

Just as at Wuerzburg and Milan, I again had to interest myself in the cemeteries. The fences needed replacement, grave stones had to be straightened and reset, records had to be updated and

both cemeteries enlarged and platted. The east side of the St. Wenceslaus' cemetery was bordered by a row of tall scraggly shrubs which were intended to form a hedge but which had never been trimmed.

One day I took a long chalk line, stretched it the length of the cemetery about a foot off the ground and cut every one down to the same height. Every parishioner, upon seeing the accumulated brush from the mutilated shrubs, thought their pastor to be suffering from some peculiar weakness of mind. However, the following spring when they saw the plants start sprouting and spreading into a beautiful hedge, they began to realize that this was part of my hobby and that I was at least an amateur horticulturist.

Since all aspects of the cemetery and church property needed a complete overhaul, I called a bee of all able bodied parishioners. Prior to calling the bee, with the help of neighbors, we set all corner posts and braces in concrete, had steel posts and wire delivered, and made arrangements to have a cement mixer, cement, sand, gravel and lumber on the premises, so that when the men came we could go to work.

To my surprise, over seventy parishioners showed up, and I was kept busy supervising the fencing, the laying of sidewalk, including new steps into the church, the straightening of grave stones and the platting of the cemetery with metal markers. All the improvements I dreamed of were finished in a day with not one penny spent for labor.

The situation was somewhat similar at Wauzeka where, after trying unsuccessfully to buy an old railroad right-of-way to enlarge the cemetery, we tore out the ties, fenced the right-of-way onto the cemetery, straightened grave stones and rooted out all shrubs that hindered comfortable mowing. I'll never forget the agony on old Pat Smith's face when we pulled up the beautiful bridal wreaths on his family's lot. Pat never objected, but his heart was heavy. He had planted those bridal wreaths fifty years before, and I felt cruel and "was it worth it?"

As long as I am writing about cemeteries I must tell you of what happened at Eastman. An old non-practicing bachelor died, and as the saying aptly describes, "The only service some Catholics

demand from the Church is to hatch, match and dispatch." So a distant relative asked for a Catholic burial. Since this was a welfare case, and since our policy was to fill the unused grave sites of the cemetery, we selected a grave in an unrecorded area. After the sexton had been digging a few hours, he came to the rectory excitedly telling me, "Father, I think I struck an old grave."

I went with him to the cemetery, slid into the partially dug grave and started investigating. There were small specks of black topsoil mixed with the yellow clay as far as he had dug. What concerned the sexton, however, was an opening at the bottom of the grave where there was nothing except a hollow area. I scratched around in it with my hands and found five connected beads of what undoubtedly had been a rosary. I also found corroded nails, now about the size of ordinary thumbtacks.

Undoubtedly, someone had been buried there years before. The rosary beads and corroded nails excepted, everything else was only heavy yellow clay. I have used this experience often to portray the truth of the ashes on Ash Wednesday; dust thou art and to dust you shall return.