



The Arlington

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Hidden treasure uncovered

Long-forgotten time capsule reveals link to Virginia Catholic history

By **JIM HALE**
Catholic Herald Staff Writer

It seemed like a normal weekday of pastoral work in early February for Father Donald J. Planty Jr., pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Church in Arlington. But he was about to make two discoveries leading to a secret hidden for 107 years.

First, a maintenance worker informed him that, hidden away in an old closet, was clearly the 1955 cornerstone of the parish school and convent. It had most likely been removed and stored away when the new parish center was built in 2004. More significantly, it appeared to contain a time capsule.

"I was excited — I love history and I know the history of this parish very well," Father Planty said. "And sure enough, there were treasures in there."

The greatest treasure he found in the time capsule was a list of ministers serving an ordination Mass, type-written in Latin on crinkled paper, dated "21 Decembris, 1918."

"The biggest surprise was seeing that a man who hopefully one day will be a canonized saint was right here at St. Charles," he said. "I thought, 'This is awesome and inspiring.' The Servant of



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God Frank Parater, that holy seminarian, had been here and served a Mass in the old church."

It seems that Parater, a 20-year-old seminarian of the Diocese of Richmond — which at that time comprised all of Virginia — traveled with Bishop Denis J. O'Connell to serve a Mass for the ordination of subdeacons on the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle that morning in Arlington.

One of the three men ordained to the subdiaconate was Leonard Koster, who later served as pastor at St. Charles and



COURTESY RICHMOND DIOCESE

A cornerstone dating back to 1955, recently discovered at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Arlington, contains a time capsule with treasures including an old edition of *The Evening Star*, a Virginia map and clues about Servant of God Frank Parater (above), pictured in his Boy Scout uniform.

ordained to pastor. He later also built the church (1960) and rectory (1965).

Until now, no one knew that Servant of God Francis J. Parater, who died at 23 in Rome in 1920 while studying at the Pontifical North American College, had ever visited Arlington.

"This reminds us that holiness is possible in any place, including here," said Father Planty. "Sometimes, as Americans, I think we're tempted to think of the lands of the saints as the far-off France of St. Therese or the Rome of the martyrs, but our land too has been bathed with the blood of martyrs — the Jesuit Martyrs in New York — we have two saints buried in Philadelphia (Sts. John Neumann and Katharine Drexel), one in Emmitsburg, Md. (St. Elizabeth Ann Seton), one in New York City (St. Frances Xavier Cabrini), and this holy man and, God-willing, future saint, who is buried in Rome but who trod this earth right here at St. Charles Parish."

A native of Richmond, Parater was recognized as a model of Christian virtue as a child who had extraordinary gifts of evangelism. Stricken with Rheumatic Fever in Rome and knowing that

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BURKE NATIVITY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Serving neighbors

'No Hands But Yours' ministry volunteers supply food and support to the homeless.

By **ANNA DONOFRIO**
Catholic Herald Staff Writer

Early Sunday morning March 8, a little corner of the parking lot at Nativity Catholic Church in Burke swiftly fills with cars stuffed to the brim with food and volunteers. The air is soon filled

with conversation and laughter, as the volunteers count and swap boxes of donations: peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, boiled eggs, bananas, baked potatoes, bagels, cases of water bottles, even work gloves, toilet paper and hand sanitizer.

The donation caravans are part of No Hands But Yours, a Nativity ministry devoted to serving the homeless and those in need in Northern Virginia and Washington. Every Sunday, volunteers meet at the parish, split the donations evenly,

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