



The Alaskan Shepherd

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Some give by going to the Missions

Some go by giving to the Missions

Without both there are no Missions

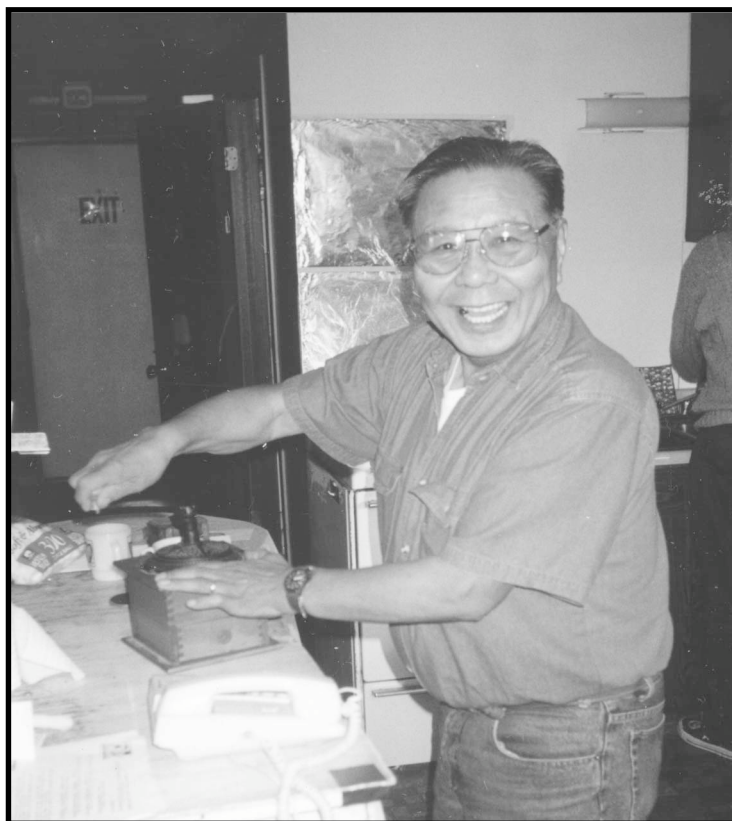
ESKIMO AND DEACON: ALVIN K. MAZONNA

The Inupiat Calendar assigns to the month of April the title, *Agaviksiuvik tatqiq*—"moon for beginning whaling." When eight years old, Alvin Kudlook Mazonna, a young Inupiat Eskimo, looked over the edge of his family's umiak (skin boat), from a wind chilled ice heave, at the deep, dark Arctic waters of the Bering Sea. With harpoon in place, the eyes of the young hunter searched for his ancient prey, a bowhead whale that would bring a great harvest to him and to his people.

With the passing of decades, the primitive hunt of his youth remains only a distant memory in the mind of Al Mazonna. Today, the great hunter from the Bering Sea village of Wales, now known best as "Deacon Al," hunts only for ways to increase the spiritual and sacramental life of his parish, Sacred Heart Cathedral. Deacon Al follows in the footsteps of his own father, Alfred Putooknuk Mazonna, who participated actively in village church services. Putooknuk would read and reread the readings and sermons for Sundays, so he could translate the English into Inupiaq.

Al Mazonna was born in Wales, Alaska, on January 2, 1934. At the age of twelve, he left behind the subsistence life-style of hunting whale, walrus, seal, and caribou to attend Mt. Edgecumbe School, in Sitka, Alaska. Al remembers, *"It was quite a change. I was real lonely and missed all my friends. Everything seemed different, including a change in my daily diet."* Al also recalls great differences in the customs of Wales and the schooling environment of Southeast Alaska. *"For the first time in my life I had to speak consistent English and eat all the time with a fork and a spoon. Even the climate was different, as I was not used to seeing rain in the winter and large trees everywhere around me."*

Mt. Edgecumbe High School plays a unique role in Alaska's education. Historically, the boarding school has served primarily students from rural Alaska who desire a more comprehensive high school program than what can reasonably be provided in their home village. Students are respected for their cultural background and diversity. They are as-



Deacon Al Mazonna grinds beans for the morning coffee, in Unalakleet, Alaska, while traveling with Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, SJ, in 1997.

