

A Bit of Viatorian History

Viatorians have a rich legacy of reaching out to those accounted of little importance in society. Below is just one example from an earlier time in the province.

In the late 30s and early 40s, Viatorian brothers staffed Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) homes in Chicago at the invitation of Archbishop Bernard J. Sheil, co-founder of the CYO, who saw a need to reach out to homeless and troubled youth. Usually, two or three brothers were assigned to the homes which were located along South Michigan Avenue. At first, they were established for homeless and transient youth



who were unemployed. The residents were provided with food, clothing, medical/dental care, discipline as well as spiritual direction. Some were given part-time jobs.

After a few years, the homes had the “unique position of being the only institution in the U.S. to devote itself to the exclusive problem of rehabilitation, sponsorship and employment of parolees between 18-26 years of age.” The brothers assigned to the homes were to “endeavor at all times to display kindness and charity.” (1940 Annuaire)

Brother Raymond Wilken, CSV is just one of the many Viatorians brothers who worked at the homes. His 1958 obituary stated that “in 1940, he was assigned to work among paroled convicts...This was difficult work and often discouraging. Brother Wilken tried to bring the young men a knowledge of God, a horror for crime and a desire for virtue...Although his kindness was often met with no response, nevertheless, it was a persevering kindness, and his hopes for the reformation of the young men never dropped.”



Fr. Francis White, CSV, also served at the homes when he was a young brother. He spent two summers supervising the residents, parolees from Joliet State Penitentiary, as they worked at the home. He found them respectful and easy to engage in conversation.

Many of the men who lived at the CYO homes benefitted from the kindness of our earlier confreres.