

PASCHAL CARL BAIER, O.CARM. (1908-1953)
Kieran O'Hara, O.Carm.

FATHER Paschal Baier was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on Christmas Eve, in the year 1908. His parents, Wenzel Baier and Anna Schauer, were members of Holy Trinity Carmelite Parish. Father Vincent Metzler baptized Father Paschal on January 10, 1909, and he was given the name Carl. His entire grade school education was gained in Holy Trinity School under the guidance of the Sisters of Providence. In 1922 he was confirmed by Bishop Boyle and graduated to high school in 1924.

During his grade school days he and his brother Tony, his constant companion, left their mark throughout the neighborhood of Holy Trinity Parish. His extra-curricular activities consisted in being an altar boy, a paper boy, and he reached his peak in his juvenile business world when he became a clerk in Walter's Confectionery store. Even during his first years at Niagara he spent the summers working for Father Leo Walter's brothers in their store on Center Avenue. Another source of revenue during his early years was lighting fires for his Hebrew neighbors at the close of the Passover. Brother Anthony Jawelak will remember him first as one always willing to act as a guide.

Traits such as his amiability and deep kindness were most evident even as a young boy. It was his constant cheerfulness and "happy to be alive" attitude that made him a favorite companion. Even as a boy he was so much the victim of teasing, it is difficult to separate the truth from fiction in relating the story of his life. His life was so colorful it is most difficult to check oneself and write a cold biography or chronology. His love for people, especially little ones, the ones in trouble and the unfortunate, made him an ideal choice for his vocation in life. In him was a natural friendliness and an ability to laugh easily. He never got around to looking upon himself as superior to others. A new-comer was not long a stranger to Dutch Baier. From early years he was known as "Dutch." He carried this nick name all his life. Many are under the false impression he acquired this name after a stellar performance in the lead role of the play *The Dutch Detective*.

Long before he entered Niagara, his father, another "Unforgettable Character," taught him the necessity of hard work. His mother died before he entered Niagara. As impressive as his cheerfulness was his habit of keeping busy. To him, living and working were synonymous. Even the most drab jobs took on color and were always undertaken with enthusiasm. It was second nature for him to be driven to do his best. He sold newspapers on the Lincoln street cars with the same enthusiasm that he sold Christ to youth later in life. He even became tired in an energetic way. Any free time he had was spent up on Gazam Hill playing sandlot ball. His idol was the greatest Dutchman of them all, Honus Wagner. Maybe the bowed legs were encouraged in his effort to be as good a ball player as the Pittsburgh Flying Dutchman. He entered Niagara a far better than average second baseman and part time pitcher. As in everything else, he played to win. He could argue a technicality with the same zeal displayed when he tried to convince people that his old bivouac, Gazam Hill, was not called Goat Hill. As Father Paschal grew older, the fine qualities that all loved in him increased. Only in

statue was he delinquent. Some might refer to him as the little giant. Each good trait grew from the time he lived on Gazam Hill until his mortal life ended in Laurel Mountain. Even in the spiritual life he began on a hill and ended on a mountain. During his high school days at Niagara he applied himself with the usual Baier enthusiasm. Languages and history were his forte. The difference in these subjects and science and mathematics was the difference between the high 90s and the low 90s. Even in high school, as in later life, nobody was ever neutral about Father Paschal. One episode in his freshman year occurred in the study hall when his Gazam Hill training came to the fore and he returned an apple core to its rightful owner after it bounced off his head. He often said that he was fully convinced the dressing down he received from Father Chrysostom Anderson meant he would be on the next train back to Pittsburgh. His love for sports found plenty of opportunity at Niagara. Third base became a more familiar place from which you would hear his constant chatter. Next to baseball, his best sport was skating and hockey. His hockey was played with the wild abandon required for survival on a Niagara team at that time. During most of his years as a Marianus at Niagara he acted as sacristan for Father Simon Schmidt, the pastor of Our Lady of Peace Church.

