

A parish letter in honor of Msgr. Blacet, may he rest in peace.

Good People of Good Counsel,

"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful... Come, enter into the joy of your master." -Matthew 25:21

It is with a heavy heart that I inform you of the passing of our beloved long-time pastor, Msgr. William Joseph Blacet. Msgr. Blacet passed from this world into the eternal joy of Our Lord today, June 21st, 2020.

Today, we as a nation celebrate Father's Day. Msgr. Blacet was a spiritual father to so many over the course of his 73 plus years of priesthood. Liturgically, we are concluding a triduum of days when we celebrate The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the Most Chaste heart of St. Joseph. Msgr. Blacet loved the entire Holy Family, and I am sure they were watching over him closely in the days leading up to his death.

Msgr. Blacet was born in St. Joseph, Missouri on December 6th, 1921. It is remarkable to think about how we would be celebrating Monsignor's 99th birthday this coming feast of St. Nicholas.

From an early age, Msgr. Blacet was incredibly gifted. Not only was he valedictorian of his high school class, but was also on the basketball team, the debate team, and played the clarinet. He would regularly serve Mass for Bishop LeBlond, who encouraged him to think about priesthood.

Priesthood was a better option than what he used to tell the Benedictine Sisters who taught at the Cathedral of St. Joseph grade school. When those sisters would ask him what he wanted to be when he grew up, he told them "a hobo". He wanted to be a hobo because they get to ride around on trains and that seemed like a good life to a child with a traveler's heart.

He remembered that desire with fondness when he would share a story about how in his first parish assignment as a priest, he and the pastor hopped onto a moving train for a mile or so in order to go visit a family in a rural area. Those certainly were different times.

I just began my fifth year of living in residence at Our Lady of Good Counsel, and it seems like everywhere I go in the Diocese someone has a story about Msgr.

Blacet. He has served at a lot of parishes and had various chaplain responsibilities over his seven decades of priesthood.

His final assignment as pastor started in 1992 when he arrived here at Our Lady of Good Counsel. Our parish is what it is today because of him. He has built something beautiful in this place and planted many seeds that will continue to blossom in the years following his death.

I don't think Msgr. Blacet was aware during this lifetime of the impact he had on so many people. I was a high school student in the late 90's and early 00's when I first heard about Our Lady of Good Counsel. The parents of one of my good friends attended Mass at Good Counsel and told me I needed to check it out: "The pastor there is a living saint."

I was intrigued. I had never seen a real-life saint before, but only read about them in books. I remember with great vividness coming to a daily Mass during the summer. I arrived early and the Blessed Sacrament was in a monstrance on the altar for adoration. In the back of the church, there was a long line of souls waiting for their turn in the confessional. A few minutes before Mass was to begin, out of the confessional strolled this 70 something year old priest in a black cassock with the red trim of an honorary prelate. The cassock made him appear to glide rather than walk as he went to approach our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

I don't remember what the readings were, or what he preached about, but I remember being amazed at the passion with which he proclaimed the Word of God to us sitting in the pews. There was a fire in his belly and a voice with the perfect Irish twinge that made everything he said sound like wisdom personified.

It wasn't long before I was joining those people in the long line in the back of the church waiting my turn to go to confession to the living saint. As much of a lion as he was on the pulpit, the man was as gentle as a lamb inside that confessional box.

I look back on those years in high school and college, all those confessions and daily Masses at Good Counsel. Never. Ever. In my wildest dreams did I ever imagine that I would one day become the pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel parish in Westport. The Lord works in mysterious ways. In a recent daily Mass homily, I was commenting on how Elisha asked for a double share of Elijah's spirit when he became a prophet. In my prayers for Monsignor Blacet and for a peaceful death, I have also been asking our Lord for a double share of that zeal with which he lived his priesthood and cared for souls.

The last few years living at Good Counsel have been a wonderful experience. Msgr. Blacet was never shy about giving a young priest some solid advice. Most of the time he just reminded me to smile and not take myself too seriously. He always had a joke and liked to see people laugh. He would walk around the rectory and sing little songs he made up on the spot.

In the coming days, I will work with the Diocese to make fitting arrangements for a visitation and funeral for Msgr. Blacet here at Our Lady of Good Counsel. Our beautiful church in Westport could never possibly hold inside of it at one time all of the thousands of people whose life has been impacted by this wonderful priest.

Over the last week, I have received numerous calls and emails with story after story of ways in which Msgr. Blacet was there for someone in a moment of great need. His priesthood impacted so many souls. I know how eager you are to come and pay your respects to this great priest of Jesus Christ.

I am working to create a schedule of events that allows for everyone to come to Our Lady of Good Counsel and pay their respects to Msgr. Blacet while still following all the required safety protocols. Look for an announcement in the coming days with more details on the visitation and funeral.

*Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord
And let perpetual light shine upon him.*

In Christ and Mary,
Fr. Johnson