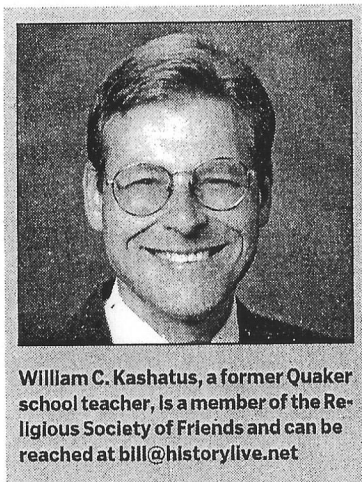


Some good to report: Not all priests are bad

By **WILLIAM C. KASHATUS**

When I was 14 years old I saw Bing Crosby portray Father Charles O'Malley, a fictional inner-city priest, in the 1944 movie, "Going My Way." O'Malley befriended at-risk kids, appealing to their love of sports and popular music. In one, especially gripping scene, after catching some local gang members stealing, he forgave them and let bygones be bygones by taking them to a baseball game.

Father O'Malley was quite different from the priests I knew in my own parish. They were distant from the youngsters, focusing their energies on Church politics, raising money, and delivering the "Word of the Lord," as if



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they were the only intermediaries between man and God.

I'm sure that they were devoted to their calling, but they seemed

to be too busy projecting sainthood instead of showing us how to live our faith.

At 18, I gave up on the Catholic Church and joined the Religious Society of Friends, which has been my spiritual home for the last three decades. But, in many ways, my Quaker faith will never be completely divorced from the Catholicism of my childhood. That is why I was so sorry to learn of the grand jury revelations of pedophilia among the Philadelphia Archdiocese's priests and the cover-up by Cardinals John Krol and Anthony Bevilacqua.

While these acts are unforgivable, we need to remember the truly dedicated priests who have committed their lives to the hon-

orable work of the Church, like Father John McNamee.

McNamee is an inner-city priest at St. Malachy's Parish, located in one of the city's toughest neighborhoods. He is a "worker priest" committed to the service of God through his ministry.

McNamee was responsible for bringing Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker Movement to Philadelphia and was instrumental in the development and reorganization of the Ludlow Youth Community Center. But his greatest contribution has been his dedicated service to St. Malachy's Church and its elementary school.

Confronted with poverty, gangs, and theft on a daily basis, McNamee somehow manages to help those who come to him.

I met John McNamee during my years as a teacher in the city's Quaker schools. Impressed by his book, "Diary of a City Priest," I invited him to speak to our students. Like a Quaker, his message was plain and simple: "It's natural for us to doubt and question our faith as long as we are willing to reach out to God and serve His creatures the best we can."

Father Mac represents all that is good about the Catholic Church. His refreshing example shows us that the priesthood about much more than saying mass or hearing confessions.

It's about being a seeker after the Lord and serving his creatures — especially the young — with the understanding that faith is an ongoing journey; not a destination. ★