

Carmelite Lives: Christian P. Ceroke, O.Carm. (1920-1984)

Visitors to the faculty lounge of the School of Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America will find a large, smiling photo of Chris Ceroke on the wall. This deserved place of honor commemorates twenty-seven years of devoted service to the University, including his considerable contribution toward the establishment of the very School of Religious Studies that is honoring him. The present article is a testimony of love and esteem by a classmate and close friend, who had the privilege of growing up with him and living in the same communities for 35 years.

For convenience sake I divide his life into two parts: “the formative years” and “the Washington years.” Part one spans the first thirty years of his life (1920-1950) and covers his boyhood and seminary (1920-1947), one year of “seasoning” (his own word) at Mt. Carmel High School (1947-1948), and graduate studies in Rome (1948-1950). The Washington years are the rest of his life (1950-1984); they were spent at Whitefriars Hall, Marymount Junior College, and the Catholic University of America.

Pitifully little documentation exists on this outstanding member of our province. He was a very private person. He kept no records, he left no papers, even his colleagues in offices at Catholic University, Berard C. Marthaler and Carl J. Peter, suspected that he removed papers from the files that were connected with himself. I was able to repossess some of these sources through the discreet and kind services of the archivist of the University. Other scanty resources were personnel forms, publicity material, and assorted personal reminiscences, my own and others’.

A very popular teacher at Whitefriars Hall in the 50’s and early 60’s, he had many nicknames, one of which was “Mystery Man.” He refused, however, to recognize this name. One day at Whitefriars Hall there was an outburst of merriment in his New Testament class, which I happened to overhear. Afterward I put to Chris one of his most frequent questions: “What’s the story?” He had no idea. He was giving some thoughts about priesthood, he said, and he observed that every priest should be a mystery man. The students thought this was immensely funny. When I told him that the joke was on him, he went into simple denial, a tactic not beyond Chris. Happily he was more than a mystery man to those who loved him, and it is this picture that I wish to recall.

I: The Formative Years: 1920-1950

Father Christian Paul Ceroke (pronounced Se-ro-kee) was born Paul Marcel Ceroke on October 30, 1920, in Chicago, Illinois. He received the religious name Christian in fourth year high school with the reception of the habit and was identified with this name often without surname. His contemporaries sometimes used the baptismal name Paul or “Chuck,” and younger colleagues at Whitefriars called him “Daddy” Chuck and Daddy were his own fabrications. At one point he called everyone “Charlie,” hence the name Chuck, and in his latter, paternalistic days he referred to himself as “Daddy” (as in “Daddy knows best”), so that name stuck on him. He was an innovator in language and enriched our in-house language with phrases like “lay rascals,” “toting the barge,” “cool, calm and collected,” “lolling

around,” “the infallibility of science,” “functioning,” and “suite-mate.”

His parents were Paul Ceroke and Anne Kreiger, the father Polish-German and the mother German in ancestry; they were first generation Americans. Chris and his younger brother Clarence, the two siblings of the family (a third son had died in infancy), had recognizably Slavic features, but Chris always underlined his German roots. The family was moderately well off in the early years. The father had his own plumbing business and the family lived in a beautiful bungalow in St. Dorothy’s parish on Chicago’s south side.

Misfortune struck while the boys were still in grammar school. Family problems led to the loss of the business and property and the separation of the parents. The boys were brought up by the mother, but they kept in touch with the father till his death in 1948. The mother went out to work as a ticket salesperson at Illinois Central Railroad and later as a cashier at Frank’s Department Store on West 79th Street. The boys survived these troubles and grew up well-behaved and cooperative at home and school. They were different in personality. Paul was reflective and verbal, Clarence matter of fact and scientific. Clarence became the engineer and Paul the priest.

In 1947 after high school at Mount Carmel and an engineering degree plus a stint in the army, Clarence and Violet were married in East Chicago, IN. They had six children, the first two of whom were named by Uncle Paul; the parents started with “Louise Therese” and “Mary Therese;” Paul’s choices were “Louise Marie” and “Marie Therese” and these names won out. Chris was a doting uncle, who brought a trunk load of gifts at Christmas, and to Violet he was, in her words, a “real brother.” He spent his vacations with them, while his mother Anne lived with them. When she moved to Washington in the late fifties, their home on Ada or in Homewood was still his home away from home.

