



The Alaskan Shepherd

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Some give by going to the Missions

Some go by giving to the Missions

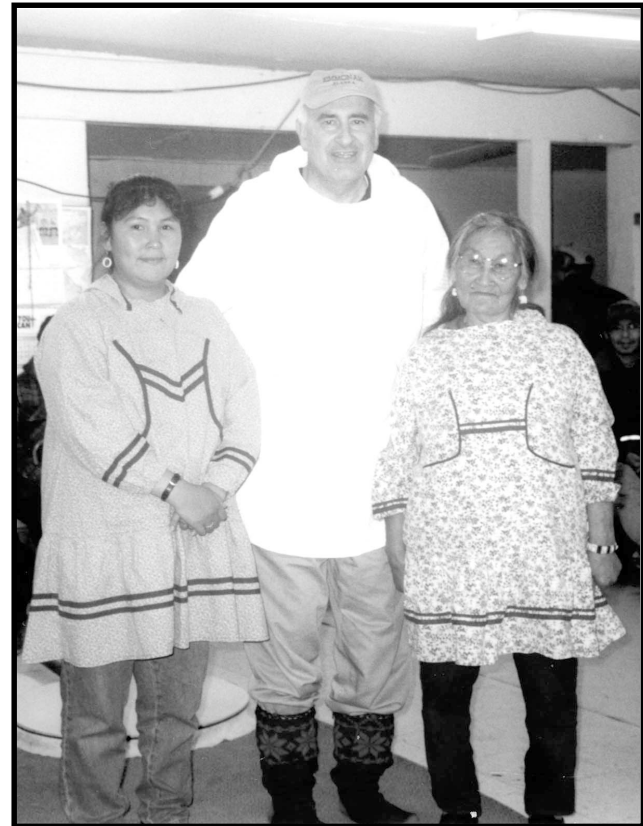
Without both there are no Missions

ON THE WING WITH BISHOP KETTLER: PART I

“I’m going on the trail!” This distinct thought pounded in my heart, as I realized that I would be accompanying Bishop Donald Kettler and Father Richard D. Case, S.J., on an eight-day long visit to the western Alaska coastal parishes. Days before the trip, while perusing my bookshelf in search of suitable reference books to take along, I happened across *Memoirs of a Yukon Priest* by Father Segundo Llorente, S.J. Truly, the Holy Spirit directed my choice, for throughout the journey, I could not put the book down. Father Llorente’s writing is so amusing and so poignant that you find yourself laughing in one paragraph and wiping a tear in the next. The course we would travel closely resembled the course this famous missionary traveled! Mind you, it was 100 times easier for us—especially traveling by plane instead of dogsled! Still, we would see much of what the early missionaries must have seen, built, and experienced—and I felt grateful beyond words for the opportunity.

Our intention was to leave Fairbanks on Saturday, August 24—just two days after the ordination of Bishop Donald Kettler. However, due to unpleasant weather, we delayed our departure until Sunday. Father Case called that morning to announce that the weather was behaving brilliantly. We arrived at the diocesan hangar at about 10:30 am. With the help of my husband, children, one Chancellor and a bishop—we managed to load our suitcases, sleeping bags, mud boots, and a few requested supplies for the villages. As we taxied onto the runway, past what seemed like several hundred private planes, it seemed only seconds—and we were up in the ‘wild blue yonder!’ Father Case flew skillfully. Bishop Kettler took the controls for much of the trip—the flight was magnificent. Having the back seat entirely to myself, I rested my notebook, pen, camera, and map on my guardian angel’s seat. What a way to travel! It is easy to acquire the heart of a poet while soaring over jutting birch, spruce, and boundless rivers.

The Cessna 207, under the pilot and co-pilot’s care, soared gracefully over woodland and waterways that formed



-----pose with Bishop Donald Kettler at a potlatch celebration held in his honor. He is wearing an Emmonak baseball cap, a traditional Eskimo gaspeq, and hand-knitted socks--all gifts from members of Sacred Heart parish, Emmonak.

--All photos by Patty Walter

intricate patterns through golden hills and valleys. The complete grandness, the beauty and the splendor all make you want to speak of ‘IT’—the Great Land—in hushed tones and quiet reverence. Add to this the inspiring and reverent life that is richly woven into Eskimo and Indian culture and an altogether grand adventure unfolds of a land that depicts mystery and beauty.

CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA
1312 PEGER ROAD
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99709-5199
<http://www.cbna.info>

A special Mass is offered every day of the year for you and your intentions in one of the Missions. Please pray that God may bless us and our work.



In Fairbanks, bending over the Cessna 207's instrument panel, Bishop Kettler and Father Richard Case, S.J., do a pre-flight check prior to take-off.

We arrived, 235 nautical miles later, in the predominantly Athapaskan Indian village of Galena. The village of approximately 675 is so named for 'galena' or lead ore, which is mined nearby. Our immediate plan was to refuel and make our way to Bethel where we would stay overnight. Father Al Levitre, current pastor at St. John Berchmans parish, and Brother Damien met us at the airport. Not being able to stay long—we were back in the air—but only shortly. A forest fire in the vicinity produced a wall of smoke that greatly limited our visibility. Father Case turned back to Galena where we would spend the night. Father Al immediately warmed our bodies with soup and sandwiches and our souls with conversation. It was a unanimous decision that we watch the Atlanta/Dodgers baseball game. It was amusing to see 6'3" Bishop Kettler stretched out on Father Al's couch! The couch, according to Father Al, is perfect for his stature. Yet the Bishop had nearly half a body misplaced! Following the game, Father Case celebrated Mass and Father Al graciously prepared dinner. Featured was an Alaskan favorite—caribou roast and co-starred corn, rice, and bread—a most tasty meal! Varieties of topics were discussed, to include the excessive cost of living in Galena. At \$8.99 a gallon, milk becomes a necessary extravagance!

Historically, the first church building in Galena had an earlier life as a saloon. In 1921, the old 'saloon' was barged down from Ruby and transformed into a church with priest quarters. In 1984, a new octagonal church, complete with priest quarters, replaced the 'saloon'. As part of our 'tour', Father Al took us to see the Interior Ministry Study Center, the first of its kind in the Bush. The Center, will be coordinated by Sister Marilyn Marx, SNJM, and Sister Marita Soucy, CSJ, and will serve the villages of Galena, Huslia, Kaltag, Koyukuk, McGrath, Nulato, Ruby, and Tanana. The Sisters will provide training of catechists in the faith and in the practical how-to of conducting and participating in worship services. Many volunteers, including Brother Justin Huber, OFM, have assisted with electrical, plumbing, and building expertise to make the Center a reality.

With our 'tour' complete, we set out to accomplish the next item on our agenda—sleep. Monday morning we awoke to the smell of Father Al's homemade biscuits! The

Bishop celebrated Mass in the attached church and a good number of parishioners attended. We were able to share a quick cracker with delicious salmon spread, provided by parishioners, and then proceed to the airport with plans of arriving in Bethel, 275 miles away, in time for the 12:15 pm Mass at Immaculate Conception!

Greeting us at the Bethel airport was Father Henry G. Hargreaves, S.J. — now in Alaska 53 years. Father Hargreaves once remarked on the contrasting culture and change in Alaska saying, "You can't turn around, but you can see yesterday rubbing elbows with tomorrow." The 88-year-old kindly Jesuit drove us—rather quickly—to the parish, over roads that he explained were continuously damaged and sinking due to both permafrost and a silt foundation. Though paved, they were extremely rutted. Bethel, population 5471, is located in southwest Alaska along the banks of the Kuskokwim River in the Yukon-Kuskokwim



Bishop Donald Kettler refueling the Cessna 207 at Galena. He took upon himself the refueling of the plane at all stops along the way.

Delta about 60 miles from the Bering Sea. With the church in sight, we were able to make out a rather anxious looking pastor, Father Gene Delmore, S.J., who urgently beckoned us in from atop the steps. Bishop Kettler, alb in hand, quickly greeted parishioners and Sister Kathy Radich, OSF, from St. Mary's—who would be joining us on the next leg of the trip. Sister Kathy coordinates the rural ministries in the Yukon-Kuskokwim area.

The Immaculate Conception church design incorporates stained glass windows from the prior church, in the shape of a cross—the effect is striking, especially at this time of day, with the sun in full force. Following Mass, Father Delmore gave us a tour of the old and new facility. We ate a scrumptious lunch prepared by parishioners, and Father Delmore shared his famous bean soup, of which we all went back for seconds! Deacon candidate Brian McCaffrey and Elizabeth, a Jesuit Volunteer joined us for lunch. After a pleasant visit, we hastened back to the airport—so to arrive at Toksook Bay, 100 miles away, by Mass time at 4:00 pm.

