

Reflections from a Regina Cleri resident

By FATHER JOHN J. NICHOLS

"When you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go!"



Recently, these words of Jesus Himself were addressed to all our priest residents from John 21:15-19 at our daily celebration of the sacred mysteries in our beautiful chapel at our home, the Regina Cleri Residence! Looking up to the baldachino over the altar, embedded beautifully for all of us to see, are the words: "Tu es Sacerdos in Aeternum" (You are a Priest Forever).

Sixty years ago, the much-loved and greatly respected Richard Cardinal Cushing — the Archbishop of Boston who ordained so many of us to the priesthood back then — determined that he would provide a residence for his retired and elderly priests. He made Regina Cleri (Queen of the Clergy) in Boston's West End a reality — a home for all who would dwell there "in the evening of our lives."

It would be a modest home, one with all the comforts of a life of service rendered to God's holy people. There, they would enjoy the fruits of a life well lived serving the local church — caring for the spiritual needs of so many people locally, and in some cases, all over the world! To date, more than 400 of our brother priests have lived out their lives in the peace and quiet with all the blessings such a holy house could provide.

Today, the 60 residents living here represent just under 3,000 cumulative years of service to the Church. Some have served as pastors and parochial vicars of so many parishes in our archdiocese. Others have traveled the world in the name of the archdiocese to serve in various missions in South America, or to care for the needs of the women and men of the Military Services of the United States. Others have spent their lives as priests teaching in universities and seminaries here in the archdiocese and beyond. We have had bishops living in this home, too. They have served in places of leadership in the local or worldwide Church.

Life at Regina Cleri is a joy and a blessing! We know that we can depend on the attentive and loving service available to us in a warm and caring environment. Our day-to-day needs have been directed in the past by three different priest directors, and



The last photograph of 'the five pennies' of Mr. and Mrs. Nichols, Jan. 6, 2020.

Photo courtesy/Father John J. Nichols

at present, by a well-qualified lay director who has been with us in various capacities for more than 30 years!

I am blessed to say that here at Regina Cleri, all our health needs are met by the 24/7 presence of a registered nurse and a very caring and gracious nursing staff. Our daily care is also blessed with three nutritious meals prepared and served by a competent and devoted kitchen staff. Additionally, we can rely on a friendly and experienced crew of maintenance people who add their thoughtful expertise to our every need! There are two devoted lay women who welcome any guests or visitors and provide secretari-

al services as well. In earlier years, from 1964-1978, the Sisters of Bon Secours were part of our Regina Cleri "family." In 1978, the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master — whose community was founded in Italy 100 years ago this very year — took over and have been with us ever since. These devoted Sisters are a special blessing to us. They live in the convent section of our home and add so much to our well-being day by day with their ever-present help for all of us.

All of us Regina Cleri residents realize that "we have here no lasting dwelling place . . .", but rather, we know that this is "God's waiting room." We know

that we will have no new or other "assignment" in our priestly life — our last years of service to God's people is living in service to one another. We are and always will be eternally grateful to our loving God, who in his Divine Providence has not only "called us" but has also placed each of us here at Regina Cleri as we prepare for our "last journey" to him!

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of this home, we give thanks to our Divine Master for his personal gift of priesthood to each of us! We thank most sincerely in our prayers the late Cardinal Cushing for his insight and wisdom, and for his successors who have followed him with kindness and compassion. We thank, also, all who serve or have served on the Board of Directors for Regina Cleri, and all those involved with the Clergy Trust.

We are grateful from the bottom of our priestly hearts to all who care for us here, and all those people who in any way have gifted us at Regina Cleri with their gracious and generous caring love! May I paraphrase and echo the famous and memorable last words of Cardinal Cushing and say, "you pray for us . . . and we will pray for you . . . and God bless us all!"



The baldachino over the altar in the chapel, embedded are the words: "Tu es Sacerdos in Aeternum" (You are a Priest Forever).

Pilot photo/Gregory L. Tracy