Chapter 9: Ted, My Friend and Mentor

"Mmmm, that's the best pie I ever tasted."

I sat at the kitchen table in the rectory, savoring each bite of the crisp crust and sweet fruit filling. It was warm, comforting — heavenly, really. Just as I was finishing, the door creaked open and in walked Father Herlihy, the Pastor. I straightened up quickly, eyes wide with surprise, the fork still in my hand.

"Good evening, Father Herlihy," my brother said politely. "This is my sister, Rose. She just finished singing in the choir, and we'll walk home soon. I saved my dessert for her."

With a smile and a twinkle in his eye, Father Herlihy replied, "Bet it's really good."

So typical of my big brother — always thinking of others, often doing without so that someone else could have a little more. Sharing his pie with me was just one of the countless sacrifices Ted made for our family over the years, both large and small.

Wednesday evenings were special. Our elementary school choir sang at the 7:45 p.m. Holy Hour Service honoring St. Jude, the Patron Saint of the Impossible. Afterward, I would head next door to the rectory to meet Ted for our walk home. He always finished his duties as a butler at nine o'clock on the dot.

That evening, as I rang the bell, the door opened to reveal my brother, dignified and poised. Ted carried himself with a natural grace, his dark brown hair neatly combed back, a

warm smile lighting his face. When he saw me, his shoulders relaxed, and he welcomed me in with his usual words, “I saved something for you.”

Ted worked as a butler for the priests at St. Dominic’s Parish, a beautifully constructed church in the heart of inner-city Detroit. He began working at the rectory in the eighth grade and continued through high school and college, juggling school and work with the same determination that defined him. He greeted visitors and escorted them to a waiting room until a priest ministered to their needs. He also served meals to the good Dominican priests who had a profoundly positive influence on our family during our years as parish members.

I fondly recall the Dominican priests with deep respect — Fr. Herlihy, Fr. Ballard, Fr. Smith, Fr. Sybilla, Fr. Curly, and Fr. McKeon. They not only admired Ted’s work ethic but also guided and encouraged him as he pursued his education at the University of Detroit. Their influence, coupled with Ted’s inner drive, led him to a long and successful career as an executive at Ford Motor Company’s World Headquarters.

Ted was a year ahead of me in school, and we frequently walked together between home and elementary school or church. The ten-block venture sparked meaningful and life-changing childhood conversations.

“So, Rose,” he once asked thoughtfully, “do you want to be a white-collar or blue-collar worker?”

“I don’t know,” I answered with childish logic, “but I like blue and think I look good in that color.”

I had no idea what the terms meant, but Ted didn't laugh. Instead, he explained and encouraged me to think about my future. I believe his guidance stayed with me, shaping the goals I set for myself and the path I eventually followed. Our conversations opened my mind and heart to the possibilities of who I could become.

Even as a child, Ted's determination stood out. At age ten, he took his first job stocking shelves at Trumbull-Willis Market, a small, family-owned grocery store near the housing project where we lived. That early experience laid the foundation for a lifelong pattern of hard work, responsibility, and care — not just for his own success, but for the well-being of everyone around him. His work ethic, determination, and hard work continued throughout his youth and adulthood, leading to a successful career and life as a husband and father of three boys.

My brother, Ted, will always be my friend and mentor.