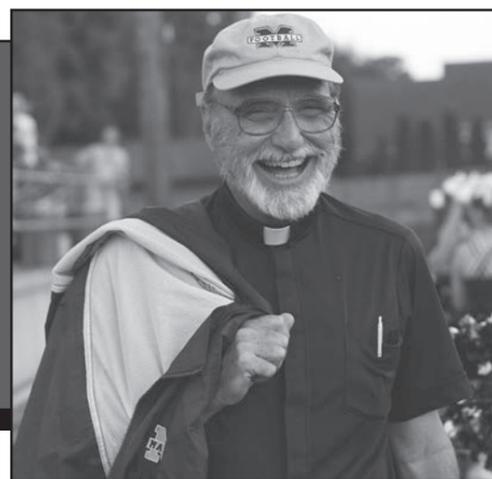


FAREWELL TO FATHER DAVE

A SPARTAN SPEAR SPECIAL

MAY 31, 2013



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LEAVING A LEGACY

A long journey to an indelible mark



By Zachary Silva
EDITOR

This spring, Marist's Chaplain Fr. Dave announced that he will be retiring at the end of the school year.

With this retirement, Marist will undoubtedly lose a presence on campus. Fr. Dave has served Marist for the past 20 years and has been a strong grounding force for the school and its students and staff.

In his time at Marist, these words do not even begin to explain the importance he has had at this school. He is so much more.

He is the priest with homilies that have the ability to entertain while teaching a message that corresponds with the Gospel. He is the goofy man that can be found anywhere and everywhere on campus teasing, laughing or telling his off-color jokes or stories and rarely dressed like a 'normal' priest. He is the listener who is more than happy to hear about the struggles that each of us goes through. He is the helping hand that is there to console any one of us when a loved one has passed. He is a friend. He is a son. He is a role model.

He is Fr. Dave.

But before Fr. Dave became a staple at Marist, he came from simple beginnings in Nebraska.

Fr. Dave was brought up by his mother and grandparents after his father died in World War II when he was not even three years old.

While he lost a parent, he was not without a friend. Growing up, Fr. Dave was friends from the beginning with his neighbor Rita. Born just three days apart, the two children were inseparable.

"My mother said that even when we had a fight [Rita] used to walk home backwards because she knew we would make up before she got home and she might as well be facing the right way."

While Fr. Dave does not

remember it Rita insists that at their First Communion Fr. Dave leaned over and whispered to her that he was going to become a priest, but she wasn't allowed to tell anyone.

He does remember that by 6th grade he knew that he was going to be a priest. At the age of 13, Fr. Dave entered the seminary, which was not uncommon at the time even for those who did not envision becoming priests. Then at the age of 18, he joined a monastery to pursue priesthood.

An important lesson that he learned at this time was from Fr. Albert.

"Fr. Albert taught me that I did not have to be smart to be a teacher and that I did not have to be holy to be a priest."

Fr. Dave then found himself at Oregon State University where he earned a masters degree in mathematics. In this time, he struck up a relationship with a diocesan priest in Corvallis who later played a pivotal role in getting Fr. Dave back to Oregon. After OSU, Fr. Dave returned to Nebraska where he was ordained in 1967.

Immediately after his ordination he taught calculus at Mount Saint Michael's, an all-boys boarding school in Elkhorn, Nebraska (for more on his calculus class see page B of this section). After just three years of working at the school, the 28 year old Fr. Dave became principal. For the next nine years, he worked day and night to ensure that the school was running smoothly. At the end of this time, Fr. Dave was exhausted and wanted something new.

He wanted to become a diocesan priest.

Part of his reasoning to become a diocesan priest was to have more freedom and to develop a relationship with his mom who had moved to Reno in his last year as principal.

Fr. Dave

rekindled his relationship with the priest from Oregon State, who was now the Chancellor of the Diocese. Fr. Dave asked if he could join the Diocese in Oregon and after the okay he was stationed in Salem as an assistant.

