

“Camden Diocese Rejects Attempt To Create New Order” - By Chris Connell

The Daily Journal (Vineland, N.J.) - Wednesday July 09, 1975

Article on Joseph Natale



Note: The following **1975** newspaper article found in "**The Daily Journal**" is presented in an effort to further support the facts concerning that Joseph Natale (1927-1995), the founder of the Most Holy Family Monastery:

- That he understood that “canonical provision /approval” is required in order to legitimately establish a Catholic religious order,
- That his petition to the Camden Diocese for acceptance / recognition of his “religious order” was officially "rejected" by the Church,
- That he was a "traditionalist" Catholic and NOT a Sedevacantist; which is why he was "never" excommunicated by the Church for "schism".

Pine Hill, (AP) – Joseph Natale has dreams. He wants to build a monastery. He wants to build workshops and plants for handicapped workers. He wants to build a religious school. He wants to build a nunnery. He hopes to eventually become a priest.

Disabled in childhood by tuberculosis, Natale has been working on his dream for years, but for the most part they exist only in fragments.

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“The dream must take place if we are to preserve our Church’s traditions, no matter what the cost,” said Natale, who has founded a religious order here that the Roman Catholic Church has refused to sanction.

The weathered sign outside his home reads in Gothic script, “Oblates of St. Jude,” and beneath the bold letters, “Handicapped brothers dedicated to God and helping the handicapped.”

But the order only contains one other brother, Thomas Wedekind, 33, from Schenectady, N.Y., who is not handicapped, and an able-bodied Irish priest, John J. Doyle, who is on leave from the Archdiocese of Camden.

Natale says he tried to establish a friary in his native Philadelphia in the mid-1960’s but says he encountered hostility from non-Catholic neighbors. Seven years ago he bought land in this rural Camden County area and incorporated as a non-profit organization for the handicapped. Since then, he said, 21 handicapped men have passed through his doors.

Some left the brotherhood on their own, while he sent others away because, “they found the religious life isn’t an easy life.” Others left because there wasn’t a priest to say mass in the house’s tiny chapel, said Natale, who is called Brother Joseph.

“The Camden Diocese wouldn’t send us no priests,” said 44 year old Natale. “Father Doyle is the first priest that ever stayed here. We had priests in and out that would help us secretly. We have masses 10 or 12 times a year.”

Now, Father Doyle, who moved in last Easter, says mass daily in Latin, bucking the switch to mass in the vernacular spoken language in the Post-Vatican II church.

Natale says his order is open to the handicapped and healthy alike, but his main source of strength and contributions seems to come from Catholics drawn by the traditional Latin masses.

“Our aim is to uphold all the doctrine and teachings of the Catholic Church,” said the 36 year-old Doyle, who came to New Jersey in 1967 after being ordained in Dublin. After serving in several parishes, he took leave of absence in November because, “I want to go into religious life, into a monastery.”

“The problem was, where do you find a monastery that was not affected by the modern changes that were going on in the Catholic Church today?” Doyle asked. “I did look around. There were a lot of them. The only one that made any sense, that was upholding all the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church was the Oblates, the one that wasn’t accepted.”

Brother Joseph applied for recognition from the diocese in late 1968. The diocese announced in March 1969 that the Oblates were “not a religious community officially sanctioned or constituted.” They said, “There are a sufficient number of orders that will accept handicapped men.”

Natale disputes that. He contends that years ago he wrote 140 orders and only two offered him a chance. He actually spent a year 1960-61 at St. Vincent’s Benedictine Abbey in Latrobe, PA., in a postulancy, or candidate’s program, that did not involve formal instruction or religious vows.

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Natale claimed that some orders rejected him because they felt “being handicapped was a sign of no vocation ... they wanted perfect men to say mass.”

He has added walls and rooms onto his 18-room house to convert it into a monastery. His grounds are strewn half-finished walls and buildings that are part of his grand design for a religious community, as well as for industry for handicapped workers of all creeds. By his own admission, “It looks little more than a salvage yard right now” than a monastery.

“If the Diocese of Camden would have left us alone, this community would have been built within three years,” he maintained. “We were clobbered from every pulpit in South Jersey and also the Star Herald, the diocesan newspaper, telling people not to give us help.”

The diocese stands by its refusal to sanction the order, but spokesman Charles Germaine said, “We haven’t issued statements urging anybody not to help anybody else.”

“Natale has not been excommunicated or punished in any way by the Church,” said Germaine, adding, “he has all the rights of any Catholic. There’s nothing like a schism involved in this at all.”

Though they are not advertised, the Latin masses may fly in the face of church regulations. Father Doyle maintains, “It has never been forbidden. The Bishops will not give permission, but it will not be forbidden.”

Spokesman Germaine said, “I don’t think there is a law against it.”

Brother Joseph has been featured periodically in area newspapers and on television in nearby Philadelphia. The publicity has attracted visitors and added to his mailing list, which includes nearly 1,000 names.

He said he has raised \$30,000 over the years and spent \$20,000 of his own money, earned making rubber stamps in Philadelphia and teaching ceramics in Lindenwold.

He has had little formal schooling, but would like to study for the priesthood, if he can find “a sympathetic bishop.”