



Parish Helped Fr. Friend As He Studied For Priesthood

By Evelyn Beck

The memory of Father Francis Friend—the first native Andersonian to become a Catholic priest—is honored at St. Joseph's through the Father Francis Friend Hall, so named by Father Thomas Timlin. Francis' twin sister, Ann, remains a St. Joseph's parishioner.

Francis and Ann's father, Fred, dropped out of school in the fourth grade after his dad died and he had to go to work to support the family. It was during a stint in a cigar factory in his native Charleston, South Carolina, that he met his future wife, Irene, who was also working there while on an extended visit from New Jersey. Fred made a promise to his mom to remain an Episcopalian, but he and Irene raised their six children in the Catholic Church. A whiz at math, Fred eventually became an agent for the Internal Revenue Service. "He was not the tax man like in the Bible," said Ann. "He lived up to his name of Friend."

The Friend children grew up on Summitt Avenue in Anderson, where Ann still lives, and attended St. Joseph's when it was located on McDuffie Street. "It was an old church made of wood; when the wind blew, you could feel the church sway," said Ann. Francis and his brother John were altar servers. Because the church was hard to heat, Mass was sometimes held in the rectory next door, as well as at locations in Abbeville, Greenville, Clemson, and Westminster. Ann remembers her brothers getting home at 5 p.m. after a long day on the road with Father Henry Speisman, the fifth pastor of St. Joseph's.

During World War II, while Ann and



Father Francis Friend celebrates his first Mass at St. Joseph's in July 1959. He is pictured with his parents, Fred and Irene Friend.

Francis were in high school, they sometimes served as witnesses for soldiers passing through who wanted to get married. Francis, whom Ann describes as "tall, black-headed, thin, and real smart," graduated as the valedictorian of Boys High School, where he was president of the Key Club and editor of the school newspaper. He had a Navy ROTC scholarship to Notre Dame but lost the scholarship when he didn't pass the physical. The reason? He was 11 pounds underweight. But Father Maurice Daly, then the pastor of St. Joseph's, helped Francis get a full scholarship to St. Bernard's, a Catholic college in Cullman, Alabama. Unbeknownst to his family, Francis

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Remembering Fr. Francis Friend

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had decided to become a priest. "Though he'd always been around the church and had been an altar boy, we were really surprised," said Ann.

Francis so distinguished himself during two years at St. Bernard's that he received an appointment to the North American College, a pontifical college in Rome for training American diocesan clergy. He was able to visit home once during the next six years, thanks to a parishioner who paid for the trip. Francis' time in Rome coincided with a significant transition in the Church: the death of Pope Pius XII and the coronation of Pope John XXII. Francis and the members of his class were privileged to stand as a guard of honor around the pontiff's bier as he lay in state in the basilica at St. Peter's. Francis was also among those permitted to take part in the eleven-mile funeral procession before a crowd of over a million people. Francis later told the *Anderson Independent-Mail*, "It was just at sunset, and as we ap-

proached the Square at St. Peter's, it was literally bursting with people. It was very strange in that most unlike an Italian crowd, there was complete quiet. As the procession approached we could hear the people praying; then a hush fell over them as they paid final respects to the man they loved so well."

Francis was ordained in Rome on December 20, 1958, along with 39 other American young men. Ann attended the nighttime ceremony along with her parents and an aunt. After his ordination, Father Friend returned to the U.S. to serve as the assistant to the bishop in Charleston. He was then sent to Rome to study for a Ph.D. before being called back to assist a new bishop in Charleston. In 1968, only ten years and ten days after his ordination, Father Francis Friend died. His chalice, which Francis designed and had made in Paris, thanks to the generosity of a parishioner, remains at St. Joseph's. It has an ivory base and features four apostles on either side.



Four priests celebrate Mass at St. Joseph's in July 1959. From left are Father St. John Patat, pastor; Father Francis Friend; Father Joseph Bernadine, the bishop's representative; and Father William Croghan, former pastor.

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