Following his novitiate at Niagara, Frater Paschal was sent to Washington to begin his college studies at the Catholic University of America. His scholastic record at Washington was on a par with the results of Niagara. During his freshman year he immediately became a member of the Freshman Honor Society and continued as an honor student, or 90 student, throughout his four years of college. He graduated in June of 1933 with Greek as major and Latin as minor. As a simple professed student there began for him an organized constant progress in the Carmelite way of life. His classmates are witnesses to these beginnings of his deep study of things Carmelite. As the years went by in Washington, his preparation for his solemn vows kept pace with his achievements in the academic world. On the Feast of the Assumption in 1932 he made his solemn vows.

After another year at Washington, he arrived in Chicago to begin teaching at Mt. Carmel High School and to study theology. Those were difficult days at Mt. Carmel. With theology and a demand for his teaching ability in the high school, the days were long and arduous. It was a continuous drive to complete the things necessary for the course of theology and also carry the burdens of the high school Latin professor. He taught other subjects at Mt. Carmel, but will be best remembered by the boys as "Father Latin." During his years as a teacher at Mt. Carmel, it was the regular thing for the visitor from the State North Central Association to comment on the energy and thoroughness of that "Little Man" teaching Latin in 104. In theology, the priest who gave him his first "dressing down," Father Chrysostom, found him a leader in his class. Hard work was part of his make-up, and his theology teachers, such as Father Laurence Diether and Father Chrysostom, found him an ideal subject with a deep piety in which to plant the principles of dogma and morals.

On May 31, 1936 Father Paschal was ordained in Quigley Memorial Chapel in Chicago. He

was ordained in a class of twelve. It was on Trinity Sunday, June 7, that he returned to his home Parish, Holy Trinity in Pittsburgh, and sang his first Solemn Mass At the altar he was assisted by Father Anthony Dressel, as arch-priest; Father Augustine Vander Schans, as deacon; Father Charles Scharf, as sub-deacon; and Father Dion Lickteig as Master of Ceremonies. The sermon was delivered by the priest who baptized him, his old pastor and boyhood confessor, Father Vincent Metzler.

After ordination Father returned to Mt. Carmel in Chicago. He remained either at Mt. Carmel or as prior of the St. Clara Community until 1941. During his time as a priest at Mt. Carmel he served on the school council as dean of the Latin department and also as Athletic Director. As Athletic Director he was also in charge of Camp Carmel. It was in 1935 that he served his first year as counselor at Camp Carmel on the banks of Hudson Lake, and 14 miles from Notre Dame University. The summers before Camp Carmel was opened he studied at Notre Dame University. From that time until a year before the camp was closed, each May found him in the midst of plans for the coming summer. The camp was conducted for boys of grammar or high school age. A successful season demanded many weeks of seeking candidates. Each year that Father Paschal was in charge of the camp a credit balance showed on the books. Despite the constant repair needed and new buildings to be built, he always showed a profit at the end of each season. He carried the title of Camp Director, but the glory was only in the name. It carried great responsibility and heavy physical work. As Athletic Director he was constantly interested more in the spiritual side of the varsity than in their athletic prowess. Each boy on the team also had to give a personal accounting for any drop in marks. Even many of the faculty did not know of the many hours he spent counseling individual boys in the locker rooms, seated on a bench. We could cover it all by saying he knew his boys.