All photos courtesy of Al Mazonna

sisted, guided, and challenged to make choices about future academic or technical schooling and optional methods for securing a livelihood.

One summer, when Al was about 15 years old, his parents didn't have enough money to bring him home to Wales. Consequently, he stayed and did volunteer work in the x-ray department of the TB sanitarium in Sitka.

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A special Mass is offered every day of the year for you and your intentions in one of the Missions. Please pray that God may bless us and our work.



A young Al Mazonna, 22 years old, joins the US Army in 1956, as an x-ray technician.

The disease known as “consumption” was particularly hard on Natives. In the first half of the 20th century, it was by far the biggest health threat facing Alaska’s indigenous people. “It was a disease that Native people lived with every day in that era and saw their families broken up and their children killed,” said Dr. Robert Fortuine, a medical historian from Wasilla who wrote about TB in his book

“Chills and Fever: Health and Disease in the Early History of Alaska.” In 1950, nearly 90 percent of 10-year-olds in Northern, Western, and Interior Alaska were infected. At the time, the usual medical treatment was to send the sick to sanitariums, where rest and nutritious food sometimes allowed patients to regain their health. Surgery was performed to remove infected parts of lung and bone.

The Mt. Edgecumbe “san,” on Sitka’s Alice Island, built in 1947, was a 150-bed facility for cases of tuberculosis of the lung. A surplus Navy hospital on nearby Japonski Island was converted into a 65-bed orthopedic hospital, primarily for children whose bones were crumbled by TB, with 20 beds in the basement for general hospital care. A new hospital was built three years later in 1950, with room for 200 tuberculosis patients. When a space “opened up,” it meant big decisions for families. Parents sent off small children who didn’t speak much English and who were too young to comprehend what was happening. Adults left not knowing who would fish or hunt or cook for their families. Worst of all, there was no cure. “In those days, when a Native person contracted TB, that was the kiss of death,” said Ted Borbridge, a Sitka tribal judge who spent ages 9 through 12 in a TB ward in Juneau. “They said goodbye, and they never expected to see them again.”

It was “here” that Alvin Mazonna found his future career. He went on to get his nursing credentials, went to seaman school, and began to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs on their supply ship, the *North Star*, on which he did x-rays, as the ship moved from village to village, in the 1950’s. Ella Latham recalls, “I remember when I was a little girl in Wales and the *North Star* would come around to do chest x-rays and Alvin Mazonna was there in his white uniform.” Al particularly made an impression on the young Ella, because he was one of the first Native Alaskans to become an x-ray technician. He enjoyed his village visits on the *North Star*. He made three trips to Barrow, and tells of the times they would help the King Islanders and the Diomeders return to their islands from Nome at the end of the summer. “We’d

unload in one village one day and be off to the next village in the morning. Sometimes we’d have really rough water and have to use the two tugboats we had on board to keep us from running aground on the beach.”

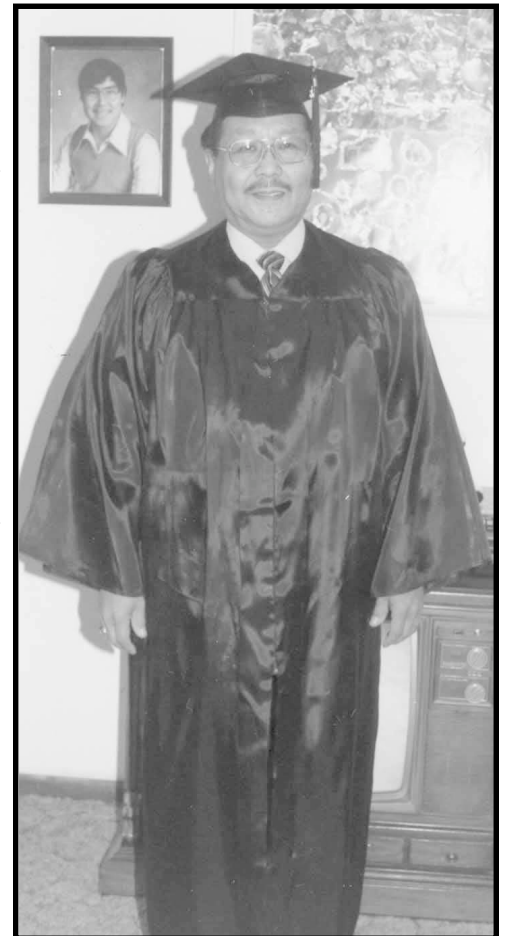
Al remembers with a grin, “As a teenager, I promised myself that I would get three things during my life-time: a Driver’s License, a Seaman’s Certificate, and a Private Pilot’s License—wanting to be able to drive on land, sea and air.” He received his Driver’s License in the 1950’s, in Alaska. Al earned his Seaman’s Certificate and LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) in 1954, his RT (Radiologic Technology) in the 60’s, and his Pilot’s License in 1974, at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma.

