

## Cheated Out of Forever

*my life as a Catholic....so far*

I guess all the robust, manly priests I remember from my boyhood days have gone to their graves or jail cells, replaced by these often sweet young men who would be more comfortable hanging with my womenfolk than packing a fishing rod in the trunk with a six-pack and heading for the lake like we did when we were altar boys. Don't forget the cigars, Father. We didn't care much whether Father liked little girls or little boys, as long as he left us alone, but we would rather he knew how to hook a fat bass than sing Kum Bay Yah around the campfire.

My wife and I went last Sunday morning to the 11:15 Mass at the Church of St. Gerunda, a man or woman of Balkan extraction who has evidently escaped the notice of church-namers across America. "Gerry," as Father Tim calls him ... and each time he does I see Germans coming over the hill shooting at John Wayne.... wants everyone to live in peace and harmony, because St. Gerry comes from a war-torn land and knows what it's like to have your teacher blown to bits during your favorite art activity at school. I can understand that.

Father Tim is a veritable peacock. Not effeminate by any means, he just can't do anything without calling attention to himself. He's a nice young man who

can be either overly serious or outright hilarious and nothing in between. He just lives at the ends of a normal emotional spectrum. Seldom seen in priestly black and often wearing shorts, at the Mass we noticed his surplice ended just below his knees to expose a pair of hairy bare legs, as if to flash us.

We all sang three or four "hymns" containing the same chord progression of C, Am, F, G7 that has obsessed music heard at Mass since 1963. I am still astonished the last Pope didn't canonize Peter, Paul and Mary. I looked at Father Tim's guitar and knew what I would do If I Had A Hammer.

The day's gospel in our copy of the Missalette should have included the same phrase that ends the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." I never cease to feel my heart lift up when I hear that verse. But for some reason, following no version I've heard of .... not the Douay-Rheims, Revised Standard, King James or even the Good News .... the author of the pamphlet for the Mass had officially changed the verse to, "And I will live in God's house for a long time." A long time? I leaned over to my wife and said, "We just got cheated out of forever." "Good news for you," she said, "hell was forever too."

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