

chism for both children and adults. The children were asked questions and their elders could see how they were doing. After the Gospel, the priest would put off his chasuble and maniple, laying them upon the altar at the Gospel side. Then he would put on his biretta, take the book of Epistles and Gospels (also his snuff box and bandana) and mount the pulpit. Once in the pulpit he would deposit his biretta on the rail of the pulpit, kneel down on a low bench and recite Sunday prayers including a general confession reciting acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition. Then he would rise and in monotone read the publications — Masses, marriages. Next he would read the Epistle (in German, of course), next the Gospel and ended by making a sign of the cross with his thumb on his forehead, lips, and body — the people doing the same. Then he would take a good pinch of snuff (they all snuffed), put on his biretta, cite his text in Latin and German, and then begin.

Through his sermons, frequently two per Sunday, and through bulletin announcements, the Collegeville pastors with a firm benevolence directed the faithful. For example, in 1891 Fr. Severin Gross, OSB, reminded his people of the proper place to locate themselves during Mass:

Certain persons here have the habit of standing around in the clock tower during the services just like border guards. If you do that also with the attitude of a rueful border guard, then that is not really wrong. But it would still be nicer and better if all would go into the pews. Standing around by the door is not healthy because of the draft. It is not proper and also not necessary. So, from now on all should go into the pews. There is room enough and not one of you needs to be ashamed.

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Fr. Rembert Bularzik, OSB, a good disciplinarian, told his charges:

Neglect (of Easter duty) thereof includes a mortal sin because of the grave duty the Church imposes upon her children to do that which is necessary for the saving of their soul. No mother wants her children to be dead children; neither does our good mother Church want spiritually dead children. (*May 21, 1950*)*

The parishioners knew that the Church had the best way to salvation. Salvation was easy—almost. Belong to the right Church, follow the Ten Commandments, receive the sacraments, and observe the Church laws. Salvation was not a guessing game; the rules, until Vatican II, were very specific.

Fr. Alphonse Kuisle, OSB, in 1897 preached:

When the Church sets aside certain days as fast days and as days when one may not eat meat, She wants to keep in front of us the necessity of self-denial and abstinence shown by Christ and his apostles and taught by them. Without self-denial there is no spiritual life. Whoever has not learned to control himself, will not be successful in the battle against sin and the strength of the passions which all men are subject to. The observation of these fast and abstinence days is a public and fearless recognition of the Catholic faith. Whoever does not fast or eats meat on days of fast and abstinence without valid excuse commits a wrong and is not viewed as a practicing Catholic. Let us then obtain the courage to die to ourselves so that we may never do wrong through our own actions and bring our holy religion shame.

Fasting

Who could eat meat, when, how much, how little, what about cooking with leftover fat and lard? The good Catholic

followed and at times was troubled by such regulations. Rarely would a parishioner challenge the laws; to challenge them would be to challenge God — unthinkable. For the uncertain, announcements such as the one delivered by Fr. Alfred Mayer, OSB, in 1932 offered help:

Those who are uncertain, if they are excused from observing the fast or abstinence should ask their confessor, who is the correct advisor in such matters and is authorized to dispense one in individual cases from fasting or abstaining for valid reasons.

Maintaining the communion fast — no food or drink after midnight — was rigorously followed until the 1950's. "If you made a mistake and got up during the night and took a drink, that was it; you had to forget about going to communion."

Perhaps the Easter duty law compelled those who lived on the fringe of salvation to be revitalized in the Church. It was always the priest's concern not to have someone slip by without making his Easter duty. In a countdown fashion, pastor and parishioners watched the time, so salvation would not slip by.