Al’s father moved his family to Nome in 1956 when he went to work at Lomen Commercial Company as Superintendent. Al remembers that Belmont Point used to be full of tents where villagers from Little Diomed and Wales would camp for the summer. The King Islanders camped on the east end of Nome.

In 1956, at Fort Greely, Alaska, Al voted in his first presidential election. In that same year, he began his military career under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in the United States Army, where he concentrated heavily upon x-ray and clinical work. For the next 22 years, Al worked in Army hospitals throughout the United States, serving in various capacities dealing with radiology. His duties also took him overseas to Korea and Vietnam.

Al met his wife, Elaine, in the military. She is from New Hampshire. They were married in Denver, Colorado, and celebrate 40 years of marriage this summer! Elaine was Catholic, and the Mazonnas raised their children Catholic. Al recalls, “I’d always gone to Mass with them, but I felt left out. I took instructions in the Catholic faith, when I was 31, ‘on post.’ I told the chaplain, Father Speitel, that I

At 54 years of age, Alvin K. Mazonna receives his Bachelor of Science in Health Studies and Hospital Administration, in 1988, in Palmer, Alaska.



Memoirs of a Yukon Priest



Please send to me _____copy(s) of
Memoirs of a Yukon Priest.
I enclose \$25.00 for each copy.

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Memoirs of a Yukon Priest, by Father Segundo Llorente, S.J., described as “an engagingly personal account of his 40 years in Alaska, written in an oral style...an outpour, a torrent of words rich in concrete, vivid detail, saturated with personal opinions, reflections, observations”-- can be ordered from *The Alaskan Shepherd*, 1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks, AK. 99709, for \$25.00 which includes shipping and handling.

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Dear Bishop Kettler:

Enclosed is my special donation of \$_____to the “Bush Travel Fund,” a fund intended exclusively for essential travel by you and your personnel within the Missionary Diocese of Fairbanks.

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Please make checks payable to:CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA

In Commemoration of Jubilee 2000, the Diocese of Fairbanks published,
in 2001, a 96-page volume entitled,

***A Brief Illustrated History of the Diocese of Fairbanks:
Profiles of Prelates and Churches, Past and Present.***

Please send me _____ copy(s) of
***A Brief Illustrated History
of the Diocese of Fairbanks --\$25.00 each.***

