of the most important works on my part was the work, with the help of our older students, in the so-called Hungarian Diaspora villages in the Mezőség. These small villages could not be reached by regular, paved roads. Sometimes we were submerged in the mud. Many times we were

compelled to carry the bicycles on our shoulders for a long distance until we reached a paved road. However, these difficulties only made our work even more memorable.

My scouts were totally dedicated to the Volk-music and Volk-dance (in the spirit of Bartok-Kodaly). They were able to sing hundreds and hundreds of the most beautiful melodies, most of them in the pentatonic sound system. One of the pentatonic melodies became a sort of hymn for my group:

I am a soldier, defending my country...

We are devastated by the Germans and by the Tatars  
(symbolized now by the Soviets)

For one country among two pagans I spill my blood...

Perhaps I overstated the importance of the folk music and dance, but definitely in the Kolozsvar area, the original folk melodies have replaced the emotional and gypsy type of melodies which were so common in the Hungarian middle class, even in the Twentieth Century.

One of the most memorable educational and sociographical trips was done by cross-country skiing in the wintertime. We traveled north of Des among totally snowed-in villages, in wolf-infested territory, to visit Hungarian peasants. We carried military rifles (Manlicher) with us to protect us from possible attack by wolves. This, and similar experiences, developed a very cohesive spirit in the scout group, which became decisive factors for their whole life, as indicated by the above-quoted medical doctor.

I became connected with the Hungarian Army in Kolozsvar, but I will write about that in a different chapter.

Despite my rather hectic workload, I also tried to pursue my writing. I became coeditor of the quarterly, "The Transylvanian Educator" in charge of the Psychological section. Several articles were published between 1938-1944 in the official philosophical reviews of the Philosophical Association Hungary, the Atheneum; in the Theological Review, official publication of the school of Theology of the University of Budapest; and in the Vigilia, a quarterly in literature and philosophy, published in Budapest.

During the 1941-42 school year, the Piarist Provincial appointed a new Piarist Director, with whom I could not agree and who eventually asked for my transfer from

Kolozsvár. With this one exception, I had excellent relationships with the older members of the community who stayed in Kolozsvár during the Rumanian period. My new destination was in the far western part of Hungary, at the Piarist School in Nagykanizsa, as a teacher of religious studies-and psychology and prefect of the boarding home attached to the school.

The years in Nagykanizsa were very rewarding. I had the opportunity to become acquainted with a totally different aspect of Hungary. Nagykanizsa was in an area where the peasantry struggled daily under the suppression of the landed nobility. Those who owned land were mostly viniculturists. The use of poppy seed among the peasants was very common (fluid from the poppy head, a form of opium, was used to make small children sleep). In addition to my teaching, I was again very much involved in scouting, and in the overall direction of the "levente" (a compulsory organization for youth). I was appointed by the military as head of this paramilitary organization's leadership training. At the same time, I organized an adult group to spread the social teaching and the Christian philosophy and among the intellectuals and professionals. Some of the members of this group are still in contact with me.

For the most part, my two years in Nagykanizsa were spent in the service. My publications during this period included:

"The Philosophical Background of Bolshevism", 65 pgs., 1944. I became co-author and co-editor for psychological and educational input for the Hungarian Boy Scout Manual, 1943, and The Manual for Scout Leaders, Budapest, 1944, and the Campfire Book for Scouts. Budapest. 1944. With Dr. George Papp, I coauthored "The Greek Catholic Hungarians", Kolozsvár, 1942.

During the summers of these years, I was very involved with leadership training of scout leaders in Budapest. Several of those trained in my camps fled Hungary because of the communists, and they became very important in reviving the Hungarian Scout movement in 1948, in the United States (the scout movement had been suppressed under the communist regime in Hungary). In 1989 it was permitted again to function in Hungary. Among these people was Gabor Bognar who did more for Hungarian youth outside and inside of Hungary than anyone else, and who still is in the spirit and soul of the Hungarian Scout movement in the U.S.A. and other countries.

One of the most significant factors in my founding Calasactius School in the United States was my involvement in a significant educational movement while in Nagykanizsa. Upon the suggestions of an excellent Hungarian writer, Lajos Zilahy (who settled in New York City after the war), and some other deeply involved writers (Laszlo Nemeth and Zoltan Szabo) who felt that the renewal of Hungarian intellectual life should reach out to the lowest social classes by selecting talented children for education in the best schools of the country. The social group targeted was the agricultural worker (not the landed peasantry, but similar to the American migrant or indentured workers). The highest testing 10-11 year olds were selected from each region of the country. The Piarist Secondary School in Nagykanizsa, located in the southwestern part of Hungary, was one of the schools where these children were sent. I had a chance to teach about ten of them. They came from the migrant agricultural worker families and were of diverse ethnic background (Hungarian, Vend and Croatian). I definitely enjoyed teaching them, especially because I was involved with the ability testing of military men in Kolozsvár.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MILITARY SERVICE

As indicated, I developed rather close contacts with the Hungarian Army during my stay in Kolozsvár. They were very helpful in promoting the work of my scout group in the Hungarian diaspora. Eventually I was inducted into the Hungarian Army. My good friend, General Ferenc Horvath, commander of the Hungarian Fifth Division, who also loved Transylvania, resided in Kolozsvár. Around Christmas 1942, when he was appointed to command the Hungarian First Tank Division, he called me to be his Army Chaplain.

Why were the Hungarians involved in the war on the side of Hitler? Hungary was definitely not yet in the hands of the Nazis. German troops did not occupy Hungary until 1944. Prime Minister Kallay and Governor Horthy wanted to avert the occupation and thus offered the First Hungarian Army as a "bribe". In an excellent book written by Dezsó Keresztury, "Requiem for Egy Hadsereg" (Requiem for an Army), the author correctly indicates that 300,000 Hungarians were sent to the Don Ukraine Curve (also defended by Rumanian and Slovak units) and certain death. The Army was neither equipped with weaponry nor the necessary winter clothing. Certain units were put in reserve farther back from the Don. These reserves arrived without rifles or other weaponry. Supposedly, during an exchange the replacements were to be given the weapons of the troops already in combat. The Soviets, who were well informed, broke through in January 1943, exactly at the time of the exchange. The unarmed and poorly equipped Hungarian units were simply for the advancing Soviets. The scene of the retreating masses was brought back to me vividly when, years later, I saw the English and Soviet-made motion pictures of Tolstoy's "War and Peace". I too saw thousands of men, without weapons, coming back on foot, eating the flesh of fallen horses, and carrying what they could. Most of the soldiers were totally drunk. They had seized the rum barrels which were kept for them when advancing and close-fighting. Hundreds lay dead in the snow. The image still terrifies me today. According to the data, of the 300,000 member army, only about 30,000 were able to come back and survived. The Hungarian government was responsible for one of the greatest crimes of the war - sending unequipped men to a certain death. The above-mentioned

author suggests that it was the government's intention to get rid of a great number of poor peasants and agricultural workers, and I am inclined to agree with him.

In the beginning of 1943, I went to the Budapest Eastern Rail Terminal and boarded a nicely equipped train, first-class, with linen covered seats. A band was playing martial songs and the Hungarian Hymn. Women, nicely dressed in furs, representing the "nation" gave all of us a package containing two rotten apples, a sandwich, some cigarettes, and condoms as a gift from the nation for its "heroes". I'll never forget how infuriated I became, and almost told these middle-class ladies to "go to hell". The train departed. When we reached the Hungarian border, we were transferred to another train, no longer first class, merely wagons for 10 horses and 40 men. In that manner we reached Kiev, and eventually Charkov. We could see the disintegrated mass of the retreating and decimated Hungarian army. At first I could not locate my unit (the tank division), but with the assistance of some very brave officers and soldiers, I eventually found it. The unit had been very much reduced. They had started the war with 2,000 tanks and vehicles. Only one tank and some trucks and cars remained. The tanks and trucks were not winterized. They froze in the extremely cold winter (-40°) and could only be started with great difficulty, and then only some of them. I reported to my General and the next day realized that our unit was surrounded by the Soviet Army. We did not want to be taken prisoners. The General, with his staff, decided to break-out of the Soviet encirclement. This was my first experience with the closeness of death. As military chaplain, I was convinced that my place was with the soldiers who were breaking out. I stayed with them, taking back some of the wounded and giving comfort to many other comrades who were dying. From about 200 men who led the attack, only about 30 survived. Eventually the tank division was able to break-out. With the remaining trucks and cars we retreated to reorganize the division.

I am still very thankful for one of the officers who gave me felt boots. I went to the front in Bilgery boots, made from leather. Without the felt boots and a felt cap, my ears would have frozen and I would also have lost a leg. Heating was very difficult in this extremely cold weather - we only had wood salvaged from homes. Even taking care of our basic needs was extremely difficult (if you dallied you risked a frozen member).

Eventually our unit became organized and we were able to spend several weeks in Ukrainian Kolchoses and peasant homes while falling back to Kiev. I still remember my

first experience with lice (the Hungarian Army did not have DDT, as the Americans did). Eventually the remaining part of the Hungarian army was put in reserve in Hungary.

While not going into detail about my Ukrainian experiences, it should be noted that some Orthodox Churches were open. Stalin made some concessions to the Church, hoping for their assistance. On the other hand, due to the stupidity of the Nazis, the German Army, and especially the SS, who expressed only hatred for any organized religion, the whole populace was alienated. In the beginning of the war they had looked to the Germans as liberators from the Bolsheviks. I had several conversations about this problem with Orthodox priests and even one Bishop, with the help of interpreters.

My first experience in the war ended sometime during 1943, and I went back to teach in Nagykanizsa for the 1943-44 school year. Unfortunately, the German takeover of Hungary came shortly after the second semester began and the school was closed. I again found myself in the Army; this time with the Fifth Army Unit, commanded by the same General Horvath, assigned as a chaplain to the Szekely Unit defending the frontier in the eastern part of Transylvania. This was a totally different experience - seeing the collapse of the German Army, the Rumanian army abandoning the Germans and going over to the Soviets. The members of the German army, especially the officers, tried to hide and escape because Hitler blamed them for the collapse of the war.

It was my role to visit the units defending the frontier, mostly older, drafted men. The Soviet army, with the assistance now of the Rumanians, reached the Karpatian Mountains. Our soldiers, who were mostly older men from the local peasantry, could not resist their advance. Several times we were surrounded by Rumanian and Soviet army units and I again became involved in taking over a small unit hoping to break through and open up one of the important cities of the area. In the fall of 1944, we retreated behind Kolozsvar and into the areas west of the Bihar Mountain.

The Governor of Hungary planned at this time to renounce the German alliance, but it was only partially done due to the large number of German sympathizers among the higher ranking officers (mostly German born Hungarians). Despite this, one general (General Veres) joined the Soviets with his units and organized the Hungarian Army on the side of the allies. General Horvath could not decide. We both agreed that we despised the German Nazis, but at the same time we were against the Soviet mentality and system.

General Horvath resigned and became commander of an army unit in the western part of Hungary. (He eventually came to the United States where I met him several times, but dreaming about the independence of Transylvania he went to West Germany. When he saw the collapse of his dreams he died, committed suicide, and sent his heart to be buried in the eastern mountains of his beloved Transylvania. This was around 1960).

