

Homily for the Memorial Mass of Fr. John Olivier

By Father Cale Crowley, S.S.

Fr. John Olivier had a banner hanging over his desk in his room at the Villa. It is still there. It reads: "Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God." I am telling you this because I want to disagree with it. After meditating over our friend, Fr. Olivier, I want to say instead: "Planting joy in others is a very important sign of the presence of God."

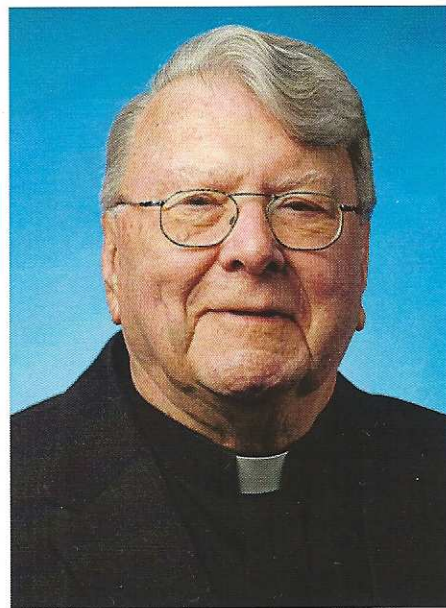
Our friend, Father John, you see, was not just joyful. He planted joy wherever he went. Early last week, Fr. Olivier staged a magnificent, very vocal revolt. He wanted out of rehabilitation. He wanted to go back to the Villa. Fr. Olivier won. The next day, we got a call from the nurses at Keswick Rehabilitation Center, where John had been. The nurses, the staff, and the patients were missing our Father John something awful. His songs, his jokes, and his banter had planted joy in their hearts. They were missing his life-giving presence. We, too, will miss that very same thing.

This business of planting joy in friends, acquaintances, and even strangers did not start just last week. It was a permanent part of Father John's character. For 22 years, from 1947 to 1965, for example, Fr. Olivier taught music, including Gregorian Chant, to the seminarians of St. Joseph's College, Mountain View, California. He taught them in class and outside class. He had a huge influence on many of them. Many of them became his friends. Some of those friends have visited him here at the Villa. In fact one of them, Ed Gaffney, was with him when he died. From listening to those students from so long ago, I know Father Olivier did much more than just teach them music and Gregorian Chant. He planted in them a life-long love of music. He also planted in them the life-long ability to find and give joy in music.

We were able, by the way, to plant joy in Father John the final night of his earthly life. At the suggestion of Doctor Barbara de la Teurre, we brought in a musical therapist for Father Olivier. She was well-trained and had a beautiful voice. She sang to him hymns that he loved. It brought peace and joy to Father Olivier. I am convinced those hymns, so beautifully sung, created an open door in Father Olivier's spirit. Jesus came to Father Olivier through that door that night, and through that same door, Father John went to Jesus. From childhood, music had always been one of his important doorways to God.

Another of his important doorways was also present to him that night. Us, his family and friends. His family has been in contact with Father John through us ever since his final ordeal began. Friends, from near and far, had been visiting him ever since he first went into the hospital.

Father Olivier was very gregarious, as you know. He was always making friends. Many became permanent friends. He was also building his friends into a community. Those



JOHN HENRY OLIVIER, S.S.

Born: February 27, 1920

Ordained a Priest: May 31, 1947

Died: April 12, 2013

points are important. For, planting life-long, life-giving love that binds people together is another very important sign of the presence of God.

God is love, you know, and he/she who abides in love abides in God. Furthermore, he/she who abides in God abides in joy. She/he also abides in God's own creative power to plant joy. Father Olivier most certainly did.

Memorial Mass

Main Celebrant: Very Rev. Thomas R. Ulshafer, S.S.
Provincial, the Society of St. Sulpice, Province of the United States

Organist: Barbara Lambert, Sacred Heart, Glyndon.

Cantor: Ken Kirkman, Diocese of Syracuse

Entrance: "Be Thou My Vision" (Breaking Bread #392)

Glory to God: *Mass of Creation* (Breaking Bread #882)

Reading: Romans 8: 31-35, 37-39

Responsorial: *Psalm 103*

Gospel: John 14: 1-6

Homily: Rev. Cale Crowley, S.S., Director of St. Charles Villa

Offertory: "Jesu, Vivens in Maria"
Setting by John H. Olivier, S.S. (1989)
Translation by Melvin Farrell, S.S. (1989)

Holy, Holy, Holy: *Mass of Creation* (Breaking Bread #883)

Acclamation: *Mass of Creation* (Breaking Bread # 884)

Amen: *Mass of Creation* (Breaking Bread #885)

Lamb of God: *Mass of Creation* (Breaking Bread #886)

Communion: "I Am the Bread of Life" (Breaking Bread #343)

Meditation: "O Sacrum Convivium"

Recessional: "Praise my Soul the King of Heaven" (Breaking Bread #559)

*You are welcome to join the Sulpician Community
for a luncheon at St. Charles Villa*

As for us, we have abided in love with Father Olivier. Father John has abided in love with us. He has planted joy in us. He has been God's grace to us. We have planted joy in him.

It is at this point that our two readings kick in. (Romans, 8:31b-35, 37-39. John, 14:1-6.) Jesus was Father Olivier's way, truth, and life. Jesus was his friend, the source of his strength, joy, and zest for life. Jesus has now fulfilled his Gospel promise to Father John. Jesus has finished preparing a place for our friend. Jesus has come back again and has taken Father John to himself, so that where Jesus is, our friend also may be.

Our loss is Father Olivier's gain. So, we gather here today to celebrate this Eucharist. We thank God for gracing Father John anew. We thank God for the gift of God's grace Father Olivier has been to us and to so many others.

We also gather to mourn. For his gain is our loss. But, our first reading tells us the story has not ended. In short form, our first reading tells us that nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. But then, not even death can permanently separate us from each other. God's love

binds us together forever. So, not even death can permanently separate Father John from us or us from him. He continues to bless us even now. He is a blessing even now to those seminarians he taught so many years ago. We, in our turn, can bless Father Olivier by remembering him, by thanking God for him, and by praying to God for him.

We can also imitate him by embracing in joy and in love our friends and our families. We can imitate him in his zest for life. Imitation is not always just the sincerest form of flattery. Sometimes, imitation is the sincerest form of remembering somebody.

Finally, Father Olivier used to finish off daily Mass with a little nap in the chapel with Jesus. Now, he is taking a long nap with Jesus. Each of us will all take that same long nap one day or the other. But, Jesus promises us we will wake up together one day. In the meantime, may God bless you. May God bless our Father John.

Cale Crowley, S.S.

20 April, 2013