Pope names Father Solanus Casey, cousin of Pequannock parishioners, ‘blessed’

BY MICHAEL WOJCIC
NEWS EDITOR

PEQUANNOCK  Jim Murphy, who grew up as a parishioner of Holy Spirit Parish here, remembers when he was 18 and his father, Michael, made a startling prediction: “Someday, your cousin will become a saint.” Murphy’s cousin moved a step closer to his dad’s prediction when on May 4 Pope Francis named Capuchin Father Solanus Casey “blessed” — giving Murphy, now 80, hope that his third cousin will be canonized a saint in his lifetime.

The Archdiocese of Detroit’s beloved friar, Father Casey, had been named “venerable” by St. Pope John Paul II in 2007 and now has satisfied the requirements for beatification as “blessed,” including the attribution of a miracle due to his intercession. Later this year, the Archdiocese of Detroit will host a Mass for the beatification for only the second man born in the U.S. to reach that designation. He is known for a ministry of caring for impoverished and sick people and listening to the concerns of countless people, who sought his counsel.

Father Casey’s cause would need the attribution of another miracle for his being declared a saint. “The entire family is excited about it. We hope that he becomes a saint in our lifetime,” said Jim Murphy, who now lives in Toms River, about his beloved cousin, who died on July 31, 1957 at 86. “The process toward sainthood at the Vatican is slow. We are still waiting. It’s coming closer. We look forward to it. If he is canonized a saint, I definitely will go to Rome,” he said.

Father Casey’s first attributed miracle was a woman who suffered an incurable skin disease. She had stopped at Father Casey’s tomb during a visit to Detroit, and felt strong encouragement to ask for his intercession. She was healed instantly — a miraculous cure that doctors in her home country, in Detroit and Rome, all verified as having no scientific explanation. Father Casey died in 1957 of skin disease, according to previously published press reports.

“The beatification of Father Solanus Casey is an incomparable grace for the Church in the Archdiocese of Detroit and for the entire family,” said Jim Murphy. “We wished to celebrate Blessed Pauline’s 200th birthday in Detroit and in Rome, to honor and spread that charism [spiritual gifts for the good of the Church] of our founder, Blessed Pauline von Mallinckrodt. It will include an array of festivities in June and July to reconnect them with her example of Christ-centered concern for the poor that keeps inspiring them to promote her mission to the wider world. These birthday events will include an Eastern Province-wide Mass with Bishop Serratelli on Saturday, June 17 at 11 a.m. in the Chapel of Mary Immaculate at the convent here.

“We wished to celebrate Blessed Pauline’s 200th birthday [which takes place on Saturday, June 3] to renew within ourselves the spirit and charisma [spiritual gifts for the good of the Church] of our founder and spread that charisma to the people we serve,” said Sister Marie Pauline Demek, provincial councilor. “She began our congregation to glorify God and perform works of charity of any kind. The Sisters of Christian Charity minister in education, healthcare, retreat work, social justice outreach and parish ministry. If we are able to do it, we will take it on,” she said.

Bishop Serratelli will visit Mallinckrodt Convent on Saturday, June 17, to serve as main celebrant and homilist at the Mass to celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of Blessed Pauline, who founded the Sisters of Christian Charity in Germany on Aug. 21, 1849. Attending will be 80, hope that his third cousin will be canonized a saint in his lifetime.
The Pledge of Allegiance: America’s Need of a Reawakening

FROM BISHOP SERRATELLI

In the early 1890s, patriotism in America was very low. The fires of the Civil War had been extinguished and there was a general cooling of any national sentiment. A Baptist minister named Francis Bellamy was thoroughly convinced that the nation needed a new awakening of national ardor. And so he composed the “Pledge of Allegiance” to that end.

Bellamy believed that the best way to instill a love of country was to begin with America’s youth. And so he worked with the National Education Association. Together they campaigned to have President Harrison make the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in every public school the centerpiece of the 400th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival in the New World. That day, October 12, 1892, gave birth to the hallowed ritual of saluting the flag with the Pledge of Allegiance, thus reinforcing the biblical principles of liberty, equality and charity upon which America is founded.

On Flag Day, June 14, 1954, President Eisenhower officially added the two very significant words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance. The previous February, he had gone to the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. He sat in the very same pew in which President Lincoln sat when he attended services. Eisenhower heard a powerful sermon delivered by the pastor, George MacPherson Doherty. And, he was inspired to add those two words. In speaking about the Pledge of Allegiance in his sermon, Doherty said, “There was something missing in this pledge, and that which was missing was the characteristic and definitive factor in the American way of life. Indeed...this could be a pledge of any republic.” And so the pastor added the very phrase that President Lincoln had added to his Gettysburg address. In delivering that address, Lincoln inserted the phrase “under God” when he said that “the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom.” Those two profoundly significant words, now in our Pledge of Allegiance, express the fundamental conviction of our Founding Fathers that God’s just providence rules over all people and guarantees their rights.

Today, the unity of our country is sorely tested. Political speech is reaching a new low of disrespect for others. There are constant protests against authority. Students feel free to walk out on speakers with whom they disagree. There is no tolerance for the views of others. Comedians with politically-fired quips keep stoking hatred and anger. And, the result is the tragic loss of basic civility and respect.

Furthermore, on very fundamental issues, we are a nation divided. Many do not hold to the sacredness of life, the freedom of religion, the Creator’s design for marriage, and charity toward the needy and the stranger among us. Is it not fair to question whether or not our unity as a nation has been shattered by those who attempt to refashion our society on human ideas without any reference to God’s providence? For America to truly become “one nation, under God, indivisible, with justice for all,” we need a reawakening of faith in the public forum.

Blessed Father Solanus Casey

and work, by providing prayers and support by working hard on his cause for sainthood, said Jim Murphy, a retired Pequannock police officer.

Over the years, Murphy family members have visited the guild headquarters and have kept tabs on Father Casey’s canonization cause. In July, several of them have attended a Mass at St. John the Baptist Church, New York City, to mark Father Casey’s death.

In 1924, Father Casey returned to Detroit, where he studied for the priesthood. He stayed at St. Bonaventure Seminary for 21 years as a volunteer. He was ordained without faculties to celebrate Mass because the Capuchins didn’t think he had the mental capacity. But during those years, he packed notebooks with more than 6,000 requests for aid. Hundreds of petitioners reported successes.

Finally, 30 years after Father Casey’s death, Pope John Paul II declared the humble priest “venerable,” the first of three steps in the rigorous process toward sainthood. In July, several of them have attended a Mass at St. John the Baptist Church, New York City, to mark Father Casey’s death.

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