After three years there, he was then moved to Newport, Oregon in 1982 and he brought his mom along with him. While in Newport Fr. Dave worked at a parish and also helped at Newport High School. He was a substitute teacher and, believe it or not, the cheerleading moderator for a year. One day he was watching Newport play baseball and they were facing off against this school from Eugene called Marist.

Fr. Dave observed how the Marist kids acted and liked what he saw. After talking to one of the Marist parents, he thought to himself, "That's where I want to go. I want to get back to Catholic schools."

Shortly after, his time in Newport was up and the Bishop wanted to promote Fr. Dave to St. Joseph's Parish in Salem, which is Oregon's largest parish. The Bishop had heard rave reviews about Fr. Dave and how he was the most qualified for the job.

But Fr. Dave politely objected.

That job was not for him and that he wanted to work with kids. The Bishop wanted Fr. Dave to

think about his decision, and had him work in Newport for another year.

After a year there, Fr. Dave received a call from the Bishop notifying him that the Marist Brothers were leaving the school and that if he wanted, he could work at St. Peter's Parish in Eugene and at the local high Catholic school, Marist.

So in 1992, that is what he did. Fr. Dave and his mom made the trip to start their new lives in Eugene.

He spent half his time at St. Peter's and the other half with Marist. The following year, Fr. Benoit came to Marist as chaplain. He was there for the next seven years and then Fr. John filled his place.

After 12 years of working at St. Peter and Marist, Fr. Dave's time ended at his parish and it was time to be relocated as is the custom with priests. When the Bishop was looking to move him, Fr. Dave decided to retire as a diocesan priest and became the chaplain at Marist in 2005.

Since then, Fr. Dave has made his presence felt at the school. Whether that be his work on the freshman lock-in or the simple idea of offering a hand to a student in need, he has been serving the school.

Through tragedy and triumph, he has been the unwavering heart of the school. He has been there to remind staff, students and parents that regardless of the hand life has dealt you, the world will go on.

And through his departure, Fr. Dave would want us not to be sad that he is gone but to realize that both for his future and the future of the school this is the next great adventure.

Here is to your next adventure Fr. Dave.



"Fr. Dave has been a profound gift to me in that he is a man of huge faith and he is a man of education. Marist is going to miss him hugely."