As a boy, Paul Ceroke was the ideal vocation prospect of those years. He was bright, aggressive, unaffectedly pious, affable, While he was a serious student and avid reader, he played all the sports and at the same time managed his share of the family chores, like getting the evening meal on the table when the mother was at work. His vocation was fostered by an easy relationship with the priests at St. Dorothy’s parish, whose Masses he served, and by the BVM sisters, who taught in the school, especially Sister Mary Saint Delphine Healey, the eighth grade teacher who was one of Carmel Niagara’s best recruiters, numbering among her Carmelite vocations Ronald Gray, Murray Phelan, and Pierce Gilmartin from St. Dorothy’s, and later Albert Verbrugge from St. Jerome’s on the north side,

Paul Ceroke, however, almost circumvented her Niagara preference. He chose to follow a different drummer, the Claretian vocation director who came to St. Dorothy’s in the spring of 1934 to promote the newly-opened junior seminary at Momence, Illinois. Sister Delphine did not approve Paul’s impetuous decision to enter Momence, where in fact he lasted less than a year. The problem was culture. The Claretian seminary was largely a transplant from Spain with little adaptation to American ways. Young Paul was fiercely American, then and all through his life, and his intransigence to European life-styles may date from this early experience. Paul Ceroke came home for the Easter holidays and never returned. The following fall he entered Mt. Carmel College, in Niagara Falls, Ontario, the prep and college seminary of the Chicago province of Carmelites.

Most of his forty-some classmates at Niagara were from Chicago. Eleven years later, on June 8, 1946, twelve of these original members were ordained priests, eleven of them in Chicago at St. Clara’s Church (now St. Gelasius). This outcome was better than the average for the Carmelite seminary system at

that time. The class ahead ended up with only three ordinations, and the class behind with five. After ordination Chris' class did not lose anyone by resignation from the Order or from active ministry

There was no doubt about the closeness of the group. They had spent large amounts of time together: four years of high school at Niagara (1935-1939), a year of novitiate under the skilled tutelage of Father Leo Walter at New Baltimore, Pa. (1939-1940), three years of college back at Niagara (1940-1943), and then four years of theology at Whitefriars Hall (1943-1947). The bonding came from other sources as well. In the high school years the class of 1939 spent time together in the summers, the only times away from the seminary. They fielded a softball team and played in the Chicago parks one or two nights a week; they kept in touch in other ways as well. Chris was an important participant and promoter of this togetherness.

He was a key player on the football, basketball and baseball teams in the seminary. On our first full day at Niagara, a large part of which was spent on the playing fields of Eton, I remember this small, tow-headed youngster diving along the ground through hefty blockers twice his size with a remarkable quickness and fearlessness to make a tag in touch-football. Sports were a big item at Niagara and Chris fitted right in.

But he was also a very hard-working student, an accomplished public speaker, and a writer of talent. He had tremendous drive. He wanted, he needed to be first: in studies, sports, class affairs, writing and speaking. He worked and played harder than anyone else in the class. When his classmates dilly-dallied on the way to the old frosh dormitory after the evening study period, Chris would scoot on ahead, rush through his teeth-brushing, and be under the covers with his James Fenimore Cooper novel before the rest of us arrived. In the novitiate he was the one who got permission to read St. Teresa of Avila, while

the other novices were satisfied with primers on the spiritual life. In college on a free day, when classmates were beating on doors for a quorum for a football game, Chris would most often excuse himself and spend the day reading extra authors in philosophy. In Washington he spent his afternoons translating for *The Sword* Father Xiberta's articles on the history of the brown scapular (see bibliography at end); in wartime summers he took double sessions (twelve weeks instead of six) at Catholic University in English literature.

His workaholic ways did deprive others of his companionship to some extent. But though a private person, he was not a loner. He managed to keep the lines of communication open with his more laid-back comrades. He had a marvelous sense of humor, a quick wit, and an endearing, engaging, playful spirit. But perhaps everyone, including Chris, would have been better served if he had given freer reign to these marvelous gifts.