One part of my army unit became part of the First Hungarian Army, which was retreating from the eastern part of Hungary through the mountains of the Tatra (north of Hungary, at that time part of Slovakia). It is not necessary to detail the complex army movements. My good friend, Staff Major Endre Kasas charged me with organizing an Information Unit from about 30-40 men (writers and printers - we had a small printing press). It was during this period that I wrote and published a Handbook for the Intellectual and Moral Training of the Officers of the First Hungarian Army. (166 pp., 1944.) The purpose of this organization was to exclude any publications coming from Nazi-dominated Hungary. (Szalasi, with the help of the German SS, proclaimed himself Minister-President of Hungary.) This was the period when persecution of the Jews became very strong. Szalasi, with the help of the SS, deported great numbers of Jews to their deaths, with the exception of the city of Budapest where most of the Jews were saved, partially by the Church and other dedicated people. Due to the fact that most of the Budapest Jewish community (more than 300,000) was saved, Budapest is the only city in post-war Hungary that has a Jewish theological school existing in the Soviet-dominated countries. (I visited its director in 1970 and he gave me one of his books as a souvenir.) Budapest was surrounded by the Soviets and ultimately fell. Our army unit left the Hungarian border and was interned by the Germans in Austria. We were settled in an internment camp in the areas of the Austrian mountains (Spytal in Pyrrn), close to Linz, and we were there when the American army units came in. The American units in charge of the interned Hungarians gave us back our weapons and handled us as an allied force. During the months at the end of the war (on Good Friday in 1945), I spent some time in Austria organizing a small school for the children of Hungarian civilians who had left Hungary with the army. I developed a good friendship with the local pastor who offered me his hospitality, but I continued living with my unit. The Hungarian families started returning to Hungary during the summer of 1945. I recall that several of the first trains were not taken back to Hungary, as agreed upon

among the allies, but were forced to go to Soviet Russia or Rumania. I was on the third train which was not forced over to Soviet Russia. Eventually I left the train in the border town of Sopron where Dr. Tibor Ham, one of my former friends from the Piarist School in Budapest, helped me. He was the mayor of Sopron and very optimistic. He said to me, "Steve, don't worry. The Soviets will withdraw and everything will be alright." He could not foresee that the Communist Party would take power in about two years, after a short period of democracy. Dr. Ham was compelled to leave Hungary after the communist takeover and presently lives in Washington, D.C.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HUNGARY AFTER THE WAR & THE LONG WAY TO THE U.S.

After the talk with Dr. Ham, I decided that it was not practical to return to Budapest wearing a military uniform. Luckily there was a Benedictine school and house in Sopron. A good friend there gave me a cassock. (It should be noted that despite Soviet occupation of the country, the Soviet military very seldom attacked priests. To a certain extent it was safer to travel as a priest than as a layman.) Most of the railroad lines were destroyed and some trains were in operation only as far as Győr; thus, a good part of my travel back to Budapest was by horse-drawn carriage. I eventually reached the war-devastated city and went to the Piarist House (and school). This was a magnificent building, built of reinforced concrete. Even though it had been hit by more than 100 bombs, the building was still intact, except for the upper floor. Remodeling and restoration were already underway by the Piarists, students, and friends.

I reported to my Provincial, Rev. Julius Zimanyi. He suggested that I not return to teaching due to the fact that I had spent almost two years in the military, and also the fact that I was the most decorated military chaplain in the Army. My teaching could be considered provoking to the new regime, which was not yet communist but in which the communist party had a very significant role. I only spent a few days in Budapest before my Provincial sent me to the Piarist villa in the Svab Mountains (later called Liberty Mountain). Before leaving Budapest, I visited my mother and sisters. Both of the sisters were married; one lived in Budapest and the other in Esztergom, near Budapest. I transferred my few belongings to the villa which was a rather large residence built by Dr. Anton Schutz, one of my professors. The name of the residence was "Cassiciacum". (Rev. Schutz was a great admirer of St. Augustine.)

During the summertime several Piarists came out from town, and some good nuns from the Budapest House housekeeping unit did the cooking for them and the Piarist clerics. However, with the beginning of the school year the priests only came out on Sundays, so I was left more or less to my own devices. I passed the time by taking care of

the residence (which had not been affected by the bombing and the battle for Budapest) and cooking for myself.

There was a severe food shortage in Budapest, paired with very heavy inflation. The value of the "pengo" (worth about 20c in U.S. money) decreased daily. One day an egg would cost 1 pengo, a week later it would cost 100 pengos, in about a month it would cost 1000 pengos. It was a barter economy until monetary reform was completed and the new currency, the "forint" was introduced, in 1946 as I recall. One food item, dried beans, was available and it saved the lives of many people both during and after the war. I learned to cook dry beans. I cooked beans with bread, hamburger, a little dessert, along with some wine (which I received from the house), I not only survived but my strength returned and my spirit unfolded with planning for the future.

Already, before the war I had been planning to move to the United States to prepare a foundation for the Piarist Priests who were not represented there. I had some communications on this topic and intensified my study of English.

My provincial was approached by Dr. George Kiss, pastor of a village parish in the country, who asked for my assistance with his parish work. (Later on, under the Rakosi regime he was arrested and spent some time in jail. After his release he visited the United States and came to see me in Buffalo. I cannot express enough my gratitude toward him). This was the period of so-called "land reform", when the large estates were distributed among the peasants. Later on, most of the villagers where I was, because they were German speaking, were deported to Germany from Hungary. The "land reform" was poorly planned. (Later on the lands were taken away from the "Kulaks", the peasantry, and except for a small lot, became state farms, or kolchoses, ala the Soviet method.) In the great fervor of land reform, the larger estates were parceled out. In most cases, although the beautiful mansions of the landed nobility were not destroyed, they were definitely damaged. I recall how the furniture and mirrors were removed, and I remember how the neighboring new owners of the land cut up the most beautiful oriental rugs and distributed the pieces evenly among themselves. In one instance, a large, several-hundred-year-old chestnut tree was given to one family. The other families also wanted the same tree, so they simply cut it down and divided the wood into four parts. The depth of the greed, senselessness, and sheer

stupidity was paralyzing. In the later years at least the Hungarian government had the sense to preserve the mansions of the nobility by converting them into rest homes or sanatoriums.

This was the first time that I had served in a parish, and I found the work rewarding. I taught religion in the grammar school and took care of the pastoral needs of the people while serving as an assistant to my excellent pastor. I also preached in other parishes and became acquainted with other dedicated priests in the area.

Another small episode, which reinforced my desire to leave Hungary, occurred while I was preparing a student from my village Romand for his examinations from the fourth Gymnasium class in the Piarist School in Veszprem (not far from my village). Most of the members of the community were friendly, but they told me not to eat with the community; they felt it was not good for them. I understand their concern because they were fearful of the increasing Communist influence in Hungary.

The Communist Party became more and more influential in the Parliament. After the first election, which was more or less free, the majority of seats were held by the Smallholder Party. The communists took over in 1947. Cardinal Mindszenty was arrested, Catholic schools were closed, religious orders were dispersed and their members interned. Some members of my order were arrested (Rev. Pinter spent more than a year in jail). Trials and executions of former political and military leaders started, in the manner of the show trials of Stalin. We should not forget that we were living in the Stalin era, and his henchman in Hungary, Rakosi, followed his terror methods in Hungary too. Upon consultation with my pastor and Provincial, I was advised to leave the country and bring together other members of the Piarist Province who were in dispersion, mostly in Austria and West Germany. The Provincial gave me a Latin Order, signed with various stamps, with instruction that I should eventually go to Rome, which was and is the center for the Piarist Order.

Luckily, through my pastor's help, I found a dedicated seminarian from the Szombathely Seminary to guide me over the Hungarian-Austrian border. In 1946, Austria was occupied and divided into four zones - Soviet territory (eastern part), British, American, and French territory (western part). I was worried about crossing the Soviet part because the soldiers checked everyone's travel documents. They stopped the bus that I was on but nobody came to me to check my documents; thus, I was able to pass over to the

American zone. My fears disappeared, but I was unable to find a place to stay, even for a night. The local parish priest did not want to accept me as a priest (I do not know why he was so fearful). Eventually I spent the night in a farmer's large doorway and boarded the train on the next day. I had one dollar with me...Hungarian money was good for nothing. My papers were checked on the train as it passed through the American zone. I showed the Latin orders, with its large stamps. The good G.I.s could not make anything out of it and at the end simply told me to just go ahead. I spent some days in a Benedictine monastery and eventually reached the French zone where Hungarians were welcome (Hungary was never at war with the French during World War II). Here in Innsbruck, Dr. George Denes, representative of the Vatican-Hungarian delegation, met me and assisted me with money. (I knew him from Hungary. He eventually came to the United States and was an outstanding French linguist teacher in the Calasanctius School). I also found another friend, Dr. Ferenc David, who came to Los Angeles after me. I officiated at his wedding to one of my secretaries in St. Stephen's Church.

From Austria I traveled to West Germany where I met Rev. Zoltan Kotai, head of the Hungarian-Vatican Delegation. He was able to help a large number of Hungarians with the assistance of the Vatican. He appointed me temporarily as the head of the Hungarian Retreat House in Gutenberg. We had a meeting here of the Hungarian Piarists in Germany and, until about the middle of December, I spent my time giving retreats to a good number of people, among whom I made many friends and who felt encouraged because of these retreats.

I could not delay my trip to Rome any longer. However, there was a very serious difficulty - I did not have a passport. It was not an easy task to cross into Italy without a passport. I went back to Austria where with Dr. Denes' help we came up with a plan. The only way to cross the Austrian-Italian border was to climb the Alps on foot. This was winter, 1946 (Christmas Eve, as I recall). Dr. Denes was able to travel on the train because he had an Italian passport from Rome where he studied. I crossed through the Alps with a young Austrian guide. The snow was very deep and I did not have any skis. From time to time I was submerged in the snow up to my armpits. Eventually we reached the Italian side and Dr. Denes was waiting for me at the train station. Luckily, this was a very small station and I was able to board the train without the intervention of the border patrol. After a rather

long train ride (Italy was also occupied by the Allied Forces) I reached Rome and reported to the Piarist Order Superior General, Rev. Del Buono. I showed him the Latin letter from my Provincial. He was not too friendly, but he couldn't send me back to nowhere. For a short time I was assigned to the General House, the St. Pantaleon, and eventually was sent to Monte Mario, the study house. Two of my confreres, Rev. F. Rozsaly and Rev. Y. Mesko also arrived in Rome. (They later came to the United States with me). I was appointed to teach Theology and Philosophy (in Latin) at the study house.

By accident I had the room of Rev. John Walter who was the Hungarian Assistant General of the General House. From his correspondence I gained some insight into the background of the manipulations that were used to force Rev. Zimanyi to resign as Provincial and be replaced by Rev. Tomek (who later became the new Superior General of the Order).

I enjoyed teaching the Italian clerics, and it seemed to me that they also enjoyed my teaching because a good number of them still remember me. One of them, Rev. Fiori, came to the United States for two years and taught in the Calasanctius School.