-Principal Jay Conroy



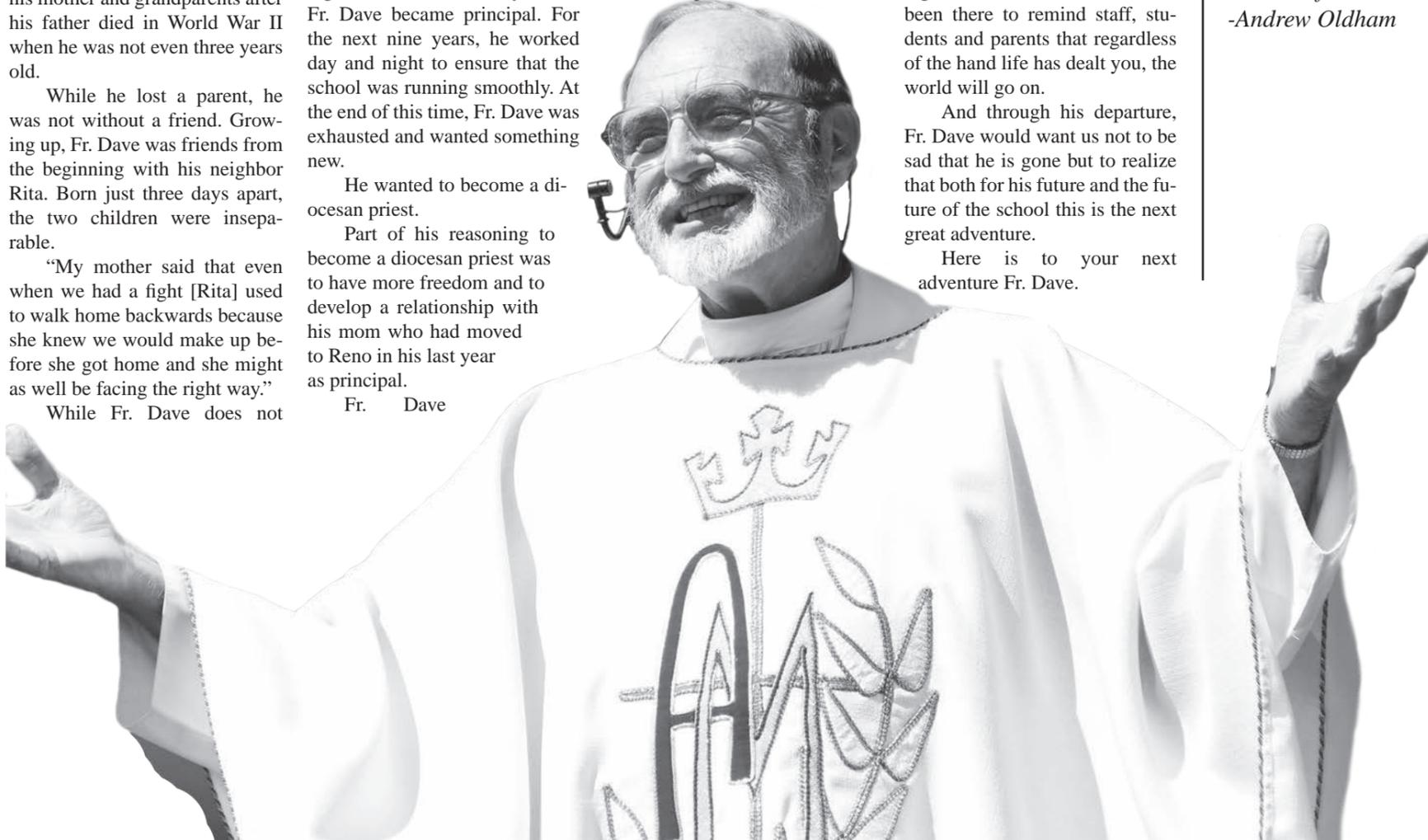
"People think religion is complicated but Fr. Dave brings it down to earth and makes it real. He makes it easy for religion to be part of your life."

-Lex Schmidt



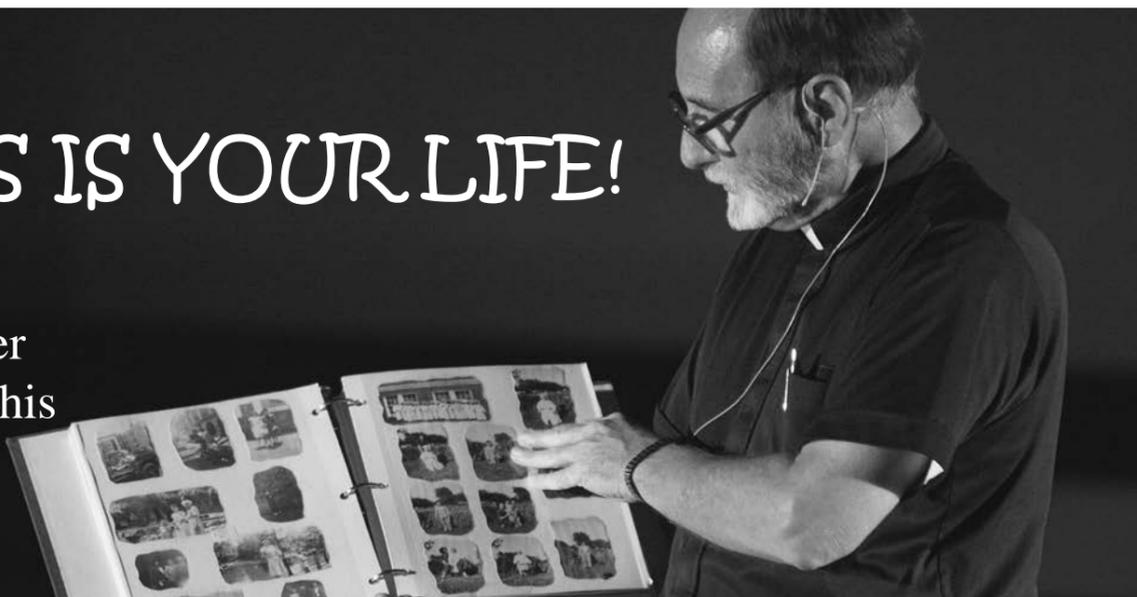
"Father Dave embodies most of what I know, believe, and love about the Catholic faith."