Next Sunday marks the end of the Easter season. If there is anyone who has not gone to confession and communion during the Easter Season he should do so during this week. (*May 24, 1885*)*

Celebrating the liturgy in the St. John the Baptist Parish in the last century was varied in language — German, Latin, and English reflected the traditions of the time — whether it was half-hour German sermons, Rogation Day observances, missions, or processions to the Grasshopper Chapel, and was influenced significantly by the bent of the pastor. Central to this liturgy, however, as it is in the universal Church, was the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Comments from the oral history bear this out:

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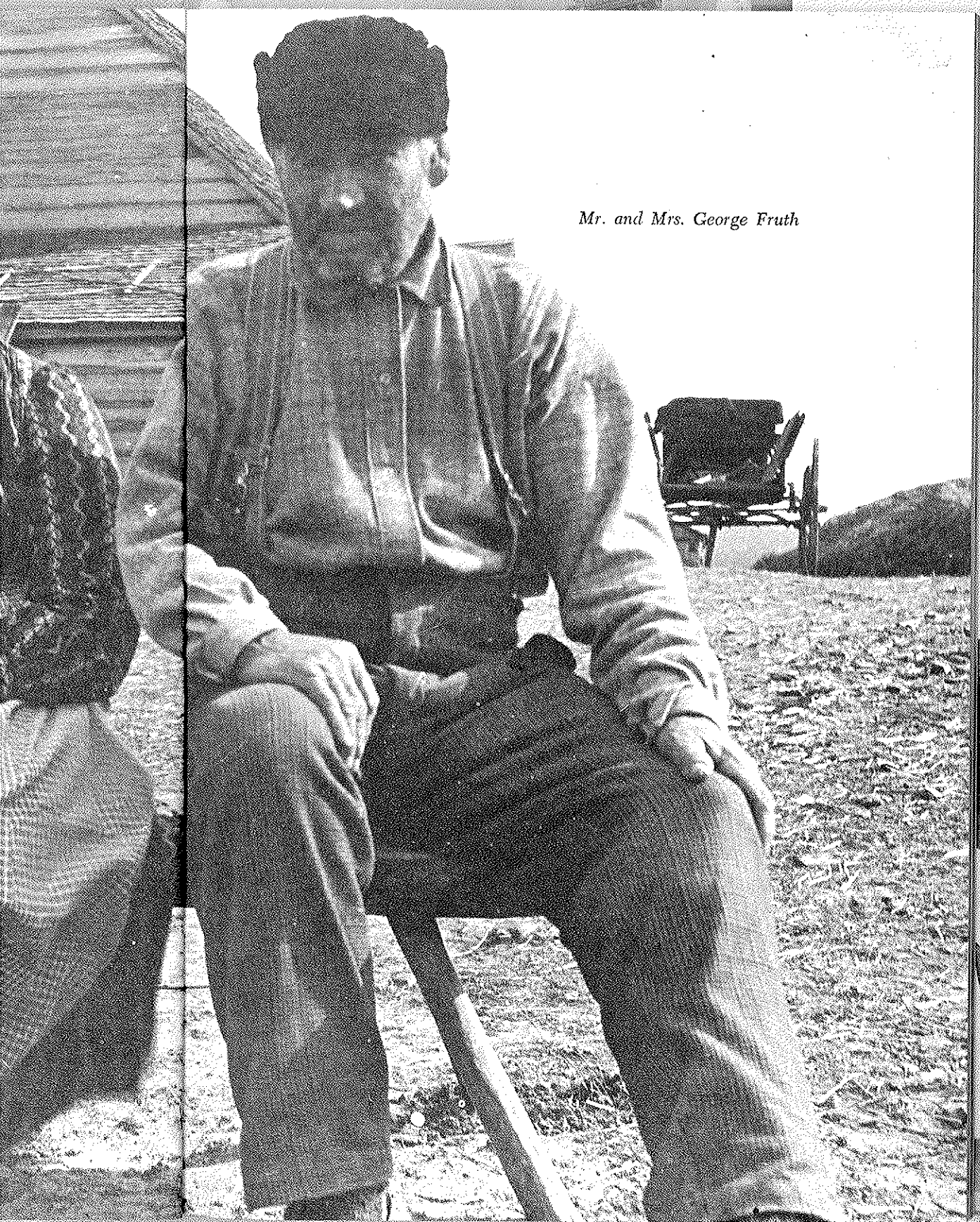
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If it was too cold to walk the girls would stay home,
but ma would say to the men, get out, so all the men
would walk to church, and the women would stay
home and say the Rosary.

Old Lady Sauer went to church every morning. If it
was stormy, wet, dirty. One day somebody stopped her
and asked her why she went to church in such bad
weather. Old Lady Sauer said: "You don't have to have
nice weather to go to church."





Mr. and Mrs. George Fruth