My experiences in Rome, outside of the teaching, included extensive planning to really know Rome - not just through the spectacular art works but also those areas which are not usually tourist oriented (small churches, little alleys and streets...). I once attended one of Pope Pius XII's receptions which was totally formalistic, and decided "never again". I realized, from my reading, that the Pope was already under the influence of a German nun and was becoming more and more superstitious (accepting as fact the strange phenomenon of the "Fatima sun miracle". - The whole thing was a simple fraud.) However, this didn't detract from the spirit of Rome, hidden below the noisy external factors. My other project in Rome was to study English which was done with the help of a young American man who came to the house to teach me (the Superior General did not like this and this is still a mystery for me).

At the end of the school year I was transferred to Firenze in Badia Fiesolana, another Piarist school. The spirit of Firenze impressed me even more than the spirit of Rome. The splendor of the Renaissance was paired with the excellent spirit of the Tuscan Piarist Province and their impressive schools made a deep impression on me (among others, there was an excellent school in Siena for deaf-mute children).

These were very important years for the Piarist Order. After many years of dictatorial rule by Rev. Del Buono, the Vatican directed that a new chapter should be called and a new Superior General elected (not appointed by the Holy See) by democratic elections through the representative members of all provinces. Del Buono had been appointed Superior by the Holy See in 1929 and served until the Congregation of the Religious called together the new General Chapter in 1947. The Chapter was held in the Piarists' Monte Mario House. Rev. Tomek, the Provincial, and Rev. Walter, the Assistant General, were permitted to leave Hungary to attend the meeting. Rev. Tomek was elected Superior General with a full majority. He was reelected in 1955 and 1961 and altogether served three terms. His election initiated the rejuvenation of the Order. It is interesting to note that in the beginning of his Generaliate he was impressed by the Common Life (*vita communis*) of the Italian and especially Spanish provinces. However, after some years he realized that the Hungarian province with the dedication to their schools was more exemplary than the merely external following of the rules of the order and the semimonastic life and intellectual low level of most of the Piarists, especially in Spain. Fr. Tomek again put the emphasis on teaching and good preparation for teaching. Until his generaliate clerics were prohibited from getting their degree. They could visit universities only after ordination; thus, a good number of them were unprepared for teaching before being assigned to a school. He changed this and again made the Piarists a real teaching order instead of a segregated monastic community.

Fr. Tomek transferred me back to Rome, to the St. Pantaleo, where I assisted in the reorganization of the library and the archives and did some secretarial work for the general. He positively supported the plan for the United States and made it possible for the three of us (Fr. Rozsaly, Fr. Mesko and myself) to start the planning for the immigration. This was not an easy task because, after the war, immigration to the United States was very much restricted. Acceptance of a United States' Bishop was needed for priests to immigrate. Eventually it was thought that the best way to reach the United States was through the Spanish Provinces, and we were sent to Spain (or rather Catalonia). We embarked from Genoa and arrived in Barcelona in the spring of 1948. I was housed in the Catalonia Provincial House in the Diputation. My confreres were quartered in other houses. We had an opportunity to learn Spanish and, in a limited way, I taught English in the School of the

Diputation. My stay enabled me to become acquainted with the very intelligent and friendly members of the community. I am especially thankful to the provincial, Rev. Vives, for his definite interest and assistance. I should note that I also enjoyed the excellent Catalan kitchen...dinner and the good wines (I even received a bottle of wine for breakfast).

After the exchange of my letters, it was decided that we should first go to Cuba, to the Vice-Provincial of the Catalan Province and try to reach the United States from there. At that time, the only way to go to Cuba was on a ship, but first we were compelled to go to Algiers and eventually to Gibraltar. We were accompanied by two members of the Catalan community and embarked on a Polish (formerly German) ship which was relatively small (around 7,000 tons) sometime in the summer of 1948. At the end of the summer, after an interesting but rather long voyage (23 days), we arrived in Cuba via Columbia, Venezuela, Panama, Curacao, and finally Havana, Cuba. We were housed in Guanabacoa and partially in the Havana house (and school) of the Piarists. Our first experience in a tropical climate was very interesting for all of us. We tried to improve our English with the help of the American Augustinian priests from Villanova University near Havana.

At that time Cuba was not yet under Castro and it was very friendly with the United States. I was still traveling with my Red Cross passport as a stateless individual. There was one advantage with this passport, you could renew it. In Cuba, one simply went to the Red Cross building, asked the janitor for the stamp and renewed the passport as needed.

Still, it was not easy to reach the United States. We had the assistance of the Cuban Vice Provincial, Rev. Rigola, a very caring older man, but the rector of the house at Guanabacoa wanted us to stay in Cuba and teach there. Again, there were many exchanges of letters. The Superior General wrote to the Archbishop of Los Angeles and to Rev. Mathas Lany, the Hungarian pastor of St. Stephen's Church in Los Angeles. With Fr. Lany's influence we obtained the visas and were permitted to move to Los Angeles. We left Havana, by ship, at the end of February and arrived in Miami, Florida. The much older Catalan priest flew on plane from Miami to Los Angeles. The remaining three boarded a Greyhound bus and after three days arrived in Los Angeles. (We passed through New Orleans during the Mardi Gras celebration). The Catalan priest joined a small Mexican community parish (they were not officially established at that time). I was assigned to Fr.

Lanyi. Fr. Rozsaly and Fr. Mesko were assigned to different American parishes. Thus ended our long voyage from Hungary, via Rome, to Los Angeles, California in the United States.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MY EXPERIENCES IN THE LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA AND BUFFALO, NEW YORK AREAS BETWEEN 1949 AND 1957

As indicated in Chapter Four, after a long and very eye-opening travel from Cuba through the southern part of the United States by Greyhound bus, the three Hungarian Piarists, Lajos Mesko, Ferenc Rozsaly, and myself, arrived in Los Angeles, California. The Catalan (rather Mexican) Piarists had small Mexican parishes there, but no regular religious community.

The Archbishop of Los Angeles assigned us to various parishes to improve our English. I spent some days at the residence of the Cathedral of the archdiocese, but eventually I was assigned to St. Stephen's parish, whose pastor was Rev. Mathias Lany. I had some very interesting experiences here: The parish house did not have a room for a second priest. It was very refreshing work for me to partition-off with the help of the pastor and parishioners, part of a large hall to serve as my room. Cooperation among the various social classes is much closer in the U.S.A. (generally in North America) than in Europe or Latin America. The separation of the various social classes even in Communist-ruled, so-called Socialistic countries, is much deeper than in the U.S.A. This was observed by those who visited the Soviet Union or the Eastern European countries after World War II.

St Stephen's was a rather complex parish made up of Hungarians, Svabs (Germans) from the Banat (the southern part of Hungary before the Trianon Treaty, the pastor himself came from there), Mexicans who came in larger and larger numbers from Mexico, and English-speaking Americans from the neighborhood. Although the official language in the parish was English, we preached in four languages on Sunday - one Mass each in Hungarian, Spanish, and German, and two Masses in English. This was not easy for me in the beginning, but it was an excellent experience. It also gave me an opportunity to socialize with the parishioners during the dinner parties sponsored by various groups for fund- SOMETHING IS MISSING I developed some insight into the Mexican problem in Los Angeles (one member was a college student from Mexico) through the discussion group, and I also gained some insight into the Black situation. Not too many churches were

integrated in 1949, but St. Stephen's was already totally integrated and had a good number of black parishioners who participated fully in the social programs as well.

My first automobile in the U.S.A. was a rather rewarding experience for me (the rather strange Archbishop would not permit assistant pastors to own an automobile, but I was given permission to have a car when I was asked to teach in the Immaculate Heart of Mary College). I purchased the car for \$20.00, repaired it with the help of a Hungarian mechanic, and when it was no longer needed, sold it for \$100.00. I drove while I was in the service in Hungary, but driving in the already crazy conditions in Los Angeles was a totally different experience.

From time to time we met and had supper with the three Hungarian priests and the Catalan Piarists at St. Martha's Church. I'll never forget one hilarious occasion. Fr. Rozsaly and I offered to prepare dinner for the group (about 5-6 people). We found a beautiful piece of meat in the refrigerator and decided to cook a good Hungarian-style stew with it. The preparations went smoothly, but the cooking took a much longer time than expected. Finally, dinner was served and was enjoyed by all. After dinner the pastor went to the refrigerator to get the meat for his cat. To our surprise we learned that the meat which had been used for the stew was a beautiful piece of horsemeat, which had been reserved for the cat. When the pastor told us, most of the good fathers vomited the excellent stew (except for the Hungarian priests who had become used to eating any kind of meat during the war). My stay at St. Stephen's definitely helped me to learn about different aspects of life in the United States. With the help of the pastor, who was the head of the resettlement committee for the archdiocese, I was able to assist a large number of Hungarian refugees who settled in the Los Angeles area. Most of them still live there and I am still in contact with some of them.

My most significant experience in Los Angeles took place when I was asked to teach theology in the Immaculate Heart of Mary College which was conducted by the Immaculate Heart of Mary nuns. This was an all female college at the time. It was my custom to first write and then to memorize all my lectures. Despite my accent (when you are close to forty and come to a new country, some accent from your mother tongue will always remain), I was able to freely present my lectures, from memory, while facing this interested and interesting group of mostly very nice, even beautiful, girls. One girl, at

whose wedding I assisted, was very specifically intelligent and beautiful. She was an art student and already an excellent artist (I have one of her paintings and her photograph in my room in Buffalo). After I left Los Angeles, we corresponded with each other and she visited me in Buffalo with her children. I could say that I was in love with her and she with me, not physically, due to the distance, but definitely emotionally. She usually called me several times a year. I learned from her that although her husband was a good but simple man, the marriage was very unhappy and did not work out. When I hadn't heard from her for a long time, I called and one of her now grown children answered. It was a great shock for me to learn that she had died, but I never found out the cause of her death.

During my stay in Los Angeles I familiarized myself with the environment, absorbing all I could. Then I was called to Seattle, Washington by the bishop to see a Hungarian family who worked for the bishop as housekeepers. I had the opportunity to absorb the beauty of the San Bernardino Mountains (the pastor had a house in Arrowhead where I spent some time), the Mohave Desert, and San Francisco. I decided not to speak about any American problems until I had some insight about them. In order to do this I made plans to visit all of the states. By 1956 I had accomplished my purpose, traveling by train or mostly by car and sleeping by the roadside. Unlike a tourist, before I went anywhere I studied the area to learn as much as I could about it and any problems unique to it. As a result they opened themselves up to me. After one year, Fr. Rozsaly left for the East and went to the Buffalo area where another group of Piarists Hungarians, Poles, and one Slovak had arrived through the assistance of Rev. Julius Szabo, who had a cousin in Hungary who was a Piarist priest. Rev. Julius Szabo (later on Msgr. Szabo) was the pastor of a small Hungarian Church, the Assumption Church in Lackawanna, New York. Fr. Szabo secured the invitation of Bishop O'Hara who was the bishop of the Buffalo diocese and the Piarists were given the opportunity to purchase a home for the Novitiate in Derby, New York which became the mother house of the Piarist Order in the United States (this house was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, the noted architect).

After living in California for two years, we were aware that there was no possibility of establishing a community in Los Angeles, California under Archbishop McIntyre (Archbishop of Los Angeles), so Fr. Mesko and I drove across the country to join the Buffalo group and work for the foundation of the Piarist Province in the U.S.A.

