

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

## GETTING BACK INTO THE GAME...

*In these days of trouble in the Church and in our society, some priests have opted not to wear their clerical collar in public. But I don't really think that is a good thing. I heard about two Padres. One said to the other, "You know, I never wear my collar in public-too many people bother you!" The other priest replied, "Yeah, I know. That's exactly why I wear mine!" Well, it's true that sometimes when you are dressed in clerics you might be bothered at times, but there is no doubt that some funny things happen at times when people see a priest in a public place.*

*Take for example several weeks ago. I needed some light bulbs in the rectory and decided to drive to the local hardware store here in Oakwood to get them. As I was asking the clerk exactly what I needed, an older man and his son walked into the store. Spying my clerical collar the son said, "Hey, you're a priest-you got any holy water on you? I can sure use a blessing!" I told him that I did not have any holy water with me (it was in the car) and said that I could give him a blessing anyway.*

*After that, I asked the man what parish he belonged to. "Parish?" He replied, "Oh, I go to Hanley's." His older and wiser dad looked at him and said, "Don't be stupid-that's a funeral home!" So I said, "You must mean 'Our Lady Queen of Peace!'..." "that's the one!" He replied and then added, "You see how much I am out of the game!" I then told him that he could "get back into the game" by going to Mass on Sundays. The man said he would think it over. When I went to the counter to pay for my lightbulbs, the clerk smiled and said, "Father, I can't charge you after that encounter!"*

*So you can see that some interesting things happen when a priest is present. I wonder how many people are like the guy in the hardware store. Religiously speaking, they are really "out of the game"-maybe for years and that's a real tragedy. For some Catholics the Church is just a place to come when you "hatched, matched and dispatched." Confirmation may have been the last time that they regularly attended Mass. I always remind the confirmation candidates that confirmation is not "graduation" from the church.*

*Statistics tell us that perhaps less than 25% of Catholics attend Mass on Sunday. They are out of the game! How can we get them back in? That's something that the Church needs to address. I believe that we need to stress more emphatically that what happens at the Mass is truly miraculous. Jesus Christ in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity become present on the altar. To me that's a big deal and that's a game changer!"*

*If we knew that some important Hollywood star or great athletic figure was making an appearance in our neighborhood, we would make it our business to get to see them! Yet the fact that Christ in the Eucharist is truly present in our churches makes little impression on most people. Saint Mother Teresa once wrote: "Sometimes we get into a rut and we almost begin taking holy communion for granted. We must resist this temptation, because Holy Communion is a great gift from Jesus, a priceless treasure." How true!*

*Let's pass on that "great news" to others who might have fallen away from the Catholic faith. Let's encourage them to come to Mass and get back into the game!*

*Sincerely in Christ,  
Father Jerome*