Name _____

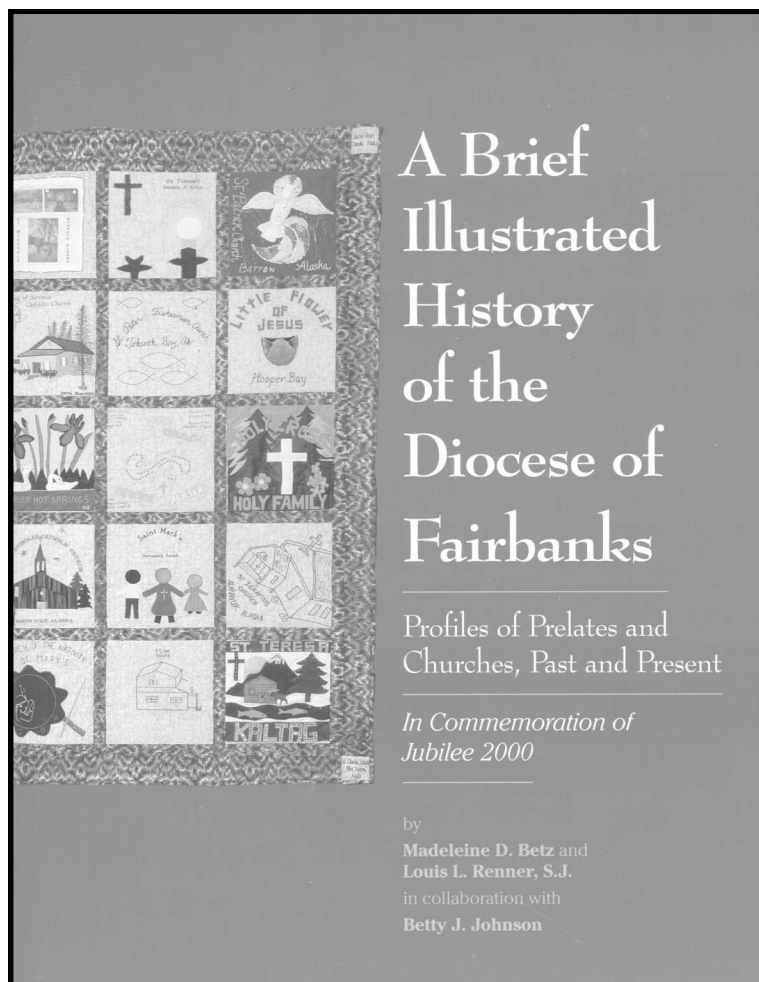
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The book begins with a Foreword and a digest history of the Diocese of Fairbanks by Madeleine D. Betz. Betz is also author of the second and largest part of the book, "Churches of the Diocese." This part has photos--most of them in color--of the 49 parish churches in use today. The photos are accompanied by a brief history of the given parish. The third section of the book, "Former Mission Churches" has photos of five one-time parish churches, with a brief parish history of each, written by Betty Johnson. Many will find the photos and brief histories of these five formerly active churches and parishes--Akulurak, King Island, Kokrines, Marys Igloo, and Pilgrim Springs--of special historic interest.

Part one of the book, "Prelates Past and Present," authored by Father Louis L. Renner, S.J., profiles men who have held ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the geographic region that today comprises the Diocese of Fairbanks. The men in question are: Bishop Modeste Demers; Archbishop Charles J. Seghers; Prefect Apostolic Paschal Tosi, S.J.; Prefect Apostolic Jean B. Rene, S.J.; Bishop Joseph R. Crimont, S.J.; Bishop Walter J. Fitzgerald, S.J.; Bishop Francis D. Gleeson, S.J.; Bishop George T. Boileau, S.J. (Bishop Boileau, though he died before becoming Ordinary of the Diocese of Fairbanks, is included since he was ordained bishop with right of succession to that post.); Bishop Robert L. Whelan, S.J.; Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J.; and Diocesan Administrator Richard D. Case, S.J. A black and white photo and a biographical sketch constitute the profile of each of these prelates.

The volume ends with photos and brief biographical sketches of authors Betz and Renner, as well as of their collaborator, Betty J. Johnson. It was Johnson who did the final editing and preparing of this book for publication. The truly attractive layout and design of the book is owing to the extreme care lavished upon it by Mr. Dixon J. Jones--a gratis contribution on the part of *Designata/Dixon J. Jones*--to the Diocese's Jubilee 2000 celebrations.





The new Deacons and their "assignments" in 1999, are, from left to right: Al Mazonna, Sacred Heart Cathedral parish; Sean Stack, Immaculate Conception parish; Bill Dourte, Sacred Heart Cathedral parish; Dez Martinez, Anchorage Archdiocese; and Bob Bernard, Good Shepherd Chapel, Fort Wainwright.

would like to surprise my wife about taking instructions. I received my first Holy Communion on December 10, 1965." Elaine "found out," to her delight, the night before.

In 1978, the same year he retired from the military, as a Sergeant First Class, Al Mazonna received the Meritorious Medal, for outstanding service as NCOIC (Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge) of the Radiology Department, Cutler Army Hospital, Ft. Devens, MA. Established in 1969, the Meritorious Service Medal is an award presented for either outstanding achievement or meritorious service in a non-combat situation or setting. Prior to introduction of the Meritorious Service Medal, the Bronze Star Medal was awarded for such achievement or meritorious service.