I want to interrupt my chronological narration at this point in order to make some remarks about what I did learn from my travels not only in the U.S.A. but also a good number of other countries. It has been said that "Tourism is the paradise of the fool". There is some truth in this statement, but travel can be an excellent eye-opener if it is done with purpose.

Although I visited more than 45 countries between 1949 and 1987, I will only comment on those which were relevant for my life and others as well.

In addition to visiting all of the States, I also visited all the Provinces of Canada, except the Prince Edward Island.

I have already mentioned the pleasant experience of sharing the common work of building my living quarters in connection with my parish work in Los Angeles. Respect toward each other, regardless of the social positions of the individuals involved, was very evident. I experienced this same respect among individuals whether sleeping by the roadside or dining in the fanciest or simplest restaurant. I have seen with my own eyes how the divisive factors in race relations have crumbled during my 38 years in this country because of the racial, ethnic, and religious variety and at the same time the constant shifting of the population.

The rich variety of the landscape speaks for itself in both the U.S.A. and Canada. Very specifically, I fell in love with the deserts (Mohave and others), the wonderful variety of the Rocky Mountains, and the seashore. In an earlier chapter I mentioned that I was fascinated as a child by battleships and the sea. I found a response for this when I experienced the seashores - East, West, and very specifically Hawaii, which is one of my favorite places in the U.S.A. In the school which I attended as a child, about 100 large paintings of various parts of the world lined the corridor walls. During recess periods I enjoyed looking at them and identifying myself with the various landscapes. When I came to America, the Rocky Mountains, the Great Plains, Yellowstone National Park were all familiar to me and I greeted them as old friends and blended myself into the variety of the North American continent. It continues to fascinate me. To sum it up, I blended into the country and the country blended into me.

When members of my family (in three groups) came to visit me from Hungary, I did not want them to just stay in Buffalo and eat daily "paprikas chicken and stuffed

cabbage”. Instead I sent them around the country by bus and train so that they could experience the great variety and richness of the North American continent. They came back from these tours not only rejuvenated, but also blended into the U.S.A. I did the same thing for one of Msgr. Szabo's cousins, who is a medical doctor, when he was here in 1987. I advanced him the necessary money and persuaded him to travel around the United States by train. He was very impressed. My experiences in the United States and Canada were behind my determination to include the Field-Study Trip Program as an integral part of the curriculum of Calasanctius School.

When I traveled alone or with a friend in other countries, it was not to see the tourist curiosities but to gain some insight into the various countries and to get some feeling of the spirit of the various places I visit.

When I traveled to Australia in 1974, I had three particular purposes in mind. First, I wanted to experience the integration of the Hungarians who had immigrated there after the Second World War and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Their integration was remarkable. The first generation usually started in physical labor, but very quickly became members of the intellectual and, in many cases, the financial elite as well. Secondly, I wanted to acquaint myself with the physical landscape. I traveled by train from Sydney to Melbourne to Adelaide. The three-day trip from Adelaide to Perth through the Australian desert was unforgettable. From Perth I flew to Darwin, North of Australia. From Darwin I flew to Alice Springs and back to Sydney. This time it definitely gave me a feel for this continent which has been described so well in Robert Hughes' book, “The Fatal Shore”, which was published in 1986. My third purpose was to visit the Australian wine areas - South Australia's Borossa Valley and New South Wales' Hunter Valley. I had tasted the great variety of Australian wines when I was in London, England. The taste of these excellent wines in their native land reinforced my love for them in this formerly mostly beer-drinking country. It was a surprise to see that the wine lists were exceptionally rich even in the medium-size restaurants. Unfortunately, Australian wines are only available in a very limited supply in the United States.

On the way back from Australia, I spent two days in Fiji. The tensions which erupted there in 1987, between the East Indian population and the Polynesians as reported in the media, were already being felt. But regardless of this tension I spent some delightful

time sailing on the Ocean to beautiful sandy islands and beaches and experienced the family life from the close quarters of a rather large East Indian family. The experience of Hungarian immigrants to Australia has been excellently described in the Autobiography of my good friend of more than 49 years from Debrecen, Hungary, Lippai Rauch, Karoly - whom I visited in Australia and who visited me several times in the U.S.A.

As I indicated formerly, I consider only those foreign travels of me for the autobiography that are connected in some way with the program of Calasanctius School.

First I would like to make some remarks about the Caribbean Islands. I decided to visit extensively the French Caribbean Islands: Martinique, Saint Bartholomew, Guadalupe, and French Guiana. About the Martinique and Guadalupe Islands, my first remark is the unusual beauty of the native women. They too are mixes - mostly European and Black African backgrounds - but they came out of so unusual a combination that I am inclined to say the most beautiful women found in my life were in Martinique and Guadalupe. These islands are black islands basically, but it is not so simple their blackness. In an issue of Time Magazine there was an article about the black middle class, that they cannot fit themselves into the American life fully. This does not apply to the Caribbean Islands. These blacks, in various shades, are running the islands - but there is a big difference among the groups according to the shade of their blackness and they stick together very strictly according to their color line.

The second remark I make is about the unprecedented cleanliness of the French Caribbean Islands. It is very clear for me that the dirt and uncleanness has nothing to do with racial factors but traditions in particular cultures. Buffalo is a "pig sty" compared to the Caribbean cities. Here I should emphasize that point too that the French Caribbean is extremely diversified. Saint Bartholomew is settled by people of French Normandy, totally white. In the same way the Isles of Saintes, also, is totally white. This makes the whole French Caribbean an exciting place with special traditions which you cannot find in other parts of the Caribbean.

Another point was emphasized by Thomas Sowell in his book, Essays & Data on American Ethnic Groups: there is a big difference in the Caribbean black population and the United States blacks. The difference - although the slavery in the Caribbean was much crueller than in the United States - was that they never had collective dwelling places. They

kept all the time responsible for their own food and gardens - this made them more independent. One of my acquaintances mentioned to me that in medical school at the University of Buffalo some years ago, from 18 black students, 16 were from the Caribbean. I do not go into detail of what this might mean, but it is clear to me that the independence of the Caribbean black people is much more marked than it is in American blacks. This explains the statement of Thomas Sowell: the average income of the Caribbean black in the United States is above that of the Polish and Irish in the United States.

A special remark should be made about French Guiana. French Guiana was place of the so-called Devils Island, which was a deportation and punishment island until the end of World War II. There you find a strange situation. Outside of the so-called Bush Negro - Negroes who escaped slavery and went into the bush - you find Carib Indians, in separate settlements. You find very interesting aspect that the former mostly white inmates of the Devils Island are serving the mostly Negro middle class.

Otherwise too French Guinea is a unique place where the various ethnic groups in rather separated ways work in this tropical area. My suggestion would be that those who want to have a real world view of the Caribbean Islands best to spend most of their time in the French Caribbean Islands and in French Guiana.

Some other remarks I can make now about French Polynesia. There are various islands in French Polynesia, among them Tahiti where again very interesting cooperation and tension exists between the aboriginal Polynesians, the French settlers. From this came out the highly interesting cultural interchange.

Now from this I switch over to other areas of my travels; one was very useful again to open up my eyes. I had a chance to participate in the various conventions of Wine & Food Societies - among other places, in London and Paris. One of my great enjoyments was especially in London, the great variety of the South African and Australian wines which you cannot find in the United States or in very limited quantities. Another eye opener for me was the visit of the Champagne area in France. Here champagne was never served chilled, as is usual in the United States, but they use the cellar temperature which brings out much better the bouquet of the champagne.

My other very interesting trip was in 1972 when I decided to visit the red light districts of some of the most famous European cities. In Copenhagen, Denmark, that time

happened the same as in America in the late 60s, the so-called sexual liberation. Sex became identified with a simple physical act separated from emotions and love in most of the cases. I will never forget one of the sex shops presenting moving pictures, which could be seen from the street too, and the great number of women and men watching them, in one particular case the whole movie was dedicated to intercourse between human beings and animals. Otherwise too was my feeling the total debasing of the sexual act to the level of a merely physical satisfaction is disastrous for the meaning of sexuality. This we can see from the sexual permissiveness in the 60s in the United States with the result of the AIDS. The situation in Hamburg at so-called St. Pauli district is different; this is practically a part of the city where you find all the varieties of the sexual expression but in a controlled way. I never forget the remark of my taxi driver: "Please do not go in that area at night because you may be robbed." I suggest the visitation of the St. Pauli area be never alone because it is not safe. The area most open sexuality that I found was in Paris, but in my personal judgment, among the 3 places I mention now, it was the most artistic.

About my foreign travels I would like to make a note only about two additional ones.

The first is connected with a group visiting the Soviet Union schools in Leningrad, Moscow, and Novosibirsk. This was in November of 1975. This particular trip was dedicated to schools and on the whole was an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and get some understanding about the Soviet school system at that particular period of the Brezhnev area. Since that time, certain changes have occurred. I write only about my experience that particular year.

First, Leningrad. We visited a regular secondary school. My impression was that which is acknowledged, by the way, by all the authors about Soviet education: the emphasis was on rote learning and memorization. Seems to me that the students knew very well their textbook and they did not deflect too much from the official text.

I have a custom whenever I go to schools: I visit the library, the corridors, and the bathrooms. The library of this particular school of 4-5000 students was one room. In my judgment, it was a very, very poor library from our viewpoint. Most of the books were selected official publications and some of the books there were in quantities of 100 or more copies. The library of this school cannot be compared to even the small Calasanctius library

in regard of variety, riches and use. In the corridors and bathrooms, it was interesting for me that everywhere there were pictures about preparing for war - war, war, war. This was the period in the so-called peace movement era which was organized and propagated by the Soviet Union and the Communist parties of the world. The toilets were clean but we should not forget it - at that time the Soviet Union did not have toilet paper- the hand was used instead of paper - this was common on trains too. In some better hotels one could find some toilet paper. Otherwise, the faculty and students were very friendly and some faculty spoke very good English.

In Moscow we visited a language school. Here I may remark that the Soviet language schools - English, German, French - are much more outstanding than language schools in the United States. I was deeply impressed by students of 16-17 years of age who were fluent in English.

In Novosibirsk, the mathematics and physics school is connected with the University and it is an outstanding school. They get their student body through a long series of achievement tests. They tested about one million 14-15 years olds. From this is selected about 200,000, and after very careful screening, about 800 of them are put in a summer camp where the number is further reduced and only about 140-150 are accepted to the University's science school. It is interesting to note here that the program of the school which was explained to us in a detailed form was modeled after the Bronx school of science- for me it was hilarious that some years ago they started a school in North Carolina for science students and said it was an imitation of the Novosibirsk school. I had a very good experience in Novosibirsk because they said the curriculum design of their school which I brought back with me was definitely very good in math and physics and chemistry but much poorer in biology than was ours. It should be noted here that in the Soviet Union there are very few (maybe 4 or 5) secondary schools connected with universities. I do not want to go into other details about my experiences but on the whole I can state that this study of some of the Soviet schools was very revealing for me.

The next point I would like to mention here is my study travel in 1985 to Oxford University in England.