-Andrew Oldham



FR. DAVE, THIS IS YOUR LIFE!

A Man Called Ronnie, David, Dave. A former calculus teacher and a (sometimes) holy man—his influence is widespread.



A connection from the past

By Zachary Silva
EDITOR

Fr. David Cullings has influenced countless individuals throughout the course of his life.

When thinking of Fr. Dave, we here in Eugene generally look at what he has done at Marist. The students, staff and parents that he has touched or his great stories that he tells.

But in my research into finding out just who Fr. Dave is, I found an individual from Nebraska who was greatly touched by our very own chaplain.

It all started in 1968.

It was the first year that Fr. Dave was a teacher. He was just 26 years old and teaching calculus at Mount Michael Benedictine boarding school in Elkhorn, Nebraska.

A young Michael Liebel was sitting in class with thoughts of becoming a priest floating in his head.

“Fr. Dave was influential because of not only who he was but because he was so young,” Liebel said.

But Liebel remembers more than just Fr. Dave’s influence in deciding to become a priest. He also remembers Fr. Dave in the classroom.

“Fr. David was a great teacher,” remembered Liebel in a recent email. “His presentation of the material was clear, or at least as clear as calculus can be to anyone the first time around.”

Liebel then explained that as the course grew more difficult, Fr. Dave decided to have an evening problem solving session once a week to help everyone keep up to speed with the assignments.

As the year progressed, less and less kids were showing up for the study sessions. It was not because of Fr. Dave but because the study sessions happened to fall at the same time of the wildly popular show Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In.

“These were the days when it was impossible to record a TV show,” recounted Liebel. “No one wanted to miss Laugh-In.”

Eventually Fr. Dave accepted defeat and the sessions came to an end.

While Liebel excitedly remembered his time with Fr. Dave, things have changed since his senior year in high school.

After high school he did indeed decide to become a priest and wound up at Mount Michael where he taught physics and math. In Liebel’s years as a teacher, Fr. Dave was still there but was now principal of the school. Once Fr. Dave left the school, Liebel remained and still works there today but now as the Abbot.

This story seems to be one of many that show the impact that Fr. Dave has had on those around him in all that he has done.

A Mother’s Love: Photos from Fr. Dave’s scrapbook put together by his mother



David Ronald Cullings
1942



David Ronald Cullings
c. 1945



David Ronald Cullings
c. 1946-47



David Ronald Cullings
c. 1946



David Ronald Cullings
(various ages)



First Communion
May 15, 1949



David Ronald Cullings being ordained on May 13, 1967



Fr. David and his mother
1971



Fr. David and his mother going on an Alaskan Cruise
1980

Great quotes, greatest quotes?
A compilation of some of our favorite Fr. Dave quotes.

“Jesus didn’t tell us to love him, He told us to love each other.”

“If you are going to graffiti, put some thought into it.”

“Don’t do stupid things with stupid people.”

“That reminds me of a story.”

“Sometimes the game you’re playing is not the game being played.”