Toksook Bay is a Central Yup'ik Eskimo village located on Nelson Island, 6.5 miles from Tununak, in the Yukon-

NOVENA OF GRACE

Each year during the month of March, a Novena of Masses is offered for you, our benefactors, and for your petitions.

The Novena of Grace is so called because countless people have had their prayers answered by God through the intercession of St. Francis Xavier, the Jesuit Apostle to the Orient in the sixteenth century and the patron of worldwide missions.

We invite you to send us your petitions. Both you and your needs will be remembered on each of the nine days of the Novena when Mass is offered for you. The Fathers on the missions also will remember you and your intentions in their Masses and prayers.

We invite all of you to join us in this Novena of Grace by reciting--from the 4th of March to the 12th inclusive--these prayers.

O most amiable and loving St. Francis Xavier, in union with you I adore the Divine Majesty. While joyfully giving thanks to God for the great graces which He conferred upon you in life and for the great glory with which He has gifted you in heaven, I come to you with heartfelt love, begging you to secure for me, by your powerful intercession, the inestimable blessings of living and dying in the state of grace. I also beseech you to obtain for me the favors I ask in this Novena _____.
But if what I ask is not for the Glory of God, or for the good of my soul, do you obtain for me what is most conducive to both. *Amen.*

Our Father; Hail Mary; Glory be to the Father.

V. Pray for us, St. Francis Xavier,

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: O God, you chose to bring into your Church peoples of the Orient through the preaching and miracles of St. Francis Xavier, mercifully grant us that we may imitate his virtues, whose glorious merits we hold in veneration.

We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

.....
TO: CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA

1312 Peger Road

Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-5199

Please remember the following petitions during the

Novena of Grace Masses:

**In Commemoration of Jubilee 2000, the Diocese of Fairbanks published,
in 2001, a 96-page volume entitled,
*A Brief Illustrated History of the Diocese of Fairbanks: Profiles of
Prelates and Churches, Past and Present.***

Copies of A Brief Illustrated History may be ordered from The Alaskan Shepherd, 1312 Peger Road Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-5199 for \$25.00 a copy. This includes postage and handling.

Please send me _____ copy/copies of A Brief Illustrated History. I am enclosing \$25.00 for each book ordered.

Send to:

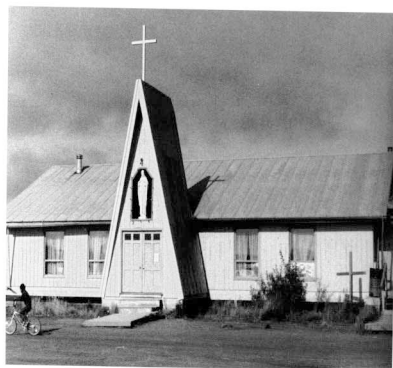
Name _____ **Address** _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

The book begins with a Foreword and a digest history of the Diocese of Fairbanks by Madeleine D. Betz. Betz is also author of the second and largest part of the book, "Churches of the Diocese." This part has photos--most of them in color--of the 49 parish churches in use today. The photos are accompanied by a brief history of the given parish. The third section of the book, "Former Mission Churches" has photos of five one-time parish churches, with a brief parish history of each, written by Betty Johnson. Many will find the photos and brief histories of these five formerly active churches and parishes--Akulurak, King Island, Kokrines, Marys Igloo, and Pilgrim Springs--of special historic interest.

Part one of the book, "Prelates Past and Present," authored by Father Louis L. Renner, S.J., profiles men who have held ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the geographic region that today comprises the Diocese of Fairbanks. The men in question are: Bishop Modeste Demers; Archbishop Charles J. Seghers; Prefect Apostolic Paschal Tosi, S.J.; Prefect Apostolic Jean B. Rene, S.J.; Bishop Joseph R. Crimont, S.J.; Bishop Walter J. Fitzgerald, S.J.; Bishop Francis D. Gleeson, S.J.; Bishop George T. Boileau, S.J. (Bishop Boileau, though he died before becoming Ordinary of the Diocese of Fairbanks, is included since he was ordained bishop with right of succession to that post.); Bishop Robert L. Whelan, S.J.; Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., and Diocesan Administrator Richard D. Case, S.J. A black and white photo and a biographical sketch constitute the profile of each of these prelates.