The University of Connecticut Summer Study for Teachers

Oxford and London, England  
British Approaches to the Education of Gifted Children  
June 14- July 6, 1985

The workshop was organized in Oxford. I studied the gifted education in Oxfordshire. I spent about a week there. I tell you frankly I was deeply disappointed by the students of the British state schools. In my judgment the so-called best state schools, at least in the Oxfordshire area, have nothing much to do with any gifted education. Most of the students leave the schools at age 16-17; very few graduate and go on to university. But I visited in Oxfordshire a very well known so-called public boarding school ("public" in Britain means private school). It was a very good school of about 400 students. I asked the curriculum and the headmaster explained everything, but my impression about the printed materials and the presentation on the part of the headmaster was that their view was very restricted to Britain. They, essentially in the history courses, deal with nothing about the great eastern civilizations. And from that viewpoint, historical studies are much further ahead in the Calasactius curriculum than in that supposedly outstanding school. I was so much disappointed in the whole Oxford excursion that I decided to leave Oxford earlier by 2 days.

Among the other travel experiences, I mention only my experiences in the two around-the-world trips I took which are not directly related to the founding of Calasactius School but definitely reinforced the idea which was expressed in designing the history curriculum of the School: the significance of the Far East and to various civilizations to the understanding of human history. This impression was very significant in my two travels in Japan and in my two to the Hong Kong area - which for me was one of the most exciting cities of the world - and my experience in Singapore - which is a remarkable growing and integrated state; and in Thailand. In all those places I could feel the pulsation of human energies which were able to translate those territories from subtle or maybe in some cases backward countries into booming and exciting places, so significant for the future of mankind. My experience in India was somewhat different.

I know and introduced the teaching of Indian philosophy in the curriculum of the Calasactius School. India is a subcontinent-with about 850 million people and many

languages and cultures. I could not find too many people among the leaders of my groups, some of whom were teachers, who were aware about the riches of the Indian philosophy tradition. But definitely I was impressed, in India too, by the enormous gap between the social classes and the differences between the rich and the poor were much more significant – in my experiences - than the differences in the U.S. I do not want to dwell more upon my travel experiences but return to my arrival and work in Buffalo.

I arrived in Buffalo with Fr. Mesko in 1951 and joined the forces with the other group of Piarist Fathers under the leadership of Fr. Batori, who came somewhat later than my group into the U.S. My first place here was in Derby in the newly acquired novitiate house of the Piarist Fathers in the U.S. This place was more than a house - good to know it - the architect of this place was Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the most famous American architects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I was in that place for a while director of the vocations of the Piarist order. At the same time I was in charge of the finances of the small Piarist group, but my actual work was loosely connected with Derby except providing sizable income for the community. Through the influence of Msgr. Szabo, who at that time was with the Catholic Charities of Buffalo and was also the pastor of the Assumption church in Lackawanna, I was privileged to be appointed as a part-time psychologist at the Catholic Charities Clinic which later became known as the Msgr. Carr Mental Health Institute where I was working for many years until 1982 when I returned fully to private practice. But about my experiences as a psychologist I will talk in a later chapter.

For the foundation of Calasanctius School my experiences were very significant as a teacher of philosophy and psychology in the Rosary Hill presently Daemen College - rather in my impression Daemen College, essentially is a glorified vocational high school. But at that time Rosary Hill was an academic institution and I was teaching there:

- Philosophy of East and West
- Philosophy of Religion
- Great Systems of Philosophy
- Child Psychology
- Philosophy of Science
- Seminar Lectures
- Philosophy of Man
- Marriage

- Psychological Considerations & Ethics of Marriage
- Mysticism

These experiences and with my contacts with a good number of very bright girls was very much assisting me in deciding about the Calasanctius School for gifted children.

The other significant experience was for me to be a teacher in Mt. St. Joseph's Teachers College, presently Medaille College. I was working there between 1951 and 1965 and teaching various courses among others:

- Psychology of Learning
- Child Development
- Psychiatric Problems in Education
- Introduction to Psychology
- Problems of Religious and Moral Guidance
- (continue listing from page 4 of resume...resume attached)

Outside of these two significant college experiences, I was teaching in the Canisius College in 1952-53 about contemporary schools of psychology and in 1964-65 in Stella Niagara Auxiliary College of the Franciscan Sisters a course in Philosophy of Man. This means that my time was rather heavily occupied: I usually left Derby in the very early morning (I would arise from bed around 5 a.m.) and returned home late night (to eat my one meal of the day around 10 p.m. and to retire around 11 p.m.) It was my habit to take a little siesta mid-day or when time permitted under the trees in the then very beautiful Delaware Park. Here may be noted that I was rector of the Derby House and Boys' Home of the Piarist Fathers between 1955 and 1960. All those teaching experiences were very significant for me in the development of the idea of the Calasanctius School for gifted children. It is needless to say that outside of this heavy workload I was involved in the organization of the mission appeals for the Piarist Fathers and during the years of 1951 to present, I myself visited 155 parishes around the U.S. which further enlarged my understanding of the riches of American life from the religious viewpoint also. All those varied experiences were very significant for me and maybe for others also. In the last several years of my sojourn in Derby I was preparing the foundation of the Calasanctius School for gifted students, about which I will discuss in Chapter 6 of my autobiography.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CALASANCTIUS SCHOOL

A fundamental question was faced at the outset: Was there a need in the Buffalo area for the kind of school envisioned? Buffalo is a heavily industrialized, blue-collar city with strong ethnic concentrations. The Buffalo Diocese, the largest school system in the area, provided a list of students who had obtained scores of 130 or above on the Kuhlman-Anderson Intelligence Test and had proved to be “good students” in the third to fifth grades. The parents of these children were asked if they would be interested in a program for gifted students. About twenty-two people attended the first meeting and were enthusiastic. The curriculum plan and admission procedures were explained to them. Individual evaluations would be carried out for each candidate, using the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and other supplementary tests. Sixteen boys were accepted. At that time the school was planned for boys only, but after its third year it became coeducational. With this small group, plus \$2,000 donated by two local businessmen and the enthusiastic collaboration of a good number of people, Calas Sanctius School opened its doors on September 8, 1957 in a small private home donated for its use for one year. The enthusiasm was remarkable, extending to the students, parents, the Buffalo business community, and various religious groups.

### DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM

It was not enough to recruit students; it was imperative to develop and implement a well-organized and comprehensive curriculum. The basic curriculum of the school was planned for a six-year sequence, commencing usually after the fourth or fifth grade, in preparation for exacting college-level study. Features of various curricula were incorporated: the English grammar school, the central European gymnasium, the French lycee, the Eastern American private schools, and aspects of American comprehensive high schools. In integrating these various approaches, specific features were added that had grown out of research in developmental and differential psychology. In 1972, the program was extended downward to include five-year-olds.

At Calasanctius, all students were exposed to a great variety of learning experiences in clearly circumscribed fields early in their schooling. In the first three years of the school, all courses were required with the only choices being in foreign languages and some areas of creative arts.

There was a good deal of serious resistance to the idea of ten to fifteen subjects weekly, following the college method of scheduling, instead of the usual four to five subjects uniformly scheduled each day. Considering that one of the characteristics of giftedness is an insatiable intellectual curiosity, channeling the interest of children in only a few directions is a questionable method. If students are not exposed to varied learning experiences from early childhood, they are restricted to limited resources. Their imaginations and lives become very one-sided. Calasanctius was intended to enlarge the intellectual and artistic horizons of the gifted.

The students responded to the challenge. They preferred the variety of offerings, and indeed a very full school day, rather than the boredom and uniformity of the daily schedule and the futility of the typical study hall, of which there is none at Calasanctius.

If students were bombarded with many different experiences, is there room for creativity? To be creative, one first needs a great variety of experiences stored in his mind. Human creativity is, essentially, finding new combinations and connections. The Calasanctius curriculum tries to open as many “windows” in the mind as possible, and to enhance the richness of imagination. Similarly, spontaneity comes when children are immersed in many areas and when through self-assessment they find ways to channel their general interests in more specific areas. This usually occurs at about age thirteen to fourteen, when their interest become more career-oriented and when they “fall in love” with certain areas of academic or artistic endeavor.

## CALASANCTIUS PROGRAM

Some of the Calasanctius programs are unique, not only as individual programs in themselves, but from the viewpoint of their integrating value as well.

The historical (not “social” ) Studies Program exposes students, beginning about age ten, to a six- to seven-year sequence in the history of civilization. Because there was

no appropriate secondary school text that exposed the students to the richness of the human heritage, a college textbook is used that gives a balanced approach to the great civilizations of past and present (Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americans) in a vertical way. This is not an area-study course, but a sequential and coordinated six- to seven-year program in history. American history is integrated into the course; it is not removed from the continuity of history. In the present age, when history is considered irrelevant in many programs, the historical dimension of our culture is emphasized.

The language program is unique, with instruction in a foreign language beginning at the age of five or six. The modern languages offered include German, French, Russian, Spanish, or Japanese. A second language (Latin, Italian, Chinese) may also be taken. In addition, other languages are available for credit through the National Association of Self-Instructional Language Program. The objectives of the language program are twofold: (a) to introduce the student, through a direct method, into conversational language patterns, and (b) to prepare him to reach some understanding of the particular culture and literature. Students are expected to attain the Advanced Placement standard in at least one language by the time of graduation. Most of them do. Calasactius takes seriously the significance of language learning.

Although the following features may not be unique to Calasactius, in their combination they constitute a unique approach to learning. All the Advanced Placement courses are offered and three are required for graduation with a Calasactius diploma. The Science Program is built vertically and culminates in Advanced Placement courses. The English Program concludes with two years of History of Literature and Criticism, taught only at college level. Art History and Music are taught at all grade levels, and Studio Art in the lower and middle school (ages five to thirteen). They are integrated into the regular curriculum and are not merely electives; they culminate in Advanced Placement courses. Mathematics is considered an integrating subject between humanities and sciences.

The Physical Education program is integrated into the regular program. The role of carry-over sports and gymnastics is emphasized with less stress on team sports. School assemblies are replaced by Colloquia, that is, weekly round-table discussions of books and issues, in small groups in the upper school, and in the form of Academia in the middle and lower schools where the students have a chance to express themselves and are confronted

in group situations.

Some of these programs exist in other schools as well. However, perhaps the strongest integrating aspects of the program are presently found only in Calasanctius. These include: the Seminar Program, which is intended to integrate the personal academic or artistic interest of the student with his career orientation and future professional plan; the Field Study Trip Program, which integrates book experience with actual live experiences; and the phenomenon-of-Man Program, which integrates, on a more conceptual level, the fragmented knowledge gained from various courses into a deeper understanding.

The Seminar Program is an independent research/study program, under the guidance of a proctor. Students are expected to do serious research in the field of their choice, under the guidance of a professional in that particular field who is interested in sharing his knowledge or talent. For each of three consecutive years, students are expected to present a serious paper based upon research (laboratory work and other sources) or creative art work. The presentation is made in front of a committee of experts. The student is expected to stand up for his findings in a serious, sometimes traumatic, but in all cases a maturing confrontation. Former students almost unanimously consider the seminar program their best experience in the school, even after their graduation from college. They report that the program assisted them in finding their career orientation, and in facing demanding programs and challenges.