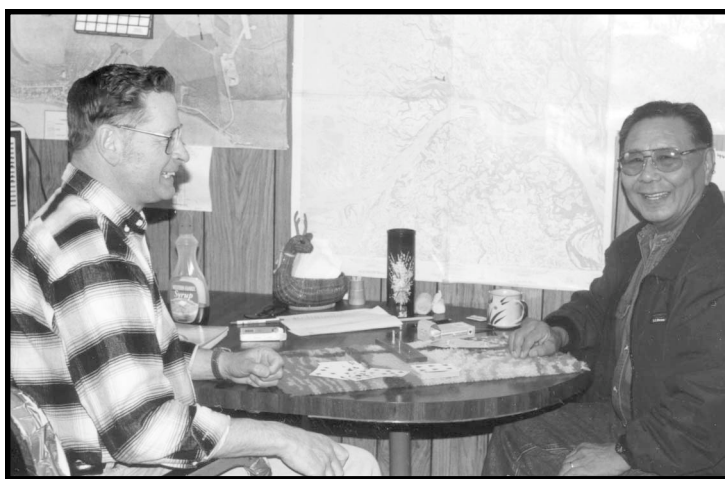
In 1978, Al returned to Alaska with his family, and began working, in Anchorage, at The Alaska Hospital and Medical Center as an x-ray technician. Father Fred Bugarin—(now at Kodiak) then pastor of Al's parish, Sacred Heart, in Wasilla—casually mentioned to Al that he should check out the Deacon program.

Following his retirement, and the raising of his three children, Al began college. He received his Bachelor of Science in Health Studies and Hospital Administration in 1988, in Palmer, Alaska. Al took master's level courses in counseling, especially in Alcohol and Drug Abuse for Adolescent treatment programs.

Al, now fully retired, and Elaine moved to Fairbanks in 1992, and there, he began to "check out" the Deacon program at Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish. Hear about the process in Deacon Al's own words: *"I started the application process in early 1995, and after testing and interviews for acceptance, I was officially accepted, through the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Ordination as a Deacon, on Sunday, October 13, 1996. The formation process took four years and includes: Theological, Pastoral and Spiritual formation with regular evaluations. At the end of the third year and beginning of the fourth year, we were Instituted Readers and Acolytes. In the final twenty weeks of our formation, we were assigned to different parishes for internship. On completion of internship, and further reviews and evaluations, we were ordained to the Order of Deacons, for the Diocese of Fairbanks, by the Most Reverend Michael J. Kaniecki, SJ, Bishop of Fairbanks, Alaska, on Saturday, October 16, 1999.*

That was the proudest moment for my wife Elaine and me, and the rest of our family. I keep at my desk at home, pictures of Bishop Mike during his homily that day and praying over me, along with my classmates during the ordination.

Among my most remembered moments, would have to be my travels with Bishop Mike, as his "Co-Pilot" in his plane, (as I am also a Pilot), and visiting 26 out of 49 parishes in this Diocese. We played a lot of cribbage, took turns washing dishes and visiting. It was a privilege to assist the Bishop in Eucharistic Liturgy Celebrations on these trips.



Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, SJ, and Deacon Al Mazonna play cribbage after finishing breakfast and dishes in Emmonak, Alaska, in 1997.

Another remembered moment, was when the Bishop, asked Sam Demeintieff, Susan Paskvan and me, to have our left hands imprinted in plaster of paris, to be cast in bronze, for a "Hands of Peace" exhibit in which our handprints and testimony, are displayed in the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center, in Washington D.C. This was a privilege given by Bishop Kaniecki, as there are only 150 hand imprints displayed from throughout the world. If you visit the Center, you will

In order to save postage and to use as much of your dollar for the missions as possible, we do not acknowledge all donations. However, if you wish a receipt or an acknowledgment of your donation, just let us know. And again, we who serve here in the Far North want to express to you, our kind benefactors, our very sincere thanks for all the generous help you have been giving us in our need.