The volume ends with photos and brief biographical sketches of authors Betz and Renner, as well as of their collaborator, Betty J. Johnson. It was Johnson who did the final editing and preparing of this book for publication. The truly attractive layout and design of the book is owing to the extreme care lavished upon it by Mr. Dixon J. Jones--a gratis contribution on the part of *Designata/Dixon J. Jones*--to the Diocese's Jubilee 2000 celebrations.



Emmonak

Sacred Heart

Emmonak is a Central Yup'ik Eskimo village located at the mouth of the Yukon River on the north bank of Kwiguk Pass. Emmonak parishioners of the 1950's came from the Black River area. The village had to be relocated in 1965 due to seasonal floods. The new village site for Emmonak was located 1.4 miles to the north.

For generations the people of the Black River area had been visited by priests stationed at Akulurak, now an extinct village. Fr. Segundo Llorente, S.J., once built a church in the old village and was resident priest there from 1953 until 1963. After moving from old Kwiguk to Emmonak, Fr. William McIntyre, S.J., then pastor, built a new church at Emmonak. Emmonak has since seen few resident priests. Most priests are visitors from Nunam Iqua (Sheldon Point) or Kotlik.

The following Jesuit priests served Sacred Heart parish over the years: Frs. Francis Nawn, René Astruc,

James J. Stroz, Henry Hargreaves, and Thomas Provinsal. Diocesan priest Declan Caulfield also served (1994-1995).

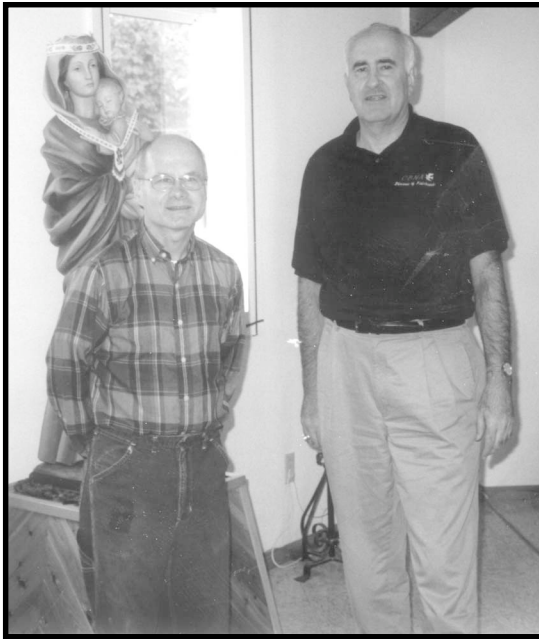
Resident deacons tended to the spiritual needs of the Catholic community during the priests' absences.

Currently the position of Parish Administrator is vacant. Deacons are: Bart Agathluk, Raymond Waska and William Trader (retired). Visiting Priest is Fr. Thomas Provinsal, S.J..

On August 6, 2000, the Most Reverend Michael Kaniecki, S.J., who was Bishop of the Diocese of Fairbanks for 15 years beginning in 1985, died of a heart attack at Emmonak before he was to confirm candidates at Sacred Heart Church.

Source
The Alaskan Shepherd Archival Reference Book A to Z.

Father Al Levitre and Bishop Kettler in St. John Berchman Church, in Galena.



Kuskokwim Delta. The village of 527 Yup'ik Eskimos is entirely Catholic. The little village is an example of the 'Eskimoland' that the Jesuit Fathers refer to in their writings.