The following titles give some idea of the scope of the Seminar program:

- "The Design and construction of a Solid State Coppler Radar with Digital Readout."
- "Ecclesia Rex and Sacerdotium, A Study of Carolingian Political Thought in the Reign of Louis the Pious as Present at the 6th Synod of Paris, A.D. 829."
- "The Canadian Dilemma."
- "The Construction of a Jotto Playing Program."
- "Separation and Aggression Anxiety in Children's Responses to Story Completions Following Arousal by Death Oriented Questioning."

- "The Effects of Amytal on the Electron and Energy Transfer Systems in the Mitochondria in the Liver of Rats."
- "Critical Interpretation of the Flute Concerto in D-Major (K. 314), by Wolfgang Mozart."
- "Exaggeration of Opinion: The Nineties."

Between 1960-1975, of the 380 humanities seminar papers presented, 309 were accepted; 33 of the 45 mathematics papers were accepted; and 176 of the 207 science papers were approved. Seminar papers in the science fields are the result of laboratory research and are usually twenty to eighty pages in length. Seminar papers in the humanities field range between fifty and two hundred pages. In studio art and music, the presentation is in the selected art field.

From the very first year, the student participates in the Field Study Trip Program, with study trips lasting two to three weeks and somewhat less for the youngest children. The trips take place during the school year. The objectives of the program are to coordinate and integrate school learning experiences with real life situations; to assist growing children to open their minds to the variety of natural beauties of the land as well as to the exceptional achievement of American scholarship, art, and industry; to foster among them the spirit of community through the rigors of camping and outdoor experiences; and, through contact with students of other areas of the country, to nurture an understanding of the diversity of the American experience. For language students, extended trips are available to Germany, France, Russia, and Quebec.

Still another unique feature of the Calasanctius curriculum is the Phenomenon-of-Man Program, a cluster of courses taken in the fourth, fifth, and sixth levels of study (comparable to the sophomore to senior years). The purpose of the courses, which are taken for one, two, three, or four semesters, is to introduce the students to the richness of the history of ideas.

Phenomenon-of-Man Courses include: History of Philosophy - Indian and Chinese, Greek and Medieval, Modern and Contemporary; History of Music; History of Art; Comparative Religion; Philosophy of Religion; Ethics; Anthropology; Sociology; Aspects of World Literature; Basic Concepts of Science; Basic Concepts of Economics;

Experimental Psychology; Developmental Psychology; and introduction to Personality. The student gains a new and integrated insight into the meaning of "being cultured," perhaps in the sense of the "Renaissance Man". These courses are part of the regular curriculum and are intended to be not so much chores as intellectual adventures.

At the end of their stay in Calasanctius, the students participate in a comprehensive colloquium on their understanding of the complexity and adventure of the ideas underlying human culture. It is clear that this program is demanding, but capable students with proper motivation are able to cope and respond to the challenge.

Finally, in evaluating our students, we assess actual knowledge in an area, not time spent in a course.

The school has always tried to develop and test experimental programs. Some examples include: the enrichment program for ages four through eight, on Saturdays during the spring and fall, and daily in July; the three-year high school sequence for students admitted after the eighth grade; the admission of "special" students who indicate talents in fields such as music, art, and so forth; the enrollment of post-graduate students. Today, these are integral parts of the curriculum; some other ideas that were tested were abandoned.

### EXPANDING THE PROGRAM

The program was extended to include younger children, ages five through nine, in 1972. An enrichment program for talented four- through eight-year olds was already in operation and a number of applicants had been evaluated. About half of the four- and five-year-olds were already reading, some even on the third, fourth, and fifth grade levels. Parents were concerned that if these children attended regular school, their high level of reading skill and intellectual curiosity could become more a liability than an asset.

In developing this section of the school, three psychologically well-founded theories were combined: (a) the Piagetian developmental sequences were followed in many respects, (b) the Jungian archetypical approach was used with regard to content, and (c) the riches of the children's eidetic imagery were to be respected. To this was added foreign language teaching, among others the rather unique experiment of teaching Japanese.

In further expansion, a Talent Search Program and Galileo Study Center have been organized, aimed at the very talented men and women who dropped out of high school or were turned off in college.

## STUDENTS

What kinds of students are able and willing to take this demanding program? In the Buffalo area every year there are about 200 from each age who can meet the IQ qualification of 130. The Wechsler Scales have proved to be an excellent tool for insight into mental functioning. To determine visual creativity and some aspects of perceptual ability, the Wartegg Picture Completion Test and a modified draw-a-person test are administered. To this is added a standardized short reading test plus a discussion of topics related to a given text. For those who are able (usually by age seven), a written story of about 200 words entitled "My Ideal" is requested. Immediately after the testing, the results are discussed with the parents and they are informed whether the child is capable of facing the challenge of the program. If the child is of the age to benefit, he is included in the discussion. In borderline cases the parents are informed why it would be better for the child to attend a different school. In a few instances, children are accepted on a trial basis, for example, when the child shows a high level of motivation. In some of these cases, the motivational forces are so strong that the difficulties that might have arisen due to the lower measured mental functioning are overcome. Proper placement is especially important in such cases. Each year, four to five emotionally disturbed but highly talented children are admitted. In looking back to their school histories and later lives, about half not only adjusted well, but blossomed in the not rigid but still patterned environment.

When a student is accepted in the school, he is asked: Why do you want to come to Calasanctius? If he himself is not interested, he is not accepted. Each year the student is asked: Do you want to return? If not, a meeting is arranged with the child and his parents to determine what is best for him. There could be many reasons for a child who was previously enthusiastic about the program to change his mind: peer pressures, a too demanding program, problems faced during physical maturation.

Students are usually retested on the Stanford Binet when they are thirteen to fourteen

years of age and again before graduation of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) or on the WICS-revised. A student's progress is evaluated against standard norms (various national and state tests), as well as against Calasanctius' own requirements.

## FACULTY

The teaching staff is international and represents various religious, philosophical, and ethnic traditions. Due to the fact that the program is extremely complicated and a great number of courses are offered (1957-58, 42; 1967-68, 135; 1975-76, 204), the faculty is assisted by members of the academic community. The Buffalo academic community assists our program, mostly as proctors in the seminar program. Their contribution, very specifically the contribution of the scientific community, is of high value and gives inspiration to the students.

In selecting the faculty, no special certificates are demanded in the education of the gifted, but it is considered very beneficial for a teacher to have a good differential psychology course in his background. A course of this nature offers insight into the problems of giftedness. What a person needs most to teach the gifted are intelligence, excellent imagination, richness of personality, and continuous learning and deepening experiences in his field and related areas. The faculty is not forced to follow one particular method of teaching. Each group or student needs a somewhat different approach; there are many ways to open windows for children's minds. To keep the faculty up-to-date, workshops are conducted every year and individuals are encouraged to visit other schools.

On the whole, the rapport between teachers and students in Calasanctius is very relaxed and friendly. The faculty actively participates with the students, especially on field trips, when they act as supervisors and bus drivers. This creates a lively community of students and teachers.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The original philosophy was to create a home-library-laboratory atmosphere in an appropriate location. The campus presently consists of seven buildings, six of which are converted private mansions, while the seventh is a new building containing additional

classrooms, the dining hall, library (18,000 books and 80 journals), and gymnasium. There are no signs to indicate that this complex is a school. The grounds are flowery in the spring, with plants from the school's own greenhouse. In the internal spaces the beauty of human art is emphasized. Various classrooms are decorated with reproductions of ancient, modern, and original art. The library is becoming a collection place for exhibition of Buffalo-based artists and for the best work of the students. In the philosophy of the school, the beauty of the environment, which includes the dining hall (not a cafeteria), is a great educational force in developing the student's sensitivity toward the appreciation of the beautiful.

## FINANCES

Practically no tax funds are presently available for the education of the gifted in independent schools. Thus, the school relies on three resources: tuition and fees, donations, and contributed services. In 1957-58 the tuition was \$660; in 1976-77, tuition ranged from \$2,000 to 2,250. This causes serious problems since the student body is not rich. Most come from middle- and lower-middle income families, and some are even on welfare. On the other hand, many interested people and local foundations have become involved in the school. Donations to the development fund have been in excess of \$500,000. To this are added the donations received through a variety of fund raising activities.

## OUTCOMES

The Calasactius experience - was it worthwhile? It was and is an exciting, worthwhile experience. To meet with and teach so many bright young people, to see their lives unfolding, their problems, their growth, even to see some going a rather confused way in life, yet in all cases, building at least somewhat on the experience gained through the program - this is the greatest reward. Through the school, the public has become more aware of the gifted and talented child, in that sense, Calasactius was truly a pioneer school in western New York.

In 1976, in honor of the Twentieth Anniversary, "Calasactius Day" was

proclaimed in Buffalo and Erie County to honor the school as one of the few in the United States solely devoted to teaching the gifted child and a school that has contributed greatly to the educational and cultural life of Buffalo and western New York.

Ongoing Psychological research has been conducted regarding such topics as changes in IQ, the correlations between talent, leadership, and responsibility, the emotional problems of gifted children, and so forth. Alumni will participate in a planned publication titled, "Talent-Elite-Leadership-Responsibility."

The school was the breeding ground for the western New York and central Canada-based Foundation for the Education of the Academically Talented, which, in cooperation with the school and other educational agencies, sponsored workshops regarding the educational problems of the gifted and talented.

One of the most important achievements of the school was that a good number of children from middle- and lower-income families and from disadvantaged ethnic groups grew out from their environmental restrictions, were motivated to select the best colleges, and eventually found a place where they could be productive for the whole society. Of the Calasactius graduates, 90 percent work outside the Buffalo area, in the national or international community.

The school has demonstrated very clearly that a pluralistic (multiethnic, religious, cultural) community is possible and works well. Yet, the real recognition afforded the school and its founder is in the contribution our students make to society. It is in this sense that the Calasactius experience contributed to the "aristocracy of merit and talent" and to the "democracy of opportunity" as seen by Thomas Jefferson and the great founding fathers of the American republic.

The impression should not be gained that the Calasactius program is so unique that it would be irrelevant in other schools for gifted or average students, although to copy the school exactly would be practically impossible. Any institution is unique, if the psychological and sociological backgrounds of its founders and collaborators are considered. There are, however; many features of the school that can be used very well for gifted students in other schools, and there are many others that can be utilized in general education.

One of the significant extensions of the Cal. Program was the creation to board

students from other parts of the country and of the world. In the first years, these students were housed in the 175 Windsor Building, but the regulations on the part of the city compelled us to transfer the students to buildings purchased on Bidwell Parkway. (For some years students coming to the school were housed in the Piarist fathers Boarding school in Derby, New York - but the distance of this place from the school made it difficult to continue this experiment). The boarding facilities drew excellent young men to the school from places such as Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Hong Kong, etc.

The list of the boarding students indicates the international character of the school. Unfortunately the lack of personnel and financial difficulties compelled us to discontinue the boarding facilities. On a smaller scale, we hope that the boarding program will be reinstated again.

I would like to make some remarks about our food service program. Very early in the history of the school, we introduced monthly dinners, the yearly Piarist balls, and I tried to develop the food services in the spirit of the philosophy of the school.