The underlying quality that endeared him to others was his sterling character and a generous heart. He often appeared distant or hard on the outside, but inside he was gentle and sensitive. He was a wisdom figure among his classmates and later on among the people he served. Chris was a professional helper. He was willing to get involved in people's problems, he loved to give counsel and advice, to explain things, to act as tutor in cram sessions before exams for classmates who could not, or did not assimilate the material in philosophy classes. These qualities were recognized wherever he worked.

There were many special friendships in his life. He tended to single out individuals and cultivate close relationships rather than be a friend to everyone. He sought out the leaders or the more gifted and identified with them. Chris operated best on a one-to-one basis. There was a great loyalty in him. He was very close to individual classmates such as Finan

Glynn, whose untimely death in 1969 sent him into paroxysms of grief at the funeral, or Bob Marshall, who left the Order after college and later married Finan's sister, Rita. Chris had high regard for Bob, and the two kept in touch to the end.

I have tried to summarize the "formative years" in terms of qualities that I recall in my friend. But the exterior side of these years needs accounting too. After his highly successful course of seminary studies, he received his first assignment as a teacher at Mount Carmel High School in Chicago. He threw himself into his work. He loved being priest. He was proud of the Roman collar and saw himself as "set apart" among the faithful. To his dying day he preferred to preside alone at the Eucharist even with a small congregation rather than to concelebrate; his daily Mass was usually in a convent chapel.

At Carmel he made his first foray into teaching the Bible by using the *New Testament* as the text for his junior religion classes. These classes were double sections in the large physics classroom on the third floor, a tiered arena with the teacher at the bottom. Besides daily Mass runs in the parishes and weekend assistance, he volunteered his services every school day as confessor during the noon hour. Always in a hurry he would leave the refectory minutes after entering and dash downstairs to the school chapel to be available for the students.

In July of the summer of 1948, after the year of teaching, the newly-elected Father General Kilian Lynch was seeking candidates from the province to build up the international community of Saint Alberto in Rome. He asked for Christian Ceroke. The present writer had already been assigned to Rome at the June provincial chapter along with two students, Pierre (later John) Larkin and Fintan Prendergast, who were beginning their theology. Christian was asked to join the group, and the four of us as well as four from the New York province, two priests, Francis

Donohue and Joachim Snyder, and two "fraters," Joel Moelter and Augustine Carter, set sail for Rome in October, 1948.

Life in Rome the next two years was a return to the Whitefriars Hall experience, except for the new challenges of living in a multi-cultural environment. Chris did not adapt very well to the foreign environment. He buried himself in his books. The summers held out some opportunity for travel. In the summer of 1949 Chris and I did a French course for foreigners at the Sorbonne in Paris and spent a month in Holland visiting the Carmelite communities. A typical sign of his devotion to Mary was his daily trek of a few blocks from the priests' residence in Paris to the chapel of Rue de Bac, where the miraculous medal apparitions occurred. Before returning to the USA in July, 1950, our provincial, Father Leo Walter, gave us a trip to the Holy Land as a graduation gift from the province. Chris liked to dramatize the scary flight we had in a rickety, old WWII Flying Tiger airplane to Tel Aviv and on the return from a makeshift airstrip in the desert outside Amman, Jordan.

The four American priests in our group enrolled at the Gregorian University along with Joachim Smet, who was in Rome since the spring of 1948. After a week or so the four newcomers transferred from the Gregorian to the Angelicum for what seemed to us a more attractive program. The textbook there was the *Summa Theologica* and there were special classes for seminary graduates seeking advanced degrees. Two years later the four completed their doctorates. Christian's emphasis in his STD studies was the Bible. He took the intensive Hebrew course very seriously and he always chose electives on biblical questions. The dissertation was in moral theology (in the Thomist classification) under the direction of Peter Lumbreras, O.P. and the topic the theological basis for the scapular promises. He published an extract of his work through *Carmelus* under the title,

The Credibility of the Scapular Promises
(1954).

