

Etched in Glass: Client of St. Joseph Serves Quietly

If you ever spent even a moment in the magnificent chapel at Mt. Carmel Monastery in Niagara Falls, ONT, you will remember the stained glass windows. Those priceless works of Carmelite art contain stories from Mary's life in an upper panel and scenes from the life of the Old Testament prophet Elijah in a lower section. The donors' names are in a pane at the bottom.

Most of the windows were given by the early parishes of the Province. But one of the windows carries the mysterious notation "The Gift of a Client of St. Joseph." That client was not some rich patron of the Province as you might suspect from the beauty of the gift. That client was Br. Joe Martin, who, from 1924-1931 would most often be found tending to the animals out in the monastery's barn, not far from the chapel.

When Joseph Martin was "thirty something" he attended a mission in Topeka, KS, given by a Carmelite named Lickteig. He decided to give the Carmelites a try because of the devotion to Mary that they shared. Joe was professed on August 15, 1926.

Joe Martin came from a large family in Solomon, KS. "Indian country" Joe would call it. In his 1978 obituary of Br. Joe published in the *Sword*, Tom Conlon, O. Carm., wrote "One stop at Solomon even today and you can believe it! Solomon almost a century later, is still way out in the wide open spaces of Kansas and it remains pretty much a one street town with a gas station, grocery store, and church marking it out for travelers who speed by a mile north on Interstate 70."

The family had emigrated to the United States from Ireland, passing through Canada. They settled on four sections of the finest wheatland in the state and it was rumored that when the last Martin child died, the land would go to the Diocese of Salinas, KS. Eventually young Joe left the family farm and moved to Topeka.

The parents gave each child a

dowry. Joe suggested that the Monastery purchase a new tractor with his dowry. However, the monastery farm already had a five horse hitch. Purchasing a tractor

background are often the ones who are best remembered long after they are gone. Brother Joe is one such person. Stories of his vigilance as phone and door

keeper at the Joliet Catholic (IL) priory are legendary. Conlon wrote, "Getting a phone call through Br. Joe was like hitting the jackpot in Las Vegas."

But farming, first at Niagara and then for two years at New Baltimore, was what suited

recalled how he admired Br. Joe and spent a lot of time in the Niagara barn. "We used to play in the loft until one of the second year students broke his arm. They told us we couldn't go there any more but I never paid attention to that."

One day Br. Joe had to make a trip into town so he took the 13 year old along, something that was forbidden in those days. Br. Andrew, "who had a temper and could swear too— but didn't often" according to Wolfe-Tone, saw them returning and after establishing that the youngster didn't have the necessary permission, insisted he go right in and tell the prior. "I

said 'Oh yes, Brother.' Well I had no intention of going near the prior. He would have thrown me out," said Wolf-Tone.

"Another time a big sow was loose in the barnyard and I wasn't aware it was. I was moving a wheelbarrow across a plank. When I saw the sow, I just wanted to get to the fence. I was

a city kid. But when I tried to run in the muck, it came over the top of my galoshes. Br. Joe just stood in the doorway and laughed."

In Joliet from 1933 until 1960, Joe was known to everyone. When he was later transferred to California, he used a slightly unconventional method to meet his new neighbors. People coming out early in the morning for their *LA Times* might find Br. Joe parked on their porch reading the sports section of their newspaper.

So next time you are in the chapel at Niagara, look for that window, the one donated by the "Client of St. Joseph."

It represents a lifetime of humble service to the Order.



(Right) Joseph Martin's window at Mt. Carmel, Niagara. (Above) Br. Joe, at far right, on one of the farms. It is thought that a teenage Terrence Fitzgerald is next to him. (Photo courtesy of the Provincial Archives)

was dismissed as an unnecessary, lavish expense.

At the time, Mt. Carmel was undergoing a massive expansion. The old hospice section was being doubled in size with a mirror addition built to the south. A large chapel was being built in the center of the complex and an effort was underway to have the stained glass windows donated.

Since his offer to buy a tractor was refused, Br. Joseph used his dowry to donate the window in honor of St. Joseph. Keeping an anonymity which he maintained throughout his life, Joe was identified only as "a client of St. Joseph."

Those who try to remain in the

him best. He was good at it.

Br. Matt Deffains was sent to replace Joe at the Niagara farm. Br. Joe was showing Matt around the farm and introduced Matt to the team of horses. After a run with Joe at the reins, Matt took over. As Matt himself recalled later, the horses simply got away from him. Four fence posts were knocked down before Joe appeared "out of the shadows" and grabbed the team. With little effort, Joe quickly got them under control.

Wolfe-Tone McCarthy of Toronto, ONT, was a 13 year old high school student at Mt. Carmel when he met Br. Joe. Never having had a father, he recently