As indicated, the Calasactius School was founded for the education of gifted children, for excellence in education of "excellent" young people. The school tried to keep faithful to this philosophy of "excellence" in selecting its student body, presenting them with a many-sided curriculum and challenging their minds and varied talents. We tried to create, even in our campus and buildings too, artistically high standards where beauty and human friendliness surround students and faculty, and where growing human beings are exposed to enriching experiences, where the graciousness of human communication and respect for fundamental values is the atmosphere. For these reasons we have no "cafeteria" but rather a "dining hall", which, without exaggeration, is the most artistically developed eating place in this area. Batik murals hang on the walls, Florentine chandeliers, wall to wall carpeting, oak tables and chairs; all combined into a simple but artistically planned dining area. Although we are unable to serve excellent foods in our daily school lunches, even simple foods served in this environment assist in the artistic education of our students. The dining hall is frequently used for special occasions, as in meetings of the Calasactius Oenological Society (the local chapter of the International Wine and Food Society), as well as for other groups who come together to enjoy the beauty of art in food and wine.

Some may say, "How can we enjoy food and wine when so many millions are

starving? ...How can we enjoy such luxuries when millions are deprived?" To answer these questions is not the task of the cookbook introduction, but I would like to make some comments. How can anyone enjoy life and laugh, when millions and millions are sick and weeping? How can we enjoy the art of "love", when millions and millions are in prisons and concentration camps, or living in empty marriages and are deprived of love? How can we enjoy the company of each other, the family life, when millions live in or come from disturbed families? In the United States alone there are five million adults and children who are so retarded that they cannot enjoy literature and art, nor will they ever enjoy the beauties of the nature around themselves. Does this mean that we should abolish the luxuries of art, music, literature? Without poetry, art, music, without seemingly wasteful temples, churches, palaces, museums, the human life would be empty.

Our need to nourish ourselves can unfold on various levels. There is the purely biological need of the intake of food and drink to promote the basic process of metabolism and make possible survival and growth. Without nourishment - calorie intake - we would die, the same as animals. And when we are in danger of starvation indeed we care not what we eat or how. But humans are not content to eat just to satisfy biological needs. We eat and drink to communicate. We sit together, serve each other, enjoy company, thus participating in the life of human community. We need not stop here. We can extend the meaning of eating and drinking to the sphere of spiritual values. We can make it an art motivated by love and care. And, indeed, a lot of love goes into the preparation of food. It is not an exaggeration to say that a well planned and served dinner is a love symbol. There is a difference between the assembly line type of food service, where we are fed like cattle, and the art of creative cooking, where we feel the riches and the care of the human person behind each course and behind the whole setting of the dinner. In this sense, eating has a spiritual dimension, reflecting the beauty of the food which is given to us through human toil and work, unselfish love. The work of a cook is indeed unselfish, what will be presented will disappear and only the memory will remain.

The same is true with drink. We can very rapidly drink ourselves "under the table", to forget, to escape, or we can drink for communication, to enjoy the sparkle of wine, friendship, spirited conversation, a real "symposium" on a spiritual level.

Food and drink can also carry a religious meaning, as in participation of the Holy

Eucharist, or in other spiritual religious banquets of great traditions. But it is not only religious traditions that use the symbol of eating and drinking. The traditional feasts of Thanksgiving, Christmas, as well as State Banquets and diplomatic receptions all underline the fact that eating and drinking is not merely a biological act but could carry spiritual meanings and should carry human meanings.

To eat and drink in an artful way is not necessarily expensive. I have eaten excellent food prepared with love in the simplest peasant homes in my native Hungary. On the other hand, I have eaten very poor food and paid ridiculous prices for drinks in expensive restaurants. Good cooking is not wasteful, quite the opposite. And the quality of preparation, the proper combination of ingredients, is not only creative but rather a loving art.

In order to cook well, certainly we need good raw materials, but more important, we need loving care and knowledge. You can make an excellent dish from tripe, or a poor dish from the most expensive beef tenderloin. You can make a palatable cake from "dry beans", as I was compelled to do in Hungary after the war, and you can ruin the most expensive ingredients through carelessness.

The menus of the Piarist Balls represent a great variety of foods from many corners of the world. I have never been one who believed that certain countries produce the best foods, for example, France, or China or Hungary. There are many excellent foods available from all around the world for different occasions and environmental settings. And, as monotony in the art of love makes marriage dull, so too is there monotony in eating foods always prepared the same way. Yes, there are psychological reasons - childhood conditioning - why we eat certain foods, enjoying some more than others, but this does not mean that exploration and discovery of new experiences cannot be enjoyable and exciting, and not only in food but in other forms of human activity too. In food there is not "best" or "worst", there is art and love, there is excellence.

I have been Headmaster of the School until 1974. In spite of many, mostly financial problems, the school was growing and the basic factors of the program of the school remained intact. This was the situation under the headmastership of Rev. Bela Krigler. Under his tenure some difficulties developed between the faculty (tendencies to unionize the faculty) and the administration. These difficulties at least partially, were overcome

through the cooperation of the Board of Trustees and some educated faculty members.

After Rev. Bela Krigler, a new headmaster was elected, Rev. Huiner, director of the Episcopalian Charities. I do not want to make many remarks about his work: With one simple sentence, he almost ruined the school. He was totally incompetent and wanted to abolish the upper school. The board was compelled to force him to resign. Several people tried to work for the school as Headmaster (there is no reason to quote their names). Finally we found a dedicated man, Dr. Hull. Dr. Hull is the new President of the Board of Trustees. Rev. Peter Bridgford suggested, as did Headmaster Richard Harrington, a teacher in the Calasanctius School, that this was an excellent selection.

We were able to reach and celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Calasanctius School in 1987. Presently, the school is in the process of recovering many original aspects of the program and develops new ones with the hope that the Calasanctius School will remain a unique school for the education of the gifted.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE GRADUAL DISINTEGRATION OF THE CALASANCTIUS CURRICULUM

I was headmaster of the school 1957-1974. In spite of the many financial problems, the school was growing and the basic elements of the program remained intact.

The situation was the same under the headmastership of Rev. Bela Krigler (1974-1979), a Piarist who not only was a dedicated teacher and seminar proctor, but was deeply involved in the administration of the school. When Fr. Krigler took over, there were 280 students, when he resigned in 1979, enrollment was 263. During Fr. Krigler's headmastership some faculty members wanted to unionize the faculty association. This was unheard of - no private independent school is unionized. This, of course, led to confrontation, but the union was voted into existence and it almost ruined the school. The union problem was only partially overcome through the cooperation of the board of trustees and some dedicated faculty members.

After the resignation of Fr. Krigler, upon a not correctly screened election, Rev. Peter Huiner (1979-1982) was elected headmaster. Fr. Huiner had been the head of Episcopalian Charities in Buffalo, but it should be noted that he was afraid of the Episcopalian Bishop's opinion of him. The disintegration of the school started with, Fr. Huiner. He wanted to make Calas Sanctius a regular high school and wanted to abolish the upper school. He misled the board of trustees and unfortunately, because I was not involved in the daily affairs of the school, I, too, as well as some members of the board, was influenced by him. Luckily two board members, the late Mrs. Victoria Van Coevering and the excellent Rev. Peter Bridgford, saved the upper school with their advice. The administration of Fr. Huiner caused serious problems, as reflected in the decreasing number of students ( see appendix).

A series of headmasters (Dr. Emmett Murphy, 1982-1982, who was an interim appointment for about four months, carried the title of Chief Executive Officer, and Headmaster Donald Nasca, Ed.D., 1982-1983) further aggravated the situation of the school.

In the person of Dr. Richard Hull (1983-1986) we found a dedicated headmaster.

Unfortunately, however, it was during Dr. Hull's tenure that we saw a decrease in the Phenomenon of Man program and a weakening of the demands in regard to the Seminar program. Dr. Hull had been serving as headmaster during a sabbatical from the University of Buffalo, and it was his wish that upon the completion of his sabbatical there would be an appropriate replacement for him.

The school hired a large consulting firm, Independent Educational Services (IES), to conduct a professional search. The search resulted in the selection of three candidates. Our first choice declined the position. Mr. Clifford Nichols, Jr., the IES consultant, then suggested that we hire Mr. M. Andrew Johnston (1986-1988). Mr. Johnston turned out to be not only one of the most expensively selected headmasters in the history of the school (\$10,000 to IES from my personal income) but also one of the least experienced headmasters. Mr. Johnston was responsible for the further disintegration of the school and the curriculum and was compelled to resign.

Rev. Peter Bridgford suggested a new headmaster in the person of our excellently prepared Chinese teacher, Mr. Richard Harrington (1988-1991). Mr. Harrington, a Yale University graduate, had already demonstrated his dedication to the school as a member of the faculty.

But, unfortunately, the basics of the curriculum, the Phenomenon of Man program and the Seminar program, were never fully reinstated. The Upper School program had been extended from three to four years; this also was a serious mistake. At the same time, the program was extended to include younger children, ages 3 and 4. Enrollment decreased to the point that we had too few students to have a viable school. Unfortunately, too, our financial difficulties were increasing. The school thus was compelled to close its doors at the end of the 1990-91 school year.

I am still with the hope that Calasanz School will be able to reopen sometime in the future.

This page is for Appendix I.

This page is for Appendix I.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

REV. STEPHEN GERENCSEI, SCH.P., PH.D., TH.D.

N.Y.S. Certified Psychologist, #2426  
Clinical Psychologist in Private Practice

Founder, Headmaster Emeritus, Chairman  
Of  
Calasactius School for the Gifted

167 Windsor Avenue Buffalo, New York 14209  
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### Personal

Born: May 27, 1913, Kolozsvár, Hungary (presently Rumania) Immigrated to  
U.S.A.: February 28, 1949

Naturalized Citizen: September 2, 1954, U.S. District Court of Western New  
York, #7341947

Member of Order of Pi alpha tau Fathers, Buffalo, N.Y., Rector of Buffalo House

### Studies

Primary and Secondary Education, in Hungary (Budapest, Kecskemet).  
Comprehensive examination (so-called "Maturity") in Latin, Greek, German,  
Hungarian language and literature, history, physics and mathematics, June 1932,  
Summa Cum Laude.

#### *Higher Education:*

1. School of Philosophy (Liberal Arts and Sciences), University of Budapest  
(formerly The Royal Hungarian Pazmany Peter University), 1932-1938.  
Earned Degree: Ph.D., Doctor of Philosophy. Major: History of Philosophy.  
Minors: Aesthetics and Experimental Psychology. October 1937. Cum Applausu  
(highest honor). Doctoral Dissertation: Pazmany, The Philosopher, a study in the  
history of philosophy in Hungary; published in book form, Budapest, 1937. 136pp.
2. School of Theology, University of Budapest, 1932-1938. Earned Degrees:  
Bachelor of Sacred Theology; June 1936, Summa Cum Laude; Licentiate in Sacred  
Theology, June 1937, Cum Applausu; Doctor of Theology, June 1938, Cum  
Applausu. Doctoral Dissertation: The Meaning of the Religious State, a study in  
mystical theology and psychology of religion published in book form, Budapest,  
1938, 186 pp.