Except for the studies Chris did not enjoy Rome. Even so, toward the end of his two years, he wrote the provincial for permission to stay on for an additional two or three years for the licentiate in Sacred Scripture. The provincial asked him to postpone those studies. He was needed immediately at Whitefriars Hall to teach New Testament. Roland Murphy, who was teaching both Old and New Testament at Whitefriars since 1944, would be in Jerusalem in the 1950-1951 school year, participating in archeological digs on a fellowship sponsored by the American School of Oriental Research. For whatever reasons Chris never followed up on the licentiate or oriental language studies. He was a self-taught expert in Scripture with the limitations of that condition, a situation he lamented with deep but (to my mind) unreasonable bitterness, since the opportunity for further studies could have been arranged. Once he became involved in teaching, however, he was too involved to return to preparation.

II: The Washington Years

In the fall of 1950 Christian joined the small faculty at Whitefriars Hall that included Kilian J. Healy, Kenneth B. Moore, Romaeus W O'Brien, Roland E. Murphy, Marcellus J. Scheuer, Emmett T. Gleeson and a few outside teachers. The class preparation in the beginning was demanding, and he kept other commitments to a minimum his first two years. Sometime early on he became associated as chaplain of a "Cana Club," a group of young married couples with whom he worked closely over the next nine years and with whom he kept in contact for the rest of his life. He also participated in weekend supply work throughout his life, both locally for example, at Holy Redeemer parish in Kensington, MD and St. John the Baptist, in Silver Spring, and in the Carmelite parishes in

New Jersey Direct pastoral ministry always attracted him. He was especially gifted at children's Masses, which drew many adults as well as children. This lesser known talent throws light on the playful side of his personality.

At the beginning of his third year, in the fall of 1952, he took on a second job, the role of instructor, chaplain, and counselor at Marymount Junior College for young women in Arlington, Virginia. For the next five years Chris divided his time between Whitefriars and Marymount. Some idea of his contribution at Marymount is conveyed in a letter from Mother M. Berchmans, RSHM, to the prior of Whitefriars, dated May 22, 1956: "It is impossible to tell you, Father, how helpful Father Christian has been, not only as a professor but also as an adviser in the many decisions that had to be made. His influence in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities has been so helpful."

In the summers between 1953 and 1960 he alternated with Roland in teaching Scripture in the theology program at Notre Dame. In the summer of 1957 he taught at St. Mary's College, Winona, MN. These visiting assignments led to invitations to both Roland and Christian to teach summer school at the Incarnate Word Sisters, in Corpus Christi, TX, and for the Christian Brothers at Winona, which they were unable to fulfill. In both cases they recommended the present writer, who had joined the Whitefriars faculty in 1951 and who was not an expert in Scripture, but able and willing to undertake these summer schools over several years. The endorsement of a Roland or a Chris was recommendation enough for a job. This kind of mutual respect and trust and the willingness to promote one another opened doors for the individual members of the Whitefriars faculty at Catholic University and else where. Throughout the sixties five members of Whitefriars were full-time faculty at Catholic University. We benefited from each other's successes. This

made for a good community spirit; the fifties were great years for the faculty at Whitefriars Hall.

In September of 1957, Gerard S. Sloyan, the chair of the religious education department at Catholic University, invited Chris to join the faculty as a lecturer. This was the inauguration of a new, and perhaps the most important, chapter in Chris' life. From this point on his interests became more and more tied into the University. He continued to teach at Whitefriars until 1968, when the Hall joined with several other religious seminaries to found the Washington Theological Coalition (now "Union"). He taught in the Coalition for another year or two. During this time he remained actively involved in the life and work of the Carmelite community. In the personnel form completed in 1968 he identified his assignment as "seminary work; teaching New Testament" and stated that he anticipated remaining in this work "until it or I give out;" the only other type of work he envisaged for himself was "retirement." Unfortunately the latter never happened; he died at sixty-three and still a full-time professor at the University.

The first ten years were marked by his own academic growth and development, mirrored in his extensive publications and his rapid advance up the academic ladder. He wrote nine significant papers, listed in the bibliography at the end of this paper, and these publications moved him through the ranks of lecturer (from 1957 to 1960), assistant professor (from 1960 to 1963), associate professor (from 1963 to 1967), at which time he became a full professor.

