

Fort Smith dog chooses priest as her new owner

written by Maryanne Meyerriecks |



FORT SMITH — A big, friendly Rottweiler found a new home at Christ the King Church when she walked up to the church office door in March.

“The staff said, ‘Father, there’s a big dog outside,’ and I saw she didn’t have a collar but was very friendly and nice,” administrator Father Brian Cundall said.

They took her in and posted her picture on Facebook, but when the owners contacted the church they asked Father Cundall if he might like to keep her.

“The family that owned her has another kid on the way and work all day, so it seemed that the dog kept slipping her collar and getting out of the yard because she was lonely. They were praying that they could find a new owner and their dog wound up going to church and finding a priest.”

The dog was as smart as she was friendly. Whenever she escaped she would head for the ballfields to the east or Christ the King School to the west because she loved children at school or at play.

The previous owners were parishioners at Immaculate Conception Church who lived a few blocks away. When they learned their prayers had been answered by Father Cundall’s offer to adopt their dog, they said, “This is a godsend.”

Father Cundall learned the dog was a 4-year-old Rottweiler or Rottweiler mix named Videll.

“This had been her second home, but she’s so friendly that I’m sure her previous owners were good, too. They might have had to give her up because she was too hard to keep inside during the pandemic, or maybe she had older owners who found she was too big for them to handle.”

He decided to keep the name Videl to help her have a smooth transition to her new home.

“She’s between 70 and 100 pounds, a big, hefty girl,” Father Cundall said. “She’s a little bit shorter than a regular Rottweiler.”

As described by the American Kennel Club, Videl has all the personality characteristics that make this breed so endearing. Rottweilers are gentle playmates and protectors who can be silly and eager to jump into their owners’ laps for a cuddle.

Associate pastor Father Jack Sidler has a 20-to-30 pound dog, Addie Belle.

“Videl is pretty relaxed around other dogs, but Addie Belle comes out and starts barking first and Videl gets a little territorial. And I’m like, “Addie Belle, be careful because she could eat you if she wanted to,” Father Cundall said.

He feels lucky to have adopted a dog who is house-trained and has had all her shots and is taking his time getting her acclimated to parish life. She walks to the office with him each morning, where she greets people with tail wagging, ready to nuzzle. The schoolchildren see her when he’s in the school yard for drop-off and pick-up times, and although a number of them have come over to meet and pet Videl, he’s giving her a little more time before bringing her on a class visit.

He's happy to have a dog in his life again, sharing walks around the neighborhood and sleeping on the rectory couch. He grew up with little dogs.

“My parents own two shih-tzus, and my sister has two shih-tzus,” Father Cundall said. “My parents have met Videl and like her, but we haven’t gotten together with the dogs yet, because their dogs would be like little chew toys for her.”

One benefit of owning a Rottweiler is that his black coat blends in perfectly with his daily dress, so shedding is not a problem.

“One third-grader told me, ‘Father Brian, your dog looks just like you,’” he said.