

"The Greatest Generation"



Marie and Jim Gallagher met and began their life together the same time eighteen year old Bob Humbert entered the Society of Jesus in August, 1940.



A GREAT FRIENDSHIP

IT WAS A LOVE OF PEOPLE THAT MOTIVATED FR. BOB HUMBERT
IN SO MUCH OF THE WORK HE DID AS A JESUIT

by George Kearney



Jim and Marie Gallagher, 2001

Their relationship began where so many good ones do—on the first tee of a golf course. On the pleasant afternoon when they first met in 1963, neither Fr. Bob Humbert, Jim Gallagher, nor his wife Marie could have predicted the truly wondrous lifelong companionship that would develop after they were introduced by Fr. Ed Robinson, SJ, at the Inverness Golf Club in Palatine, Illinois.

Jim, a veteran of World War II who was working in his father's business, A.J. Gallagher Insurance Brokers, was drawn immediately to Fr. Humbert. "He was just so full of life," Gallagher said of his old friend, "he loved people and he was good to people." It was this love of people that drove Fr. Humbert in so much of the work he did and the relationships he sustained as a Jesuit. It was his love for others that compelled him to literally carry his father through his last days when he was almost completely in-





Marie and Jim Gallagher consider Bob Humbert, SJ, as "part of the Gallagher family."

Bob Humbert, St. Xavier High School Class of 1940



Then they would return to the house and have dinner with the Gallagher family.

"He was more than just a great friend to us," Marie Gallagher said of Fr. Humbert, "he was part of the family. He was *our* Jesuit." On those Thursdays, Fr. Humbert, who had played college baseball at Xavier, tutored the Gallagher children in the fundamentals of the game in their backyard. He taught them how to pick up ground balls and how to throw properly. Eventually baseball gave way to math and Fr. Humbert again answered the call. He enjoyed sitting at the kitchen table directing Jay Gallagher, Jim and Marie's oldest son, through systems of equations and other algebraic challenges. He was an expected guest at Thanksgivings and Christmases with the Gallagher family.

Recently these old friends had a chance to rekindle some memories of time spent together when the Gallaghers traveled to the Colombiere Center in Clarkston, Michigan, where Fr. Humbert is now living because of a rare neurological disorder.

"It was very hard for us to watch his health deteriorate, and we were sad when he told us that he wanted to go to Colombiere," Marie said. "I was also worried about the place. So many nursing homes are just not nice places, and we worried that he might be in a place like that." But on their visit to Colombiere they were overjoyed to find inviting buildings, caring people, the strong brotherhood of the Jesuit community, and a smile on Fr. Humbert's face. The smile isn't surprising, considering the following remarks from Fr. Humbert: "I can't say enough about Colombiere. The staff is marvelous; they are competent, and loving. It is a truly wonderful place."

Despite Fr. Humbert's satisfaction with his surroundings and his station in life, Marie and Jim Gallagher admit that sometimes it's difficult to see their dear friend in a wheelchair. "He was such a powerful man, a great athlete, and a truly independent being," Jim said of Fr. Humbert, who remains part of their family as evidenced by Marie's remarks, "we still love him, and want to help take care of him." So the Gallaghers are making an effort to keep Fr. Humbert in their family, and to help take care of him and make his years at Colombiere joyful ones. They try to call regularly, write often, and always keep him in their thoughts and prayers.

Their work must be paying off. Fr. Humbert recently referred to Colombiere as "the doorstep to heaven." He also added that "it's a perfect example of the tremendous care the Society of Jesus gives to its Jesuits."

Fr. Humbert spent his life giving that care to others, and now he has given the Gallagher family a tremendous gift, the opportunity to repay him with their companionship and generosity. ■

capacitated. It was the same love for people that drove him to countless wakes and funerals for families and friends of Loyola Academy, where he served as the director of alumni relations for over twenty years.

Br. Jim Small, who has called Fr. Humbert a friend since 1940 and spent years with him at Loyola Academy, joked that "he's been to more wakes and funerals than any ten men I know." Br. Small added that Fr. Humbert "was always a very caring person, a very kind, prayerful, and holy person."

It was Fr. Humbert's gentle love for others, gregarious nature, and fine sense of humor that prompted the Gallaghers to invite him to their home in Palatine. When he was working as the Assistant to the Chicago Provincial he worked on Saturday and Sunday but was free on Thursdays. So every Thursday morning he would venture from Oak Park to the northwestern suburb of Palatine where he would join the Gallaghers for lunch and a game of golf.