Welcoming us on one of the shortest runways, about 1800 feet, was seemingly the whole village! Children held up a heart-warming sign reading, "Welcome Most Reverend Donald Kettler from your YK-Delta people!" Father Case was not immediately able to secure the plane because people, who knew him and loved him, wanted to distribute what appeared to be a continuous line of hugs and handshakes. Elder Yup'ik women sang hymns and smiling children laughed and shouted—"Hello Father—Hello Most Reverend—and Picture ME!"—upon seeing my camera. The village sits precariously on a hill—making the best-suited vehicle—the four-wheeler. The owners of



The Yup'ik Eskimo men of Toksook Bay beat their drums in a rhythmic tempo—while an elder dances, pantomimes, a story depicting some aspect of life on the Alaska tundra. Bishop Kettler sits in the "seat of honor"—usually preserved for the eldest man.

these vehicles graciously offered rides to church. However, we longed to stretch our legs after the series of flights, and scurried along "boardwalks" to St. Peter the Fisherman Church. How interesting it was to find these boardwalks so necessary in the case of rainy, snowy, or icy weather. It could become difficult to maintain one's footing on the sloped village during such conditions. The temperature was about 70 degrees—and though the roads were dusty, we knew that at any moment there could be rain and wind. Father David Anderson, S.J., is the pastor of St. Peter the Fisherman. Since Father Anderson is also the priest for the parishes of Tununak and Nightmute, Parish Administrator Maggie John assists him greatly.



In Immaculate Conception Church, Bethel, Bishop Kettler and Father Gene Delmore, S.J., concelebrate Mass.

The church is adorned with a large net on one wall and a beautifully embroidered altar cloth—bearing symbols of fishing. It was our third Mass of the day and my heart rejoiced at receiving the Eucharist again. Feeling rather conspicuous in my anonymity and tall stature, I settled into a front pew where I could manage some pictures. The unfamiliarity was quickly swept away as Jesus was elevated on the altar. How easy it is to feel at home at Mass. We sang songs in both English and Yup'ik and the little church was packed. The music and singing was charming. Sister Kathy explained that the Eskimos have a different voice range and our singing is a bit foreign—a drastic change from the melodic chanting of the Eskimo dance songs. The parishioners sang with a passionate reverence. Prior to receiving the Eucharist each parishioner blessed themselves and it was evident how very much they love the Lord—and He them. Following Mass, Father Anderson introduced Bishop Kettler, Father Case and me to the parishioners. Upon hearing my name, an elder seated behind me grasped my hand saying—"I know you—you write to me!" True enough, it was Bertha Lincoln.

Note: Substantiate your gift to us, a non-profit organization. The IRS encourages your gift to Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska, if you itemize it on your income tax return. If you have given us a gift of \$250.00 or more, and wish to have the IRS recognize it as a tax-deductible gift, then a receipt from us *must* be in your hands before you file your taxes for the year. We happily provide you with receipts acknowledging your donations.

Bertha and I correspond by mail. Her letters are a pleasure, always sincere and a constant assurance of her prayers for the Diocese. It is comforting to find familiarity—where you would not expect it. That evening we were guests at a village potlatch, given in honor of Bishop Kettler’s ordination. We celebrated in a new hall, recently dedicated to the memory of Bertha’s late husband, Billy Lincoln.

The ‘Potlatch’ was an entirely new experience for the Bishop and me. Villagers sat around the perimeter of the hall on chairs and on the floor and waited, while Deacon Joe Alirkar, an elder, and his wife Pauline organized the event. Upon their urging, several parishioners arose and took their place at the buffet line to serve. Bishop Kettler, Father Case, Sister Kathy, and I found ourselves being urged to the head of the line, followed by village elders, and finally the children. We were encouraged to “eat—eat!” The table displayed huge containers of bird soup (goose), salmon, halibut, fry bread, grape soda and of course, akutaq. Akutaq (agooduk), is often called ‘Eskimo ice cream,’ and is made by combining blackberries, salmonberries, whitefish, sugar, and Crisco® that has been diluted and whipped with water! It resembles a fruit salad. Paper was rolled out to cover the floors and provided for easy clean up. Father Case and Sister Kathy renewed treasured old friendships while Bishop Kettler took a four-wheeler for a spin around Toksook Bay. Upon Bishop Kettler’s return-*unscathed*-- many men started arriving with drums and formed a row in the front of the auditorium. It was inspiring to see younger men move down as an older man arrived! Age and wisdom are celebrated and profoundly valued virtues to the Eskimo. This whole procedure was very unhurried. Father Paul O’Connor, S.J., often marveled at the intended casual pace of the Eskimo. In his book, *Eskimo Parish* he wrote, “*The Eskimo takes life as it comes and acts accordingly. He is so accustomed to meet the unexpected that the future, whatever it may be, never causes him the least concern or worry. He is never in a hurry and for that reason he presses the most out of each*



In Emmonak, Bishop Kettler learns a dance portraying an Eskimo’s movements while hunting for geese. As the beating of the drums increases in volume and speed, he is caught off guard and feigns a shocked look.

