

The monsignor continued lecturing us on the economics of sainthood. “When a cause is just getting off the ground, the main focus is PR, getting the word out to the public, letting them know about the Servant of God.”

“The Servant of God?” asked a confused Father Foley.

The monsignor obviously took pleasure in the pretense of authority, using jargon to elicit questions he knew he could answer. I had lately done some reading on the subject of saint making and knew that everything he told us that night was information readily available to anyone with a library card. And there he was, another of the Church’s frustrated little men who would spend his life toiling and spinning for the glory of those far more artful and ruthless than he, holding court like the postulator general of the Jesuits.

“Yes, the Servant of God is the one whose cause is being forwarded. In this case, Theresita Albara herself.” He took his first bite of Amelia’s cookie. “These are excellent,” he said. “You know you could probably sell these.”

“We already do,” agreed Father Foley. “Twice a year at the school bake sales—spring and fall. They’re our top seller. She always has me bless the dough before she starts baking.”

“That’s an interesting angle,” commented the monsignor.

“You told the sisters the archdiocese is going to help them,” I

said. "What exactly are you planning to do for them?"

"Yes," he said, "that's what I was getting to. At the beginning of a cause, it's like anything else—the Nobel Prize, the Heisman Trophy, or what have you—your candidate can't win if nobody knows about him. So it's all about PR and publicity. Only at the local level. That's where it has to start."

Father John pointed out that the sisters had been doing little things along those lines since they arrived at the parish. "Every year for Theresita's birthday they have the children write poems and draw pictures of her to take home to their parents. They start with that famous photograph of her. You know the one where she's sitting at her desk next to a radio and there's a picture of Christ on the wall?"

"Yes, I've seen it," said the monsignor.

"Well, they have a contest to see who can draw that picture the best," Foley added. "I'm always the judge."

The monsignor looked at his watch, but Father Foley didn't take the hint.

"Last year one little girl drew Theresita to a tee," he said. "I mean everything right down to the chewed up fingernails and that little spot on her lip. But she had Christ looking like one of the Beatles. What's the one who married that Jap woman who looks like the missing link?"

"John," I said.

"Right, John. With that stringy hair and beard and those granny glasses. Only she didn't put the granny glasses on him, but it looked just like him all the same. She would have won, only everybody kept saying, 'What's that Beatle doing on the wall?' so I just couldn't give it to her. Besides, a couple of the sisters didn't think she should have drawn the spot on her lip. They said it was probably just an imperfection on the film because it's not in any of her other photographs. But it still could have been a cold sore."

"Indeed," snorted the monsignor, bug-eyed for a split second. It

would prove to be the first of a handful of subtle glimpses into his true opinion of Theresita. He recovered his façade of equanimity, though, before I was able to read any significance into his telling little ejaculation.