Teaching was Chris' gift and at least after Marymount his area was always the Bible and eventually only the New Testament. Audiences varied. He had an appointment as Catholic representative in a joint course with Jewish and Protestant religion teachers at George Washington University in 1964-1965. He taught in CU's adult education program

and gave lectures, for example, to religious women at Aylesford in Darien, IL, to clergy in Tucson, AZ, to lay folk at Mt. Carmel in Newport News, VA. His approach to the Bible was theological as well as exegetical and always with a practical and pastoral bent. In the opinion of his students at the University (which were replications of those at Whitefriars), he was an excellent teacher, exciting, entertaining, creative, in the words of his colleague Berard Marthaler, "effective academically and pastorally." At the memorial Mass at Catholic University, September 19, 1984, the homilist, Kevin Seasoltz, OSB, described Father Ceroke in the early sixties as "a vital teacher who communicated enthusiasm for the New Testament among the many students enrolled in his courses". Father Sloyan, whose regard was shown in his asking Chris to fill in for him as chair for one semester in 1961, called him a "model colleague." "For ten years," he said, "we worked together as academic colleagues in the same department; he represented only support and contribution to the common venture."

Some of his extra-curricular roles show how accepted he was by the undergraduate students: he was moderator for the graduating class of 1966 and chaplain of the Chi Iota Pi sorority. By no means an ivory tower professor, he was a mentor and father-figure, who was there for the students, whether in classroom or social events.

The next seventeen years at the University, from 1967 to 1984, represent a different agenda from research and publication. More time was given to multiple administrative tasks and committee work. There were also extraneous problems of personal health and increasing responsibilities in the care of his mother, who needed more and more of his time and emotional energy. The combination of these factors hurt his own scholarship, though not his actual teaching, which continued to get uniformly good marks, except in some cases at the end. The industry

he expended on his classes is illustrated in the piles of class notes left behind, which he had carefully crafted and mimeographed for the students; this task took immense time and effort. His only serious publications in the seventies were two important articles for the *Supplement to the New Catholic Encyclopedia* (vol. 17), which he completed in his second sabbatical year, 1977-1978.

In 1967 he accepted the invitation of his friend John Whalen to work full time as biblical editor for a projected *Catholic Theological Encyclopedia* to be developed in a new publishing venture called *Corpus Instrumentorum*. Father Whalen, erstwhile editor of the just-completed and well-received *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967), launched the new project of *Corpus* for the publication of scholarly theological materials. Christian was his most important associate. The work demanded a leave of absence from Catholic University, one that was extended into a second year, when John Whalen became acting rector of the University and Christian took over as executive secretary of *Corpus*. Thus for two academic years, 1967-1969, Chris' own studies were on hold. *Corpus* did succeed in getting out some books, but not the theological encyclopedia. Chris returned to teaching in 1969 and *Corpus* began to phase out in 1970. The sabbatical year granted him in 1970-1971 did not produce any publications. He served on other editorial boards in these years, notably the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* in 1958 as book review editor, and from 1959 to 1968 as associate editor. He prepared all the New Testament footnotes for the *New American Bible*, published by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in 1971; Christian P. Ceroke, O.Carm. gave his *nihil obstat*, so that his name appears on the fly-leaf of the printings of the *NAB* in the seventies and eighties. A new revised edition with new notes appeared four years ago.

More and more of his time was taken up with university business. He was increasingly more active in university affairs and politics, hobnobbed with important executives and leaders, and gave huge amounts of time to committee work, serving on prestigious committees such as "Appointments and Promotions." In 1971 he was asked to be part of the John Zender committee, an *ad hoc* group of representatives from the schools of theology and canon law and the department of religious education convened to plan one umbrella school for all the religious sciences and to be called the "School of Religious Studies." He served on this committee with William Bassett (Canon Law) and Carl Peter (who replaced Charles Curran on the latter's resignation). Carl Peter, who died suddenly at the age of 59 in August, 1991, was a supportive and concerned friend to Chris over the years; he gave high praise for his work on behalf of the new school, which began operations in 1973, and especially for his contribution to its department of biblical studies, which finally got off the ground in 1976. Carl told me in an interview in 1987: "The department of biblical studies would not exist without Chris; the project succeeded because of him." Those are high compliments about a very important addition to theological studies at Catholic University.