3. Teachers Training Institute of the Piarist Fathers, Budapest, Hungary (affiliated with University of Budapest, for practice teaching)
4. Workshops in Psychology, various, Hungary and United States
5. Special Certificate: Certified Psychologist, N.Y.S. #2426, February 23, 1960

### Publications

#### *In Hungarian, in Hungary:*

- **Pazmany, The Philosopher**, a study in the history of philosophy in Hungary; Budapest, 1937, 136pp.
- **The Meaning of the Religious State**, a study in mystical theology and psychology of religion; Budapest, 1938, 186pp.
- **The Philosophy of M. Blondel, Budapest**, 1940, 30pp.
- **The Religious Experience and the Problems of the Existence of God**, Budapest, 1944.
- **The Philosophical Movement of the Enlightenment and the Piarist Order in Hungary**, a study in the history of philosophy; Budapest, 1943, 47pp.
- **The Philosophical Background of Bolshevism, a study in the philosophy and psychology of Bolshevism**; 1944, 65pp.
- **Handbook for the Intellectual and Moral Training of the Officers of the First Hungarian Army**, 1944, 166pp.
- Co-author and Co-editor for psychological and educational input: **Hungarian Boy Scout Manual**, 1943; **Manual for Scout Leaders**, Budapest, 1944; **Campfire Book for Scouts**, Budapest, 1944.
- Co-author w/Dr. George Papp, **The Greek Catholic Hungarians**, Kolozsvár, 1942.
- Co-editor of (former) Journals: **New Life**, a cultural monthly, Kassa-Budapest; **The Transylvanian Educator**, a quarterly published in Kolozsvár, 1940-1944 - was in charge of the psychological section.
- Articles and Book Reviews in fields of psychology, philosophy and theology: **The Philosophical Review**, Budapest, 1938-1944; **Atheneum**, the official philosophical publication of the Philosophical Association of Hungary, 1938-1944; **Theological Review**, the official publication of the School of Theology of the University of Budapest, 1938-1944; **Vigilia**, a quarterly in literature and philosophy, Budapest, 1938-1944.

#### *In English, in the United States:*

- **Calasanctius: The Saint of Public Education**, a study of the life and educational ideas of Joseph Calasanctius, the namesake of Calasanctius School and an innovative educator of the early 17th century, serialized in the monthly magazine, **Victorian**; Buffalo N.Y., 1962-1963, 120pp
- **The Joyful Learning to Live and to Create**, a study of the psychological problems in marriage and the preparation for marriage, Positive Motivation Program, Inc., Buffalo, N.Y., 1971, 60pp.
- **Between Childhood and Adolescence**, Positive Motivation Program, Inc., Buffalo, N.Y., 1971, 50pp.
- Articles and Book Reviews: **Victorian**, Buffalo, N.Y.; **Catholic Biblical Quarterly**, Washington, D.C.; **Gifted Children Quarterly**, Cincinnati, Ohio; etc.
- **Some Psychological Reflections about Love and Marriage**, 1974, 41pp

*In English, in the United States, connected with the development and program of Calasanctius School for the gifted:*

- **Objectives and Principles of Calasanctius Preparatory School**, 1957.
- Annual reports and publications dealing with the problems of curriculum, students and philosophy of the school.
- For the first evaluation of Calasanctius school, 1963, by Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, a detailed analysis of the philosophy, objectives and psychological problems of the education of the gifted and their application to Calasanctius School (available on request).
- Continual updating and data concerning Calasanctius School.
- Statement by Rev. Stephen Gerencser at Department of Health, Education and Welfare Hearing regarding problems of the gifted, 1971, New York City.
- **Joseph Calasanctius and His Heritage**, 1979, 122pp.
- **The Calasanctius Experience**, a chapter in the 78<sup>th</sup> Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, The Gifted and Talented: Their Education and Development, 1979, NSSE, Chicago
- **Guide for the Perplexed Parents and Friends of Gifted Children and Adults**, 1982, 160pp.

### Lectures and Discussions

Educational groups, civic and parents' groups, conventions, workshops, television appearances - especially concerning the education and psychological problems of the gifted.

### Teaching Activities

- 1938-1940 Piarist Gymnasium, Debrecen. Religion, psychology, introduction to philosophy.
- 1940-1942 Piarist Gymnasium, Kolozsvár. Religion.
- 1941-1942 Agriculture Academy (College), Kolozsvár. Problems in Hungarian History.
- 1942-1944 Piarist Gymnasium, Nagykanizsa (with interruption for military service). Religion, psychology, introduction to philosophy (logic).
- 1947 Philosophical - Theological Institute of the Piarist Fathers (Calasancianum), Rome, Italy. Psychology, moral theology. January to June.
- 1948 Diputación, Barcelona, Spain, a Piarist School. Moral theology for deacons of the Catalan Province. July-August.
- 1949-1950 Immaculate Heart of Mary College, Los Angeles, California. Theology. September – June.
- 1951-1965 Mt. St. Joseph's Teachers College (later Medaille College), Buffalo. Psychology of learning, child development, psychiatric problems in education, introduction to psychology, problems of religious and moral guidance, psychology of exceptional children, psychology of mental retardation, psychology of gifted children, ethics, introduction to philosophy, psychology of religion, logic, moral theology, introduction to ascetical and mystical theology, seminar in psychology of religious and moral guidance.
- 1951-1974 Rosary Hill College (now Daemen College), Buffalo. East and west. philosophy of religion, ontology, great Christian thinkers. great systems of philosophy. child psychology, philosophy of science, seminar lectures. philosophy of man, marriage -psychological considerations and ethical problems, mysticism- comparative study.
- 1952-1953 Canisius College, Buffalo. Contemporary schools of psychology, psychology of character education, psychology of learning.
- 1964-1965 Stella Niagara, an auxiliary college of the Franciscan Sisters. Philosophy of man.
- 1957-Present Calasancian School, Buffalo. History of religions, history of philosophy, psychology.
- 1951-Present Various group courses. Psychology, philosophy of religion.

### Research

- 1941-1944 Organized and conducted extended research project on the development of the concept of the supernatural and national consciousness in the eastern part of Hungary (presently Rumania). Part of the research was published in the Transylvanian Educator
- 1940-1942 Use of psychological tests to determine special abilities among recruits for military service. Kolozsvár, Hungary.
- 1943-1944 Participated in the identification and evaluation of the problems of gifted children among low-income agricultural workers. Nagykanizsa, Hungary.

- 1948-Present Continuous research into clinical application of the Szondi Test, a projective psychological technique.
- 1952-1957 Partially with the assistance of graduate students at Mt. St. Joseph's Teachers College (now Medaille College), a study of the problems of gifted children and the various curricular designs and systems serving their needs in the public and private sectors of the country, and also in other countries.(The founding of Calasanctius School is an offspring of this research.)
- 1957-Present Mostly connected with Calasanctius School: a) The factors in changes in IQ levels. b) Emotional problems of intellectually gifted children. c) Curriculum research in regard to programs for the gifted. The offspring of this research (c) in Calasanctius School is the correlated studies of historical, social, behavioristical and philosophical studies and the correlation of the curriculum in mathematics and sciences, also the unique Seminar and field" Study programs.

#### Clinical Psychological Work (Counseling, Testing)

- 1938-1944 Piarist Fathers Gymnasia; Debrecen, Kolozsvar and Nagykanizsa Hungary.
- 1941-1942 The Fifth Hungarian Army Corps Headquarters; Kolozsvar.
- 1941-1943 1944-1945 First Hungarian Army Staff
- 1948 Collaboration with Dr. Hombravella and the Mental Health Dispensary of the City of Barcelona, Spain
- 1949-1951 Collaboration with Dr. John Majoros, Los Angeles, California
- 1951-1958 Our Lady of Charity Refuge, Buffalo
- 1952-1963 The Reading Clinic, Mt. St. Joseph's College
- 1952-1982 Psychologist, Msgr. Carr Mental Health Clinic, an affiliate of Catholic Charities, Buffalo
- 1957-Present Psychological evaluation of seminarians and applicants to various religious communities of men and women.
- Consultant psychologist, N.Y.S. Department of Social Services, Office of Disability Determinations, New York City.
- Consultant psychologist, Erie County Department of Social Services, Child Welfare Group, adoption, abuse cases, e.g.
- Consultant Psychologist, Tribunal, Diocese of Buffalo. Medical Expert, Tribunal, Diocese of Buffalo.
- Consultant Psychologist, Railroad Retirement Board, Buffalo.
- Consultant Psychologist, People, Inc., Buffalo.
- Consultant Psychologist, St. Augustine's Center, Buffalo.
- Private practice as clinical psychologist, testing and counseling in all areas: marriage, career planning, school adjustment problems, retardation, gifted, religious, alcoholics, adoptions, obesity, etc.

### Administrative Experience

1944-1945	Head of Information Group, about 80 men, of First Hungarian Army Staff
1952-1955	Oeconomus of the Piarist Fathers, Derby House, Derby N.Y.
1955-1960	Rector of Derby House and Boys' Home, Piarist Fathers.
1957-Present	Calasactius School, various positions: Founder, Chairman of Board of Trustees, Headmaster (Emeritus), Director of Development (former), Director of Psychological Services
1971	Co-founder, with a group of concerned parents in Western New York and Canada, of the Foundation for the Education of the Academically Talented

### Military Service

1942	Training, Military Chaplain, Kolozsvár, Hungary. Attached to Fifth Army Corps, special assignment.
1943	Chaplain, First Hungarian Armored Division, Russia, Don area. January-March.
1944	First Army Staff
1944-1945	First Hungarian Army, Information Group (until internment by the Germans in Austria, April 4).

#### *Military Distinctions (Royal Hungarian Army):*

- Bronze medal, on war ribbon, with swords
- Silver medal, on war ribbon, with swords
- First Class War Cross, fighter medal
- Close-fight medal
- Knight's Cross, on war ribbon

### Youth Organization and Youth Work

1938-1945	Various youth and Boy Scout camps, Hungary.
1938-1944	Leader of Boy Scout groups in school in Debrecen, Kolozsvár and Nagykanizsa, Hungary
	Member of the Central Training Group of the Boy Scout Movement, Hungary
1940-1942	Vice President, Boys Scouts of the District of Transylvania, Hungary

1942-1944 Director and Supervisor of Youth Organization Leaders in the Zala District, Hungary  
 1951-1960 Vice President, Hungarian Boy Scout Organization in Exile, United States

### Memberships

Hungarian Philosophical Association  
 St. Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Association  
 Western New York Psychological Associations  
 New York State Psychological Association  
 Society of the Teachers of Theology  
 American Catholic Philosophical Association  
 American Catholic Theological Society  
 American Catholic Biblical Society  
 Phi Delta Kappa Educational Fraternity  
 Association for Gifted Children  
 National Conference of Catholic Charities  
 Hungarian Piarist Alumni Association  
 Council for the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology

### Travels

Australia	French Caribbean:	Pakistan
Austria	Martinique	Poland
Belgium	Guadelupe	Rumania
Bermuda	St. Martin	Singapore
Columbia	Germany	South Korea
Curacao	Gibraltar	Soviet Union
Cuba	Hong Kong	Sweden
Canada	Hungary	Spain
Czechoslovakia	India	Switzerland
Denmark	Ireland	Taiwan
England	Italy	Thailand
Fiji	Japan	United Sates
France	Luxembourg	Venezuela
French Guiana	Madeira	
French Polynesia	Mexico	

### Languages

Read: Catalan, English, French, German, Greek (classical), Hungarian, Italian, Latin, Spanish  
 Speak: English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Latin, Spanish  
 Write: English, Hungarian, Latin