Above, Al Mazonna poses next to his image on a translucent wall with life-sized images--portraying the many faces of the Catholic Church. Below, standing next to his wife Elaine, Al places his hand in the bronze cast made for the "Hands of Peace" exhibit. Both the mural and cast are displayed at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center, in Washington DC.



also see the murals of Sam and me. We are displayed on a translucent wall with life-sized images--portraying the many faces of the Catholic Church. My wife Elaine and I visited the Center in June 2001."

Lest you think that Deacon Al Mazonna completed his education, he has since learned to play the guitar, violin, and accordion. He and Elaine continue to be very active at Sacred Heart Cathedral and are much loved by parishioners.

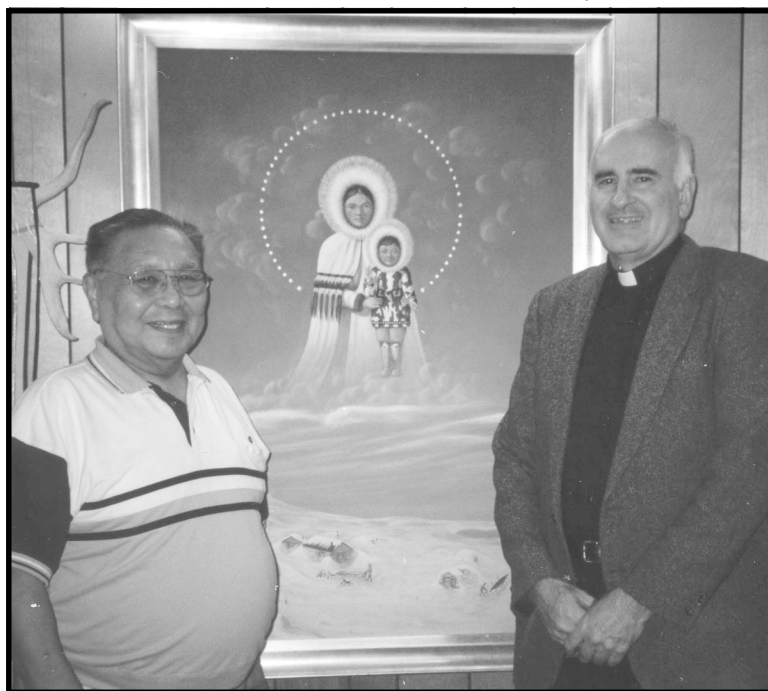
Father Ed Hartmann, Cathedral pastor, writes about Deacon Al's service: "Ever since his ordination to the Diaconate, Deacon Al has been totally immersed in the spiritual and sacramental life of the parish. With his broad experi-

ence from the military and being a Native Alaskan, his preaching has reached the minds and hearts of our parish family with his many stories of his culture and 'real life' examples from his own experiences. He also heads up the Baptismal Preparation Program for the Cathedral. This provides a monthly meeting with the parents and godparents of our children to be baptized and he catechizes on this sacrament monthly. He is also actively involved in marriage preparation and the celebration of marriage with the couple and their family and friends. Though he is living with back problems that cause him a great deal of pain and discomfort, he is always eager to minister, no matter what the cost to himself. Deacon Al is loved by the parish and is a great asset to the over all ministry at Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish."

In a recent homily, given by Deacon Al, he spoke lovingly of the Eucharist. Mentioning that Jesus is waiting to give us life and healing. He closed with the reminder to go out in the coming week "to the neighboring villages" and proclaim the Good News.

After visiting 26 out of 49 "neighboring villages" of this 409,849-square mile Missionary Diocese—we can safely assume, that Deacon Alvin K. Mazonna practices what he preaches!

—Patty Walter



Deacon Al poses with Bishop Donald Kettler, in front of the "Our Lady of the Arctic Snows," picture hanging in the Chancery lobby. (Smaller copies of this picture are available from the Alaskan Shepherd --for the asking.)

Photo By Patty Walter

Sincere thanks to those of you who occasionally send us stamps. For those who inquire about our immediate needs, in addition to stamps, we are always in need of rosaries and Pieta Prayer books.

Again we assure you that we never, under any circumstances, sell, exchange, give out the names of our benefactors. This has been and continues to be our sacred pledge.