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In Toksook Bay (from left to right): Bishop Kettler, -----, Maggie John, Father Dave Anderson, S.J., Patty Walter and Father Dick Case, S.J.

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This Eskimo mask hanging in Sacred Heart Church in Emmonak, is particularly special to the parishioners, inasmuch as it symbolically puts a 'face' on an invisible God. Kayaks and a ptarmigan representing the Holy Spirit also adorn the mask.

perform with beautiful fans made of special beading and caribou beard. The men too take turns performing with similar fans, theirs instead adorned with swan or ptarmigan feathers. Faces etched in concentration, move in perfect synchronization in their lovely gaspeqs (kuspuks)—colorful dress-like parkas, adorned with beads, ribbon or fur. The men in front on their knees keep up with and enjoy the increasing tempo. Soon we were presented with dance fans and encouraged to join in the fun. Elder Deacon Joe Alirkar informed me after I completed a dance—that I was not too bad- but, then, I was not too good either! Many of the stories were amusing. Some teased of emptying 'honey buckets' into the wind! Others portrayed a day of hunting seal and berry picking. Father Case and Sister Kathy were proficient dancers and the Bishop joined in the dancing and the drumming, for several continuous hours, though he must have been exhausted. His day consisted of flying, celebrating three Masses and greeting hundreds of people all eager to meet him! Still, he beat the drums and danced until nearly 10:00 pm! At the end of the evening, Bishop Kettler knelt for a sung Yup'ik blessing and then he accepted an invitation, along with Father Anderson, to join the village men for a steam bath. The 'bath' resembles a sauna-- heated rocks are placed in the middle of the room and water poured over them. The temperature can reach 300 degrees! We

chuckled over Bishop Kettler's rendition of the experience. He was somewhat stooped in the wood steam house because of his height. The temperature reached about 275 degrees—which he was informed was not very hot. Our dear Bishop had to cover his head and hands with a wet cloth to keep them from burning! The Eskimos are truly a robust people!

Taking advantage of the light, (courtesy of the midnight sun) and with camera in hand, I decided to take a little walk at about 11:00 pm. Directly outside of Father Anderson's house, on his neighbor's roof—was the skin and head of a large musk oxen! Musk oxen can weigh up to 700 pounds and can withstand severe cold and hard winters thanks to their long, thick wool. This soft under-fur of the musk oxen is called qiviut (kiv-ee-ute) and is the warmest, softest, and most valuable wool known.

A few houses down, I spied a long row of salmon—hung to cure. With the sun just slipping out of sight, I stood mesmerized by the beauty of Kangirvar Bay. Toksook Bay encompasses 32 square miles of land and 41 square miles of water. Many boats dotted the shore and the water from the bay reflected a calm that seemed to settle in the village. I slept undisturbed, except for the occasional howl from a malamute. The next morning we awakened to the smell of Father Anderson's blueberry pancakes, eggs, and coffee. I was beginning to feel spoiled! We left Toksook Bay at almost 11:00 am en route to St. Marys for refueling. The temperature was a cool 48 degrees. After the 108-mile trip to St. Marys we would continue on—a mere 57 nautical miles to Emmonak.

At St. Marys, Bishop Kettler gassed up the plane—a task he undertook for the entire trip—and we rested briefly in the airport terminal. Here Bishop Kettler was delighted to meet Raphael and Vivian Jimmy. The Jimmys were traveling to Anchorage to celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary and during this brief encounter—they received a special blessing from the Bishop. Following a favorable weather report, we buckled ourselves securely in the Cessna and Father Case 'pointed' the plane towards Emmonak.