“Anyone can be a holy person, I mean if I can do it, so can you.”

WHAT MAKES FATHER DAVE, FATHER DAVE?

Fr. Dave has been at Marist for 20 years and in this time, he has touched the lives of countless individuals. We at the Spartan Spear have collected memories from students, staff members and alumni to remember our hero.

Student Reflections



"I will miss his presence at the school and miss his jokes. He made fun of people in the best way, because it ended up making them feel good."

-Freshman Austin Stanley



"I will miss how he always gave me the perfect advice when I needed him most. It was never forced, he just knew exactly what to say to me with the perfect words at the perfect time."

-Junior Darren Nelson



"He always could tell when something was bothering me and I didn't have to say a word and he knew. I'll miss having that person who I could always count on."

-Senior Morgan Silver



"He reminded us all that everyone has his or her own cross to carry, and to always remember this. Some crosses are visible and some are not, but we must always remember that we are not the only one with a cross to carry."

-Senior Maddy Maitlen



"After I had taken my placement test, Father Dave was waiting outside the doors of senior hall saying 'Don't worry if you failed, your parents are paying a lot of money, we have to take you!'"

-Senior Meghan Gescher



"My favorite story is seeing him picking up trash in the parking lot and helping him do it when I was little. I'll miss his jokes, his masses, and his presence most of all."

-Junior Zac Oldham



"Fr. Dave has always taught me about humility. More through his actions than through his words, he has taught me how to be humble. I will miss his warm presence."

-Junior Liam Henshaw



"I will miss the happiness that he gives off. School and life can be really stressful but when you see Fr. Dave walking around campus, it makes me stop and enjoy my time in high school."

-Junior Maegan Anderson



"The best advice I received from Fr. Dave was not in words, but in watching the way that he lives his life. A life of service and of happiness."

-Junior Gavin Doremus



"What I'll miss most about Fr. Dave is his hugs and him always checking in on me and asking how I'm doing."

-Sophomore Seth Thoreson

Staff Reflections



"When I think of Fr. Dave I start laughing because he's goofy. And this attitude is perfect for high school students in how he ministers to students."

-Ryan Baker, French Teacher



"[His saying] 'suck it up cupcake' is a perfect Fr. Davism. It teaches how to deal with the good and bad times of life... I don't think we have any idea of just how much we will miss him next year"

-Tripp Nelson, History Teacher



"He is a humble jokester. And he's always demonstrated what a priest should be."

-Pat Wagner, Biology Teacher



"I like his sense of humor because it could be the worst day and he is still bright, cheerful and uplifting."

-Tony Huck, Academic Resource Center Associate



"He is funny and sarcastic but not mean about it which makes everyone feel at ease. And with all his stories, there is always a lesson."

-June Miller, Science Teacher



"Fr. Dave has been life-changing and has had a profound impact on my faith. He has invested in each of us personally and has truly been a shepherd who will chase down that lost sheep."

-Bill Ferrari, Lit Teacher



"We think religion is scary and in some ways it is but Christ is a good natured person and Fr. Dave does an exceptional job imaging Him."

-Matthew Oppe, Theology Teacher



"Fr. Dave is someone who is very accessible to everybody. I have never seen anybody, priest or lay person, that people respond to better than him. His presence, especially when people need someone to listen to them, will be missed."

-Jon Nuxoll, History Teacher



"I see the other side of Fr. Dave. He's a person who helps someone with the darkest periods of life. He has a mission to help those in need."

-Tammy May, Attendance Office



"He's not conventional, he is full of surprises, catches your attention, makes you laugh and though he may not look to fit based on his attire, he is a perfect fit in our lives."

-Rick Martin, Theology Department

Alumni Reflections



"Fr. Dave has an amazing way of connecting with people and making them feel like whom they are and what they are doing is important. And he has an even more amazing way of giving advice without it sounding like a lecture!"

