



Rev. Karol (Charles) Niznansky, S.D.B.

Born: November 4, 1919 - Vrbove, Czechoslovakia
Profession: August 15, 1937 - Czechoslovakia
Ordination: June 29, 1947 - Czechoslovakia
Death: June 25, 1984 - Goshen, N.Y., U.S.A.

"Supplices te rogamus. . ." In Eucharistic Prayer I we find these words which start off the prayer that goes: "Almighty God, we pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in heaven." Truly that was our prayer as we gathered to celebrate the funeral Mass for Fr. Charles Niznansky on a sunny June 27th this past summer. Fr. Charles died from a stroke that resulted from complications of his diabetes on the morning of June 25, 1984. He died while stationed at our junior seminary in Goshen, N.Y.

Fr. Charles led an interesting life. He was born in Vrbove, Czechoslovakia in 1919. He went to the local Catholic school until he was about eleven years old. From then on the Salesian influence was felt for the rest of Fr. Charles' life. He went to the Salesian aspirantate and studentate. He obtained an M.A. in Philosophy before entering theology. He was ordained in Czechoslovakia in 1947. Times were not easy in Czechoslovakia. Father actually went through much persecution before he escaped from his native country in 1948.

Most of his active Salesian life was spent in the missions of India. He served in Shillong as Catechist and Dean of Studies. For six years Fr. Charles dedicated his efforts to being Principal of St. John's High School in Calcutta. During these years he met many Indians who would later be priests serving their people as he did. Fr. Charles loved music and could be found many times playing his accordion or "squeeze box", as he called it, to audiences of little children. The quality and impact of his work can be judged from the fact he received a special award from Prime Minister Shastri himself. Ill health forced him to leave India in the late sixties.

Fr. Charles continued his work for India while he was in the United States. He spent most of his first years here raising money for Indian seminarians. Many American Salesians first met Fr. Charles while he was stationed at Columbus, Ohio as confessor to the theologians. He had a way with little fellows in our camps and clubs. If any of them were missing, many times when you found them later their excuse was, "I was with Fr. Charles."

It's hard for us here in the States to get a true picture of Fr. Charles because we don't know that much about what made him the way he was. Looking through his conferences or homilies, one finds some writings that answer some of the questions we might ask.

On priesthood Fr. Charles wrote:

"No one is a priest for himself: but for the community . . . You can't be good or bad alone . . . your people will follow." "Every priest is a leader . . . It is his vocation. Holiness is his goal . . . Salvation of souls his work. ". . . your job is extraordinary: to fit the natural to the supernatural standards; preserving the temporal to make it eternal; to make of men Sons of God; to change sinners into holy people; to plant the seed of heaven onto this earth and to harvest it out of time and out of this world." (God) "wants your hands, to bless; your words, to convey the grace; and your cooperation to make visible the invisible. You administer the sign and He administers the grace."

"Priests, no man should fear to approach you. Be cordial and amicable and calm and cheerful and affable."

1971, he wrote about death:

"The seed must die in order to be reborn and bring forth many new seeds. Death hangs on life . . . Life springs up from death . . . the death of one is the life of many. So death is but a continuation of life . . . death is in time. Life is eternal.

The priest as confessor (Fr. Charles served as confessor in Goshen for 10 years):

"As a confessor the priest assumes the office of the spiritual father towards those whom God the Father calls to be his children . . . Confessors are to be the fit instruments of the Holy Spirit . . . The human self is to be opened, emptied, and purified that the Holy Spirit can replenish it . . . make it holy . . . Then the fire of the goodness of God takes over and overflows the human capacity to flood the world with graces."

There are many other things we could quote.

Like any Salesian, Fr. Charles had a devotion to Mary. The only spiritual “equipment” he had with him in the hospital during his last illness was his rosary. In the back of one of the binders we find a sermon on the devotion to Mary Help of Christians by the Salesians. There was a section on Mary in Fr. Charles’ notes. The section ends with: “Those who love her here on earth, she will help to come to heaven to love her son and his Father forever.” Certainly Mary was there to welcome him with Her Son, Jesus.

In one section of Fr. Charles’ notes there is a long list entitled: *Missa - Vita Sacerdotis* — Mass, the life of the priest. Next to each year was the beginning of a prayer in the Latin Mass. He went all the way up to the year 2008. That year was the year *Ad missam in coelis* — the Mass in heaven. I don’t think Fr. Charles planned to necessarily be around for the year 2008, but you must remember that there were a lot of prayers in the old Mass. To get to the point: next to the year 1984 we find: *Supplices te rogamus*. That prayer in Eucharistic Prayer I goes “Almighty God, we pray that your angel may take this sacrifice to your altar in heaven.” Let us pray for this faithful confrere so that he may begin his Masses in heaven a few years before 2008.

Please pray for the Goshen Community.

William Keane, S.D.B.

Director

Data for Necrology:

Fr. Karol (Charles) Niznansky † Goshen, N.Y., 1984