

News

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Fr. Joe Murphy is Turning 100!

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By MC Havey, Archivist

In May 1918, two important events occurred. On May 5, 1918, Michael Joseph Patrick Murphy was born in Halifax. Two weeks later on May 19, a Province for the English-Canadian Redemptorists was created in Rome.

For Fr. Joseph Murphy, Edmonton-Toronto Province's oldest and distinguished member, the birthday celebration will be held on the actual day of May 5 at St. Alphonsus Church with a Mass and luncheon.

During his centenary, Fr. Murphy has made each community where he lived a better place.

Raised in Halifax, Fr. Murphy, the first child of Joseph Martin and Ellen Shea, was baptized in St. Mary's Cathedral and attended St. Mary's Boys School under the Sisters of Charity and St. Mary's College in the city. His priestly vocation developed through many avenues and people. As a young boy of seven accompanying his grandfather Patrick Shea, Joe met Fr. John Foley, a pastor in a country parish. "This generous and amiable priest won a warm spot in my heart," he recalled later. "Such was his example, his kindness and amiability that even as the years rolled by his memory, unlike many others, remained cherished in my heart." An altar server at the family's parish of St. Thomas Aquinas, he read about the persecution of the Church in Mexico and considered the life of a missionary. A meeting with Redemptorists while in Grade 8 planted the desire to join the order. But it would be three years later before Fr. William McCullough took his application to St. Mary's College, Brockville. During the intervening early Depression years, Joe considered quitting school to help his father with the family business until a Sister of Charity convinced the Murphys that Joe should remain in school.



At the Brockville college for four years, "his good-natured and winning smile have earned him the respect and appreciation of the whole student body," stated Joe's graduate profile

in the St. Mary's College Review. "Besides being a great asset to the choir, Joe has made a name for himself in every branch of sport, particularly in hockey. He is very fervent in prayer, and the fact that he was chosen as the 'College Gentleman' leaves no further explanation of his character necessary."

Studies were interrupted when he returned home for a month early in 1936 to the bedside of his dying father.

Following graduation in 1937, he entered the novitiate under Fr. Arthur Conlogue in Saint John, professing vows on August 2, 1938. He proceeded to St. Alphonsus seminary, Woodstock, where he was ordained by Bishop Martin Johnson of Nelson, BC on June 20, 1943. A week later, Fr. Murphy celebrated his First Solemn Mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Halifax.

After remaining at the seminary for Second Novitiate (1944) under Fr. Anthony McBriarty, he began 50 years of appointments in Redemptorists' Western Canadian parishes, where he "was devoted and enjoyed serving people. He is very much at home in the parish among the people," noted Fr. Edward Kennedy. In the first such appointment (1945-1949), he was stationed at the northern BC parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Dawson Creek to provide pastoral care to its outmissions. He drove a 1929 Model A Ford, that he nicknamed "Eileen," to the three missions with churches and 17 stations without churches, where Mass was held in homes, schools and mess halls of lumber camps. For recreation, he joined the local baseball and hockey teams. Transferred to St. Mary's, Saskatoon (1949-1955), he balanced duties in the parish and at nearby St. Paul's Hospital as a chaplain. In addition, Fr. Murphy began his long association with the Knights of Columbus. Throughout his years, he has been honoured on 37 occasions for his service as chaplain to eight K of C councils, a member and chaplain of fourth degree in all four western provinces.

In a second posting to Dawson Creek (1955-1960), now as superior and

pastor, Fr. Murphy also was appointed as the senior militia chaplain in the Northern Alberta area and as a part-time chaplain to the U.S. Army during the construction of the Alaska Highway. At the end of the Dawson Creek assignment, he oversaw the suppression of the Dawson Creek foundation for which Edmonton Provincial Superior Bernard Johnson was grateful for his "enduring spirit of faith, good will and patience in these past trying many months."

After leaving Dawson Creek, Fr. Murphy was appointed as bursar (1960-1963) to the newly-opened Holy Redeemer College in Edmonton and also served as chaplain to the Canadian Armed Forces base in Edmonton. Back in the parishes, he was stationed at St. Joseph's, Grande Prairie (1963-1964), as well as hospital chaplain and director of the Catholic Women's League. Upon moving to Sacred Heart, Williams Lake, BC (1964-1968) as pastor and superior, he

To study the changes of the Second Vatican Council, he attended the Divine Word Institute (1971-1972) in London, Ontario before returning to parishes as superior and pastor at St. Mary's, Saskatoon, (1968-1973) and at St. Alphonsus, Winnipeg, (1973-1975), where he also acted as chaplain at the Mennonite Hospital. Appointed associate pastor at Holy Trinity, Calgary, (1976-1980), Fr. Murphy moved to St. Gerard's, Yorkton, (1980-1982), where he was also the chaplain to CFS Yorkton, the Knights of Columbus, Columbian Squires, local schools, the advisory council to the Catholic school board and to the Church's marriage encounter program. Upon Fr. Murphy's departure from Yorkton, G.H. Master Warrant Officer, described him as the finest, most compassionate priest.



Fr Joe Murphy en route to Wainwright to first atomic exercise May 1960



Fr Joe Murphy's 60th anniversary of ordination (l-r Fr John Spicer, Fr Mike Brehl and Fr Murphy)

Since 1982, Fr. Murphy has lived in Edmonton, first as the Edmonton Province's Vocation Director (1982-1984) at Liguori House, and bursar (1984-1985) at Scala House. Moving to St. Alphonsus parish as associate pastor (1985-1998) and superior of the community (1993-1998), he celebrated his 50th anniversary of ordination with fellow classmate Fr. John Spicer in 1993. He joined the retired Redemptorist community at Grey Nuns centre, later renamed Villa Marguerite, (1998-2013) and now lives at the Youville Home in St. Albert.