In 1939 he was transferred to St. Clara Community and took over the position of prior. He continued teaching a full schedule at Mt. Carmel along with his work of Athletic Director. While at St. Clara's he also acted as Shrine Director for different periods. His life at St. Clara's was truly the mixed life. During the day he taught at Mt. Carmel and in the evenings he gave his time over to parish work. His list of converts was astounding. The parishioners of St. Clara's soon learned his value as a confessor for the oldest even to the youngest. In the pulpit his success was due mostly to his sincerity. His sermons were simple, but sincere. The first grader and the aged listened with the same rapt attention. He never seemed to preach to a crowd, but to an individual. He avoided platitudes and one sensed a long preparation, both remote and proximate. There was always present an apology and he talked "up" to the people, never "down." One practice of his still lingers about St. Clara Parish. It was his regular visit to the school each week on his way home from Mt. Carmel. He did not visit all the classes, but usually just the first grade. The first graders always talked to him in the familiar and relaxed way they reserve for one of their own. He used these frequent visits as a source of recreation.

In 1942, Father left St. Clara's and returned to Niagara to take over the task of master of professed students. Although it was with a heavy heart that he left Chicago and St. Clara, there were very few who knew it. During the years after, he always looked forward to an opportunity to visit Chicago. The entire province considered the choice of

Father Paschal as master of professed, a happy one. The clerics soon learned to look upon their new master as one who had his whole heart in their interest. Many, for the years to come, will be able to look back on their lives and realize that he conveyed to them a deep love for our Order. Even more, a deep love for the Patroness of All Carmelites. One had only to witness his complete obedience to understand the depth of his love for Carmel. Niagara was a complete change after Chicago. Teaching in the school was different; his first responsibility, "the Frats," was greater in his eyes than anything he had ever undertaken before. Even his physical or manual work was different. "Dutch" Baier from the city streets of Pittsburgh had to become a farmer. The gardens at Niagara meant much to the Order in supplying the house with fresh vegetables in season and the Sisters with things to preserve for the winter months. It meant a complete new study and a study that was not to be a hobby, but a big financial investment, not to mention the human investment of many man hours of work on the part of the Fratres. His beginnings were small, as suited his cautious nature, but before long the truck garden at Niagara was carrying on in full swing. As a side line he permitted himself the joy of a few flowers. During this time at Niagara he also acted as novice master for the brothers. He also gained his Master's Degree at the University of Niagara.

At the provincial chapter in 1948 he was named novice master of the clerics and once more packed his trunk and left for New Baltimore. The change to Niagara was a radical one, but the one to New Baltimore demanded even a greater adjustment. The novices had to be received and molded into religious. Only twelve short months to accomplish the job. Father Paschal's temperament caused him to approach the new duty with fear and misgivings. As always, he gave his best despite his own feelings that he fell short of what he thought a good novice master should be. The observation of another was summed up in this manner. "His was a difficult life in New Baltimore as novice master, yet I never heard him complain. He just went ahead and did his best. Every minute of his time was available for his novices. No one was ever turned away impatiently." During the first three years as novice master he also held the position of assistant provincial. The acid test of his concern for his novices was his reluctance to leave New Baltimore. As assistant provincial he often needed to travel to different parts of the province. Even when it was to Chicago or places he enjoyed much, there was always the urge to return to New Baltimore. As a retreat master he was in great demand, but except on some few occasions he placed his novitiate work first and foremost. Anyone who knew the man well can understand why he was considered such a good novice master in all eyes except his own.

It was on October 5th, 1953 that his mortal life ended. He and Father George Klasinski, the procurator of the novitiate, left the monastery to attend the funeral Mass of a neighboring priest. Just a few miles west of New Baltimore on the Lincoln Highway, Route 30, the end came. It was sudden and with the quickness of lightning, but one must feel that the suddenness was slow in comparison with the speed of prayer that must have reached his lips. All his life he was a "quick study" in prayer. It was a head-on auto collision that ended his earthly career in Carmel. The novices, silent in their sorrow, and the people of New Baltimore in their tears, spoke for all who knew him.

A Solemn Requiem Mass was sung at the novitiate and then the body was transferred to Holy Trinity Church in Pittsburgh. Only his sister Anna and his brother Joseph are left of the immediate family. He was buried in Our Lady of Mt. Carmel cemetery on the east side of Pittsburgh. *R. I. P.*