



How do you adequately thank someone who had such a positive influence on your life?

I not speaking about my parents. Of course they had a major role in my development. I'm speaking about someone who was a teacher, a mentor, a friend, a role model, and a priest.

I first met Fr. Camilus Thibault, A.A. as a gangly fourteen-year-old entering Our Lady of Lourdes Seminary (OLLO) in the tiny town of Cassadaga, NY in September 1964. My very first impression was: "Wow, this guy is really bald." Yet, Fr. Camilus had an infectious smile and a very engaging personality. Despite the pandemic of homesickness felt by myself and so many of my fellow freshmen who were away from home for the first time, Fr. Camilus made so many of us feel right at home.

For the next four years, Fr. Camilus was everything I could imagine that a priest should be. I watched him pray with pious humility. He had a great laugh and a wonderful sense of humor, yet could be a comforting counselor for someone with a troubled soul, as I was on more than one occasion. He was the kind of priest that I wanted to be.

As it turned out, my calling was not to the priesthood. In the late 1980s I became an active volunteer with the St. Vincent de Paul Society and continue in several active roles to this day. I realized that my discipleship is to serve those in need as a layperson.

Fr. Camilus not only taught me French, but also instilled in me a deep appreciation for the French culture. To date, my wife and I have made five trips to France and now have close friendships with several French citizens we've met during our visits.

After I graduated from Assumption College in 1971, I lost contact with Fr. Camilus for several decades. But I never stopped thinking about him and the many blessings he brought into my life.

I had the privilege of speaking to Fr. Camilus a few weeks ago. I'm now 66 and my friend is now 86, yet when I heard his voice it seems like only a week ago that we were back in Cassadaga as we reminisced about those grand days at OLLO.

During his years at Our Lady of Lourdes, the time he spent at Assumption College, and his twenty-year assignment in Mexico City, I can't imagine the vast number of people Fr. Camilus has touched in very special ways.

Fr. Camilus is not just the embodiment of priesthood. For me, he's a living saint.

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