-McKenna Jones, Class of 2000



"It's hard to believe he is retiring. Father Dave helped me so much through some hard times. I will never forget his caring and thoughtful advice on my encounter."

-Blake Swanson, Class of 2009



"Father Dave had a huge impact on my life. He was always there for support and to give a little advice. I truly believe he is one of the men in my life that helped me become the man I am today and I wish Father Dave nothing but the best! He made my Marist experience something I will always cherish."

-Kyle Blain, Class of 2002



"He would always come sit with us kids at lunch and be interested in what was going on in our 'big' little worlds. I also loved that he was always making jokes."

-Jessica Smith, Class of 1994



"[Fr. Dave's] wisdom, love of God, and self-deprecating sense of humor will leave an invisible, indelible mark on every wall, desk, and chalkboard of Marist High School. We were probably undeserving of the many years of faithful service he gave to our school, but we are anything but ungrateful."

-Moira Cary, Class of 2010



"Whenever I was feeling horrible I knew I had someone to pick me back up in Father Dave and he proved to be an outlet that I turned to on numerous occasions during my time at Marist. His combination of sensible humor and decades of experience with kids just like me always did the trick."

-Michael Lyford, Class of 2012



"He gave me hope. He gave me a reason to continue on, and leave the despair and bitterness behind. God loved me, and I saw that through Father Dave's love."

-Micah Stratton, Class of 2011



"When you don't know the answer in math, write down 'who cares.'"

"If you don't want me to tease you, don't do anything that I can tease you about."

"Your sins are erased from the mind of God. Isn't that a sweet deal?"

"Just have faith."

"The crosses that we bear are what make us who we are."

"Don't be so worried or focused on your future that you miss what is going on in front of you."

"Focus not on the love you get, rather, the love you give. Love is the eternal giver."

Fr. Dave's Greatest Hits

Collecting tales from a man whose favorite phrase is
"Oh, that reminds me of a story!"

With Fr. Dave's departure, Marist is not only losing an icon but also what he is best known for: his stories. Fr. Dave has a story for seemingly every occasion that he is more than willing to share. Senior newspaper associate Meghan Gescher sat down with Fr. Dave for a few hours and collected a handful of his famous stories in order to put them on record so we can look back at their wisdom and future students can learn from them.



Fr. Dave meets with Meghan Gescher. Photo by Emma Pindell '13

THE GAME YOU ARE PLAYING IS NOT THE GAME BEING PLAYED

In the early 70's, I was the principal of a high school in Nebraska. We were part of an accreditation team of 40 schools and we met for a conference in Chicago. We stayed at the Palmer House Hotel, and the hotel had these fat doors where you would put your dry cleaning on one side and some sort of creature comes during the night and cleans it and then it's back in the morning.

When I was little, I would stay there with my mother and aunt during hockey games and I was small enough to be able to hide in the door. Anyway, I'm not sure what the main talk was on, but after it was over the speaker told us to go to the back of the room and to play a game at the tables. There were ten tables, four people per table, it seemed easy enough. On each table was a game board, dice, money and property. It wasn't a game anyone had seen.

At the corner of the table sat someone from the workshop with a clip board and a fountain pen ready to take notes. So we asked him, how does this thing work? He just shrugged his shoulders and acted like we weren't there. But they announced that there needed to be a winner within an hour from each table so eventually we had to decide what the rules were and I'm sure there were 10 different games being played. So we played until there was a winner at each table and then took a coffee break.

We came back and the man in charge announced the winners for each table and sometimes it was the person we had decided but more often than not it wasn't. It was then that he said that the game we were playing was not the game being played. The person at the corner of the table wasn't evaluating who won our games.

There are three types of people: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who have no idea what's happening. The person with the clipboard looked for who took over and who became the leader. That's what he was evaluating; he was looking for leadership skills. The true winner was the one who made things happen.

