

Father Mac's legacy — the three-legged dog

MORAL PERSPECTIVES



REV. ROBERT SCHADEN

Mac's wake service was seasoned by a number of stories about the kind of man and the kind of pastor he had been. The stories were told by a number of people who spanned the gamut of society's many rungs, as well as the nearly 40 years of the ministry of the Rev. Tom McAnany.

Listening to young adults, and folks who left that category long ago, tell of their experiences was a religious experience in itself. Even those who could not be

heard very well spoke an important message as they stood at a microphone they didn't quite know how to use.

Some of the stories were important for everyone to hear. All of the stories were important for the tellers to share. But the Mac story that struck me more than any of them was the revelation that Mac had a three-legged dog. When asked why he would have a three-legged dog, Father Mac simply replied that someone had to take in the three-legged dogs of the world.

I rather doubt that it ever occurred to him that this offhand comment would impact people even after he had left this world. I never saw that three-legged dog, whose name I do not know, nor for that matter, did I see that much of Father Mac. But in the week that has passed since I heard the story I have not been able to get that dog out of my mind.

The pastor of Rosary parish on

the corner of Woodward and the Ford freeway left a life-giving message in the story of his three-legged dog.

Let's face it: We are all three-legged dogs. And Tom was right on the mark. What kind of world would we have if the only creatures accepted were those who fit the mold of the perfect anything?

Most of us have seen or experienced the kind of world it is when the three-legged dogs are not accepted. It makes for a lonely world, and a frightening one as well. Lonely because we are then led to believe that only when we are perfect can we truly be accepted, and frightening because down deep we all know that we only have three legs. What if someone finds out?

In the meantime, we cannot even accept ourselves because the message has been etched on our psyches that only the perfect need apply when love and acceptance

are the quest.

On the other hand, we may have been blessed enough to know, also from experience, what a magnificent world it can be when the three-legged dogs can stand right up there along side the four-legged ones.

Our years have shown us the marvel of getting to the moon, the wonder of a flower that breaks through the snow, the beauty of a sun that sets like it never did before.

We may know how satisfying it is to pass an exam, to get a raise or even to find a job. But is there really anything that can match the experience of being accepted and loved unconditionally?

Is there anything that can touch the abundance that is felt when someone has let us know that the number of legs we have doesn't matter, that we are as lovable as if we had four? It just doesn't get any better than that!

If only more of those folks who

do not know how to be anyone other than themselves, those who fail to match our measure of perfection, could know that they are OK anyway. More of us need to know that taking in the three-legged dogs is simply the thing to do.

The Rev. Robert Schaden is with Neuman House at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. If you have a question or comment, call him at 953-2047, mail box number 1876, on a touch-tone phone.

Churches sought to comfort AIDS victims

About 100 people showed up at Pontiac's First Presbyterian Church recently for an interfaith church service designed to convince religious folks to be more sympathetic to AIDS patients.

"If there was any attendance) at all then it was a good response," said Denise Johnson, a

spokeswoman for the Oakland County Committee for AIDS Resource Development, which organized the service.

Ultimately, the AIDS committee hopes to convince area religious leaders and their flocks that people with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome are as wor-

thy of their charity and compassion as anyone else.

According to the most recent state health department statistics, there are 3,232 documented cases of AIDS in Michigan, including 339 in Oakland County, 1,474 in Detroit and 320 in the rest of Wayne County.

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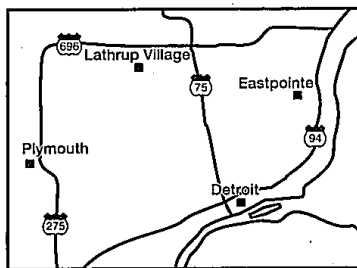
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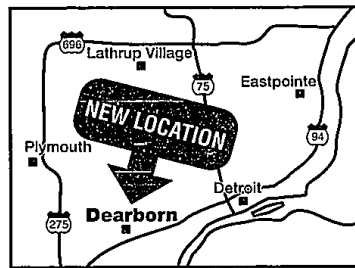
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