Beloved Br. Terry Burke as a young Redemptorist (above) and attending to his 97-year-old mother Rita at his recent 50th jubilee celebration at St. Alphonsus “Rock” Church.

**Br. Terry Burke:**
**50 Years of Serving the Poor**

by Rick Potts, C.Ss.R.

When news that Br. Terry Burke was celebrating his 50th jubilee this year, parishioners of St. Alphonsus “Rock” Parish in St. Louis wanted to host a huge celebration. After all, Br. Terry is a mainstay – a virtual fixture in the parish after 38 years of service. What may have been the most surprising is that Br. Terry actually showed up at the celebration!

Deeply moved by the outpouring of appreciation from so many parishioners, Br. Terry was most grateful that the parish brought his 97-year-old mother and most of his family from Detroit for the celebration. A special Mass was celebrated on Saturday evening, the Mass Br. Terry typically attends so that he is free to oversee the Sunday collection. Fr. Kyle Fisher preached, sharing a few of his memorable experiences with Br. Terry and his family over the years. Everyone enjoyed a fried chicken dinner – Terry’s favorite – as friends both roasted and praised Br. Terry for his many years of faithful service.

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Provincial Superior Stephen Rehrauer and Fr. Paul Coury were unable to attend the celebration, but sent video messages. Br. Terry's mother wasn't the only one whose interest was piqued when she heard Fr. Paul's voice: the teasing and banter between Fr. Paul and Br. Terry is legendary.

Br. Terry completed novitiate at Mount St. Clement's College in DeSoto, MO in 1965-1966. He had a staff position at St. Joseph's Preparatory College in Edgerton, WI in 1966-1967, and was assigned as sacristan at St. Alphonsus Parish in Grand Rapids in 1967-1970. Just as he was beginning his second novitiate in 1970, the “Rock” Church community in St. Louis needed some extra help. Br. Terry gladly obliged. He professed perpetual vows with the rest of his class at Immaculate Conception College in Oconomowoc and immediately returned to his “temporary” assignment at the “Rock.” He served as local treasurer in that “temporary” assignment, which lasted 12 years!

He was assigned to the finance office at Sacred Heart Retreat Center in Rolling Meadows, IL in 1982, but returned to his beloved “Rock” Church in 1990, where he continues to serve as local treasurer and facility maintenance manager.

During his entire 38 years of service at the “Rock,” Br. Terry has worn many hats. First and foremost, he has always maintained the physical plant. Over the years, he has been responsible for the church, office and high school, the St. Louis Archdiocesan School for the

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Deaf, the boiler plant and the rectory, which once housed more than 30 Redemptorists, as well as the grounds, in which he rightfully takes great pride. Br. Terry has always been involved in the parish finances, and oversees the volunteers who count the Sunday collection. He also is the house minister, and was invaluable as the primary contact for all of the contractors and suppliers involved in rebuilding the church after a devastating fire in August of 2007.

Br. Terry is well known for his work with the famous Resale Shop, which Fr. George Corbett began as a fundraiser for the high school. It evolved into an entirely new entity under Br. Terry’s leadership. He and a few volunteers began helping people to clear out and liquidate the contents of houses – some of them bequests to the “Rock” Church. Word quickly spread through the local network of lawyers that Br. Terry’s team was quick and efficient. With the help of a larger truck, they were soon hired to clean out houses all over the city. The contents of the homes often were given outright to Br. Terry and his volunteers, or Br. Terry was able to make great deals for the portions that may benefit a family. The Shop soon became a place where people could acquire furniture and other household items that they might not have otherwise been able to afford. Br. Terry has many stories about the adventures of those bygone days – the people they met and the things they discovered, all in the name of helping the poor.

Left to right, from above: Br. Terry Burke enjoys being praised and roasted during his jubilee celebration; and a young man representing the youth of the parish leads the congregation in praying over Br. Terry in thanksgiving for his 50 years of Redemptorist life and steadfast service to the “Rock” parish community.

Preparing for Lent

Br. Terry Burke was just as surprised as everyone else to see this photo in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 2013. He swears that he didn’t know that a photographer took his picture while he was praying on Ash Wednesday. He purchased several copies of the paper and sent them to his mother as evidence that he really does pray!