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NCR archives: A church man of intergity

Dennis Coday | Jan. 11, 2012 NCR Today
NCR Archives

Here's something for the NCR archives. The life of Jim Shannon, formerly an auxiliary bishop in St. Paul-Minneapolis, still carries message for us today. Click on the headline below to go to the full story, which is on a very old version of our website. The story appeared in the Sept. 19, 2003 print edition.

Appreciation: James Shannon loved the church all his life [1]

Bishop who resigned over Humanae Vitae and married is laid to rest with honors

By MARY BADER

My friend had only days to live. She had made peace with everything in her life but the Catholic church. The church, to which she had once given so much of her generous self, had torched a great, lingering anger in her when it annulled her marriage. In her eyes, the legalism of the church was telling her that her many years as a wife and mother of their children did not amount to a real marriage. She felt, she said, like a pariah.

Those of us who loved her could never convince her that it didn?t matter what the canon lawyers said. She was as much a part of our church as she had been her entire life but she didn?t believe us. Until, that is, her friend Jim Shannon paid a visit. He knew better than most about pariahs in the church. A short time before she lost consciousness and slipped into eternity, he quietly blessed her and she died in peace.

And now Shannon himself has slipped into eternity, having quietly and by example encouraged our generation of Catholics who knew him to stay involved in the church, despite profound disagreements with some of the decisions of the hierarchy. His often-repeated statement that ?the Catholic church is my spiritual home? led others to realize the same. His refusal to become the pariah that some once branded him gave us an example of how to live in an ambiguous world where the road to justice seems always to climb a very steep hill indeed.

As one admirer who knew him as a young priest put it, ?His life showed us all that we could remain in the church and live a life of service for others without being either repressed or embittered.?

James Patrick Shannon once seemed destined to be the ecclesiastical superstar of the St. Paul and Minneapolis archdiocese .....

Read the full story. [1]

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[1] http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2003c/091903/091903s.htm