

## TWO MENTORS

Jean and I are enjoying retirement even during the pandemic. One aging issue we each seem to have, however, is often not sleeping very well. Sometimes your brain starts going and you can't seem to stop. Does that happen to you? It happened to me the other night. I was thinking about this writing project, Story Worth, that my niece gave to me and my brother as a Christmas present last year. The program gives us a chance to write about our memories and stories. In particular, that night, a picture came to mind. Then a flood of memories came, triggered by the people in the picture. Sleep finally came. I hoped this picture would help me in the next episode of my writing.

The next day I started looking for this picture. I've been looking now for a couple of days in the vast memorabilia I've saved over many years. I still can't find it. Maybe it will show up sometime.

I'll describe it to you as best I can, as I think it unlocks a couple of other gift memories of my formation time in the Jesuits. There is an outdoor barbecue going on and I am posing for a picture with two other men. I am much taller than either of them. I'm in the middle and have an arm around each of them. We're all smiling. They seem small in comparison to me. Actually, they are giants in their fields. I am dressed in casual clothes, but the other two are dressed in clerical garbs, white collars around their necks. One is Joe Fitzpatrick, an elderly Jesuit priest famous as a sociologist who studied the migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. and published his materials in the 1950s. The other is a younger priest, Silvano Tomasi, a member of the Scalabrini order of priests who work with refugees. He later was the representative of the Vatican to the U.N.

Joe Fitzpatrick furthered my interest in immigration. I first met him in 1965. In addition to studies at that time, I taught young men in a high school equivalency program, many from Puerto Rico. Many of Father Joe's writings compared the more recent Hispanic migrations to the U.S., such as from Puerto Rico, to the earlier arrival of Irish immigrants in the mid 1880s. Their experiences were strikingly similar, especially in their confronting stereotypes and prejudice. Later while pursuing a Master's Degree in history at N.Y.U. I took a course at Fordham with Father Joe dealing with immigrants and assimilation. He was always an excellent guide.

Father Silvano Tomasi, following his Order's ministry, worked with refugees. His Order was founded for this purpose in the late 1800s and confronted the prejudices in the U.S. against Italians in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those were the days when even Ivy League scientists developed prejudiced eugenics studies showing the inferior nature of southern Europeans and Eastern European groups, especially Jews. These prejudices became enshrined in the immigration laws of the 1920s.

Silvano's Order had a Center for Migration Studies on Staten Island. At that time, around 1972, I was a student at Woodstock College in N.Y.C. I went to Staten Island to study and write a paper about a German layman, Peter Paul Cahensly, for one of my courses. Silvano and his brother were very gracious and helpful to me in finding materials on this topic. I was studying the time in Germany when Catholics were being persecuted because of their faith by the German leader, Bismarck, in what was known as the Kulturkampf. Peter's work eventually led to an organization called the St. Rafael's Verein, which continues today. This group helped refugees leaving Germany, including poor conditions on boats, and also aided in welcoming people to the U.S. at docks when they arrived.

Little did I know that I would be doing similar work for other refugees and potential immigrants a few months later. Also, little did I know that I would see Silvano often in the future at immigration forums and programs. He was bright, dedicated, and a warm and caring person, always helpful for those sharing in a similar mission.

I found the picture.

