

## **Fr. Joe Chapter 7 ~ High School Instructions In his own words...**

Instructions to high school students were more difficult. I got a break when the school in the central area of my territory ran a release time for religious instructions in the school. I would go on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons into the school for instructions in a classroom. But that did not help the other students who lived in the outer fringes. So on Monday nights, I would pick up the students in the south area and gather them at the church for instructions. On Tuesday nights, I would take the students who lived in the north fringe area and gather them in someone's home. I never used a classroom setting or text, I would just talk to them. Sometimes it was just a short talk and the rest of the time it was spent in working around the church or just in recreation.

A few years ago, I landed in the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky airport about midnight. Transportation was scarce. Some people got into an old taxicab and I followed and got into the front seat. As we were chugging down Donnelson Road, the driver turned to me and said, "Aren't you Father Andres?" I said, "I am. Do I know you?" He said, "I'm Vincent! Remember you use to pick us up for Catechism, and you would talk to us for a while and then put us to work around the church."

I remembered very well and asked him how he was doing. He said he had dropped out of the Church, but was thinking about going back. He would have to get back to Sunday Mass, then have his marriage validated, and be reinstated with the sacraments. I said, "Vincent, you sound like a theologian, how do you know all of this?" He said, "You used to think we were not listening when you instructed us. We were listening to everything you were telling us."

One summer morning I was teaching grade school children and Big Jim showed up. I figured he is the only one in his age group and he is so big in stature that he did not fit in. He was more like a high school boy. So I gave him a bucket of paint and a brush and told him to go out and paint the outhouse, get it ready for the city folk who are coming Sunday to our chicken dinner.

After a little while he came into the church, mad as a bull and cussing. I said, "Jim, what's the matter with you, cussing in church and in front of all of these little children?" He said, "You told me to paint the outhouse and while I was doing it, I ran into a hornet's nest." I said, "Jim, keep cussing, but just go back and finish the painting."

Sometime later his family's home burned down and they moved back to Cincinnati, Ohio. He went to Roger Bacon High School, played football, became a first string all American. Out of all of the scholarships that he was offered, he chose to go to Ohio State University. One day a friend of mine said he was in the locker room at Ohio State University and Big Jim was telling a group of teammates about the time a priest gave him permission to cuss. Later Jim transferred to Xavier University and graduated. He became a religion teacher at his old alma mater at Roger Bacon High School. Teaching high school students requires a lot of patience and perseverance.

You never knew how they would show up. Sometimes they would be friendly and other times they would be silent and seemed to be disinterested. They would gather in small groups, whisper to each other and totally ignore you. I did not let it bother me and I went on with my efforts to teach them.

The artisans and the builders of the great cathedrals in Europe spent more than 300 years building, yet knew they would never see the finished project. However, they still did their little part to contribute toward the final project.