When the School was inaugurated under the deanship of Colman Barry, O.S.B., in 1973, Chris was named chairperson of its department of religion and religious education for a three-year period. Chris was able to serve only the first of the three years because in April 1974 he suffered a severe heart attack—described by his doctor John F. Brennan Jr. as "a coronary occlusion that produced myocardial infarction of rather alarming extent." In a letter dated April 11, 1974, Dr. Bacos (presumably the cardiologist) and Dr. John F. Brennan, Jr. agreed that the patient should take a year's leave of absence. His progress in the long hospital stay and

convalescence at home was “less than satisfactory in Dr. Brennan’s words, and on July 11, 1974, Christian resigned as chairman and went on sick leave until August 31, 1975. The dean, Father Colman Barry, OSB, wrote a moving letter of regret, dated July 15, 1974, on Chris’ resignation, pointing up the respect “on all fronts” for Chris and his work in the school and the department, stating his own indebtedness for “support, advice and direction” without which, he wrote, “I could not have, gotten through the first year of my tenure.” He singled out Chris’ work in the department and hoped “the splendid momentum” he created would continue under the successor. He hoped too that Chris would keep his hand in the further developments of the school, especially in the biblical studies, thanking him profusely for all he has done “for the University and for all of us’ and predicting that Chris had a still greater contribution to make in terms of the biblical studies department yet to come.

This last hope was shared by others in the administration, since the resignation from the chair of the one department did not preclude his appointment to another one, this time to be the coordinating chairperson to establish the new department of biblical studies in the School of Religious Studies. This department needed to be designed from scratch and Chris was its main architect. The plan was to obtain faculty and establish curricula during the 1974-1975 school year and open in the fall of 1975. Actually the department started in 1976 and Christian was appointed its acting chairman for the year 1976-1977.

But this was a Pyrrhic victory. Chris became the victim of infighting and politics and in the end he failed to be invited on the faculty. This was a bitter disappointment for him, according to his friend Carl Peter, and no doubt part of the reason why Chris regretted his over-involvement in University politics to the personal loss in his own studies.

This disappointment, however, must not overshadow the immense contribution he did make to the ecclesiastical studies by his key role in setting up the new school and planning the one of its kind biblical department which now offers the Ph.D. in scriptural studies. There is no doubt that Christian deserved the gratitude expressed by the President of the University Father William J. Byron, S.J., who prayed in a letter of condolence to Clarence Ceroke that God would replace Christian “with other priests who can serve on the faculty with the distinction and dedication that characterized [his] long and generous service.”

Christian was granted a second sabbatical in 1977-1978 to work on a book on Mark’s gospel. His desire to do a solid commentary on Mark’s gospel goes back to his earliest scripture days. He loved this gospel; it was his point of departure and constant return. But the commentary was his nemesis. He failed to make good his promise to do it for the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (first published in 1968), and he did not produce it in this sabbatical year. He did finish the two articles referred to above for the supplement to the *NCE*.

Two other factors affected Chris’ life in a profound way in this last period of his life. One was his own health, the other a great deal of turbulence. The heart attack of April, 1974, was symptomatic, not only of his deteriorating health, but of many worries and anxieties in addition to the struggles and disappointments chronicled above. First, his own health. Chris prided himself on his strong physique; he quipped about his “magnificent torso” that would “crush” germs like the flu bug, even as his friends observed only the runny nose and bleary eyes that should have, but seldom did put him in bed. The fact was that even the mighty torso was no match for the little care he gave his body. This lack of care was less obvious when he was young, but it was evident in the Washington years. He

seldom took any exercise; he was constantly on the run, to the detriment of good eating habits; he was a heavy smoker, and in the seventies his drinking became a concern to his community and his friends. The heart attack was inevitable.

The turbulence is more difficult to specify. Part of the trouble was his always-faithful, but very demanding and sometimes frustrating care of his mother. When Anne Ceroke first came to Washington, she was welcomed into Carroll Manor by the Carmelite Sisters of the Aged and Infirm, who conducted that retirement home. The first years were not a heavy drain on the Sisters or her dutiful son. But her days became progressively difficult for herself and her caregivers. By 1970 she found it impossible to live in the home.