Upon our arrival in Emmonak, a village of 804, we learned that we would be 'deposited' at four different homes for lunch. Bishop Kettler was welcomed at Maggie Charles's house and had a delectable lunch of turkey and potatoes

Again, we who serve here in the Far North want to express to you, our kind benefactors, our very sincere thanks for all the generous help you have been giving us in our need. It is you who, through your kind donations and prayers, keep us on the trail, and on the wing, and so enable us to bring the Mass and the sacraments and the ministries of the Church to our flocks in towns and villages scattered far and wide throughout this vast 409,849-square-mile missionary diocese. Where we go, you go; what we do, you do. God bless us everyone!

followed with blueberries and salmonberries. Lucille Westlock, who prepared delicious sandwiches and salad, received Sister Kathy. Father Case ate at Edward Andrews' house and I arrived at the house of Alec Bird. His daughter, Lynn Hootch, greeted and invited me in. Father Tom Provinsal, S.J., pastor of Emmonak's Sacred Heart Parish, joined us. It was a magnificent lunch of salmon patties, made by Lynn's husband Peter, rice, and fried bread! After thanking our hosts, Father Provinsal, Bishop Kettler, and I walked to Sacred Heart Church. On the way there, Father Provinsal showed us the place, where the late Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., suffered his fatal heart attack on August 6, 2000. Father also showed us a beautiful quilt made by a parishioner in Bishop Kaniecki's memory and a memorial at the front of the church. One beautiful piece, displayed in the church, is an Eskimo Mask—with a picture of Jesus in the middle. Father Provinsal explained that the parishioners have a great affection for that mask—because by putting the face of Jesus there, they were saying—'now we know who God is.'

At 3:30 pm, Bishop Kettler and Father Tom celebrated Mass, and afterwards we were invited to a 5:00 pm potlatch followed by dancing at 7:00 pm! The potlatch consisted of items similar to our last feast—and included turkey. The dancing was slightly different from the dancing in Toksook Bay. Father Provinsal explained that each village develops a variation of the Eskimo dance. In Emmonak, women use colorful gloves and dance fans. The Bishop received several presents including, exquisite dance fans, a hand-carved ivory seal figurine, a white gaspeq, an Emmonak baseball cap, hand-stitched Eskimo socks, and a beautiful handmade woven basket. Celebration and dancing continued until 10:00 pm. On our way back to the rectory that evening, the Bishop received a gift from parishioners at Kotlik—a hand carved seal bow. That night we welcomed sleep and eagerly climbed

into our beds! Sister Kathy and I stayed in the old rectory attached to the church. I took a rollaway and Sister Kathy slept on a table—complete with a mattress—and insisted it was quite comfortable! The next morning Father Provinsal prepared eggs, waffles, and 'just right' coffee. While we finished a scrumptious breakfast—Father procured a ride, for us, to the airport. I was especially anxious to visit our next destination, the Mission at St. Marys—a mission that Father Llorente himself had helped move from Akulurak—literally nail by nail. I provide this endearing excerpt from *Memoirs of a Yukon Priest*, "Pulling nails became very tedious because of the extra care needed not to injure the board. ...I told the Lord to keep an eye on those nails and give me a sinner for every nail I pulled. Naturally, I would give Him the sinner back. It worked. As the nail came out, I would say in Spanish, 'Ahi va otro—There goes another one.' When a nail came out easily, I felt that the sinner just converted was a lightweight one. When the nail showed itself difficult, I knew that this time the Lord and I had gotten a big one. When it was not a nail but a spike clinched and twisted and rusty that made me use the crowbar and left me gasping for breath, then I rejoiced over the fact that the Lord and I had landed one of the biggest criminals walking this earth."

We had reached the halfway point of our whirlwind visit to the most outlying parishes of the Diocese. Already Bishop Kettler had celebrated four Masses, and at each Mass, he conveyed this sincere message, "I am here to do what St. Paul did 2000 years ago—I am here to help you, I am here to support you, and to continue doing with you, the work that is already in progress in your parish. Thank you for being here with me today."

Thus far, the trip had left me wholly invigorated, inspired, and deeply in awe of the dedicated missionary men and women who built and continue to preserve Catholicism in Alaska. It is undeniable that Alaska is a harsh land—cold and unforgiving in climate. Yet ask the Alaskan priest, sister, brother, volunteer, or native person—why do you live here? Why do you endure this climate? They will most surely smile and answer simply that the people and their unbreakable spirits are indeed the true reward of the labor and the sacrifice of the missionary. Fr. Tom Cunningham S.J., once remarked, "You need never feel sorry for me because I am doing the work I chose and the work I love...I may leave Alaska any time I so desire. But why would I want to leave such fine friends?"

We had encountered this missionary zest and native resolve in each village. We knew little of what lay ahead in St. Marys, Nome and Kotzebue but we could scarcely wait to find out!

—Patty Walter

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