I first started telling this story to sports teams and actually told it at Cody Waters' funeral. The game Cody was playing was very very important, I'm not trying to diminish that, but the game being played is who you are becoming as a person—that's what's important. I'm not talking down to the

game you're playing, but don't let your eyes falter from the game being played.

You're trying to be a good student, a good daughter. I'm trying to be a good priest, a good teacher. And there's nothing wrong with any of those. But there's a bigger picture.

CHINESE FARMER: GOOD LUCK, BAD LUCK WHO KNOWS?

The Chinese Farmer Chang lives on the farm and raises bamboo. Chang-e is his wife. (They put an e on the end of the man's name instead of a maiden name like we do here. That's a lie but people believe it.) Cheng is the farmer's oldest son, Ching is the horse, Chong is the donkey, and Chung is the youngest son.

Well in this story, one day the horse runs away. Tragedy! Chang has to run the bamboo farm without a horse. The whole town came out to console the Chang on his bad luck.

Then Chang says, "A blessing from God, a curse from God, good luck, bad luck, who knows?"

And you know what? He was right.

Later that week, the horse came back and had befriended twenty wild horses and now the Chang was the richest man in the valley. And the whole town came out to congratulate Chang on his blessing from God, this good luck.

But Chang says, "A blessing from God, a curse from God, good luck, bad luck, who knows?"

And again, he was right.

His son was working with one of the horses and it threw him off and he ended up breaking his leg. Tragic! The son's leg is broken! So the whole town came out to console the Chang on his curse from God.

And Chang says, "A blessing from God, a curse from God, good luck, bad luck, who knows?" And he was right again!

Because later that month the Chinese army came to town to recruit young men for another foolish war against Manchuria, another blood slaughter. But they didn't take his son because of his broken leg. So the whole town came out... and you see where I'm going with this?

It just goes and goes and goes. Life is that way. You tend to want to describe something as a blessing or a curse, but that's just not the way life is.

JAR OF HOSTS AND THREE GIRLS

So I was sent to Salem and was a math teacher at the Catholic high school but was living at St. Joseph's.

Anyway, Salem has a lot of mental institutions; all the ones in the state are there. And then a lot of people in group homes live in the downtown area by St. Joseph's as they transition from the institutions back to normal life. The politically correct term at the time was limited. It might be down syndrome, it might be a mental illness, but they were not able to function completely on their own.

So the doorbell rings. I go to the door and standing there is a young man in his twenties clutching something close to his body.

And I said, "What can I do for you?"

He said to me, "My group leader said I have to come give this to you."

I said, "Well whatcha got?"

And he said, "A jar"

I said, "Well why does he want you to give it to me?"

"There's something in the jar."

"What is it?"

"You can look."

He showed me and there was a host at the bottom of the jar.

"Ohhhhh I understand," I said, "Don't worry, you didn't do anything wrong, no problem, I'll just take it and take care of it. You don't have to think about it again."

"Noooooo," he wailed and started crying. "I don't want to give it to you."

I said, "Well, it's not a problem. You did good, you did good. How'd you get it?"

"On Sunday a few months ago I came to communion and I put the host in my pocket and brought it home and put it in my jar and set it on the windowsill in my room."

I said, "That's okay, it's not a problem."

But he said, "I can't give it to you!"

And I asked, "Why not?"

"In the group home, some people have double rooms, but I don't. I'm alone in my room because of some problems I have in living with other people. You can't imagine how lonely it was in my room before I got this."

I said, "Take it. Go home, go back to your group home and tell your group leader to call me if he has any questions."

I couldn't take it away from him. God's got to figure that one out. We believe in the real presence as Catholics but which one of us would feel a presence that would keep us from being lonely? Isn't

that unbelievable?

So the second story now...

For Masses on Sunday, there were four of us and so two of us would busy ourselves getting ready and two of us would greet before Mass because it was a big parish. Well, Father Reedy (who died at 100 years old) had just retired at my age now and I was young and so we were often the greeters together.