Chris had to find an alternative place for her. A Sister friend in Richmond, Virginia offered to care for her; Anne left Carroll Manor and went to live in Richmond. The arrangement lasted only a few weeks. Anne had the same problems with the Sister as she had found in Carroll Manor, and, for that matter, as she had found with her genial daughter-in-law. A brief stay in a nursing home (Manor Care) proved inadequate. The only solution seemed to be a home or apartment where Chris could look after his mother himself. A house belonging to John Whalen in Silver Spring, Maryland, was made available to Chris. Chris moved out of Whitefriars Hall and into the new home with his mother. This arrangement delighted the mother and lasted until her death in March, 1982.

Life with his mother on Parham Road had the advantage of suitable care for Mrs. Ceroke. But it took an immense amount of time. Chris was housekeeper, cook, and nurse to his mother, who was bedridden most of the time there. The relationship between mother and son was complex and sometimes difficult. No one could question the faithful love

between them; neither could even the casual observer miss the problems that would arise from such total and close proximity. Chris, no doubt, liked the privacy of his own house. But he had only limited support from his Carmelite brothers and his other friends because he was basically isolated in these circumstances. The Carmelites and close friends did visit and help out when they could. But Chris became more and more distant from the Whitefriars community. By 1970 most of his own generation had moved on to other places. The faculty at Whitefriars were younger men, who admired and liked Chris but were a different generation. Coupled with the stresses of his own life especially in the middle and late seventies, the isolation of Parham Road was not good for him. Friends observed that Chris wrestled with loneliness, alienation, and feelings of depression at home and at the University. These were not Chris' best years.

The death of his mother in March, 1982, was a great sorrow for him. But in one respect it was a release. It offered him the opportunity of new beginnings. Chris did close out the house in May, but he did not return to live at Whitefriars Hall. He moved into the faculty quarters at Curley Hall at the University where he lived comfortably for the next two years until his death on July 6, 1984. The decision not to return to Whitefriars Hall was a good one in view of Chris' overall health and the stresses that would have come from adapting to a seminary system so different from the one he formerly lived in. Chris was not comfortable with many of the changes that had occurred in the formation policies of the Hall.

In the homily at the University Memorial Mass on September 10, 1984, Kevin Seasoltz talked about the "stormy years" in the late sixties and the seventies, Chris' feeling of abandonment, and the great calm of his last years, presumably meaning the years at Curley "In the last year [sic]," he

said, "Father Ceroke got settled in Curley Hall, he was able to be more closely related to his own religious community, he was pleased to receive the Benemerenti medal [which is given for twenty-five years of service] last spring, he took part in commencement in May for the first time in many years. And he died in peace."

This assessment seems accurate. Chris was able to be himself once again. One of the outstanding experiences of the last year of his life was the provincial chapter at Niagara in June, just a month before he died. Chris drove to the chapter with Jack Welch. He was warmly received and fêted by his many friends who had seen far too little of him the last few years. When he returned to Curley Hall for what turned out to be the last month of his life, he was a changed person. Close friends like Msgr. Fred McManus and Carl Peter and lay friends like Jane Frank observed this change. He was back "in touch" with himself, his friends, and his Carmelite community. The tragedy is that he had only one month more to enjoy it.

Chris was discovered dead in his room on Friday morning, July 6, 1984, when the Sacred Heart Sisters at Ninth and Varnum reported his failure to show for Mass. There was a brief wake at the local funeral parlor, at

which Don Buggert expressed the gratitude of the Carmelite seminarians for what Chris had done for them over the years. "We, his students," Don said, "are grateful to him for giving us a love of the Word of God, for getting us excited about God's Word." He later praised Christian for contributing to attitudes of open-mindedness and the acceptance of change in theology and Church discipline in the Carmelite students of the fifties and sixties.

The body was flown to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, in Darien, IL for the funeral Mass on July 10, 1984. A large outpouring of Carmelites gathered to say goodbye to a great man in their midst. Father Carl Peter represented Catholic University and spoke warmly of Chris at the wake service, conducted by classmate Leon Battle. Next morning the Mass of the Resurrection was concelebrated, with the provincial Murray Phelan presiding, and classmate Eamon Carroll the homilist. The send-off was a fitting tribute to a deserving brother and friend. We trust Chris is observing the present scene from his vantage point in heaven and still offering his salty social criticism of things ecclesiastical and Carmelite. We thank God for this dear brother and friend.