There were three girls with down syndrome who would hold hands and skip and we could see them coming and giggling and hollering at me from blocks away. They would then run at me and throw their arms around me and plop these sloppy wet kisses on me and say, "Good morning Jesus! We've been oh so anxious to see you!"

And I would have to explain "No no, I'm Father David. When you go into church, you'll see Jesus."

This routine would go on Sunday after Sunday, the wet sloppy kisses, hello Jesus and me trying to explain the truth.

And finally one day they went in after greeting me and Reedy said, "Quit bugging those girls about calling you Jesus."

I said "Well I can't do that! That's not right!"

And he said, "Father, they just see what you're supposed to be."

It's amazing—limited people have unlimited visions of spiritual realities that us unlimited people can't touch.

GOD GOT IN LINE

When you travel, sometimes what you go to see is not what you end up seeing.

Have I told the story of going to Nepal since you've been here? Well, I was actually going from Thailand to India to see the Taj Mahal and Mahatma Gandhi's memorial—I had my list of things I was going to see.

The Royal Nepal Airline offered a free three-day stay over at the capital of Nepal. Aw heck, the tallest mountain in the world, Mount Everest is there! That's got to be on my list (it wasn't before but I put it there right then!). And free? So I did, and it was a wonderful stay.

However, my flight out was canceled, and my driver and tour guide laughed and said, "We knew you wouldn't get on, but don't worry, we got something planned for you today. It's Thursday, we're going to go up to a Hindu shrine in the mountains."

So up we went to the mountain and as we started getting higher

up, we would see more and more people congregating and they've got chickens, rice and all sorts of animals. There was an actual road and a bus was driving up and people were just pouring out but all their animals were tied to the top.

And as we got up there, there's a beautiful white marble sanctuary and a mosaic depiction of the goddess of fertility. The Hindu people come there about three times a year to offer their gifts for the atonement of their sins and for good crops. You bring whatever is the best you've got. And there's a men's line and a women's line. My guide said, "You can stand here and watch but can't go into the sanctuary."

Well, there are these two Hindu priests with sharp machetes and the first person brings forward a chicken and gives it to the priest. The priest then slits the chicken's throat, shakes the blood out and then takes a rubber dust pan, scoops up the blood and throws it at the shrine of the goddess. And then a goat and a bit more blood; it's ankle deep now. The poorer people throw rice, flowers, whatever they've got to offer to the goddess.

And here's what I love. I've been around a long time, but how did I miss this? John the Baptist stands opposite the Jordan River and he looks across and sees Jesus and says "There is the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world."

God got in line with His lamb and brought it up to be sacrificed so we didn't have to anymore. You know, we call Mass the unbloody sacrifice of Calvary? The bloody sacrifice isn't needed anymore. God got in line and offered the perfect one. And now we don't have to do it. The Hindu people on the mountain still do because they don't have the image of the perfect sacrifice.

So they take me back down to the airport and the flight isn't canceled this time and Royal Nepal has bought the first 757. I'm a veteran traveler so I was really excited and I got in there and it was the first time I've ever seen a TV screen embedded in the seat in front of me with a remote and I could watch any movie I wanted! And I sat down and I started watching and I looked down at my pants and they were all scattered with blood. Here I am in the most modern machine I have ever seen in my life and I'm looking down at the most primitive animal sacrifice that no one would ever believe! The contrast of worlds is remarkable.

We present you with some of the greatest quotes about Fr. Dave...

"Fr. Dave blessed my baseball bat freshman year and the next game I struck out every at bat." - Senior Chris Damewood

"The first time I ever saw Fr. Dave with a beard was at football practice and I thought he was a homeless guy just creepily watching us practice." - Henry Harper, Class of 2010

"I once asked him, do you ever wish your last name was Time? So that way people can call you Fr. Time?" - Grant Gilchrist

"He always tells me how much I cried when he baptized me. And because he baptized me, he tells me that's why I am so amazing today" - Junior Angela Fuchs