

Throwback Thursday - Fr Francis Cunerty, Jr.

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By MC Havey, Archivist

Born on Christmas Eve 1923 in Toronto, Frank spent his early years in Brooklyn, NY. until the family moved back to Toronto. A good student, he studied at St. Vincent de Paul separate school and St. Michael's College School. Following in the footsteps of Fr. Francis Patrick Cunerty, his uncle and namesake, Frank entered Novitiate under Fr. Thomas Patrick Murphy, where he professed first vows on August 15, 1943.

Seminary studies followed at St. Alphonsus seminary, Woodstock, where he professed final vows in Hebrew and was ordained by Bishop John Cody of the London Diocese on June 29, 1949. He celebrated his first Mass in his home parish church of St. Vincent de Paul with his Redemptorist uncle as the preacher.

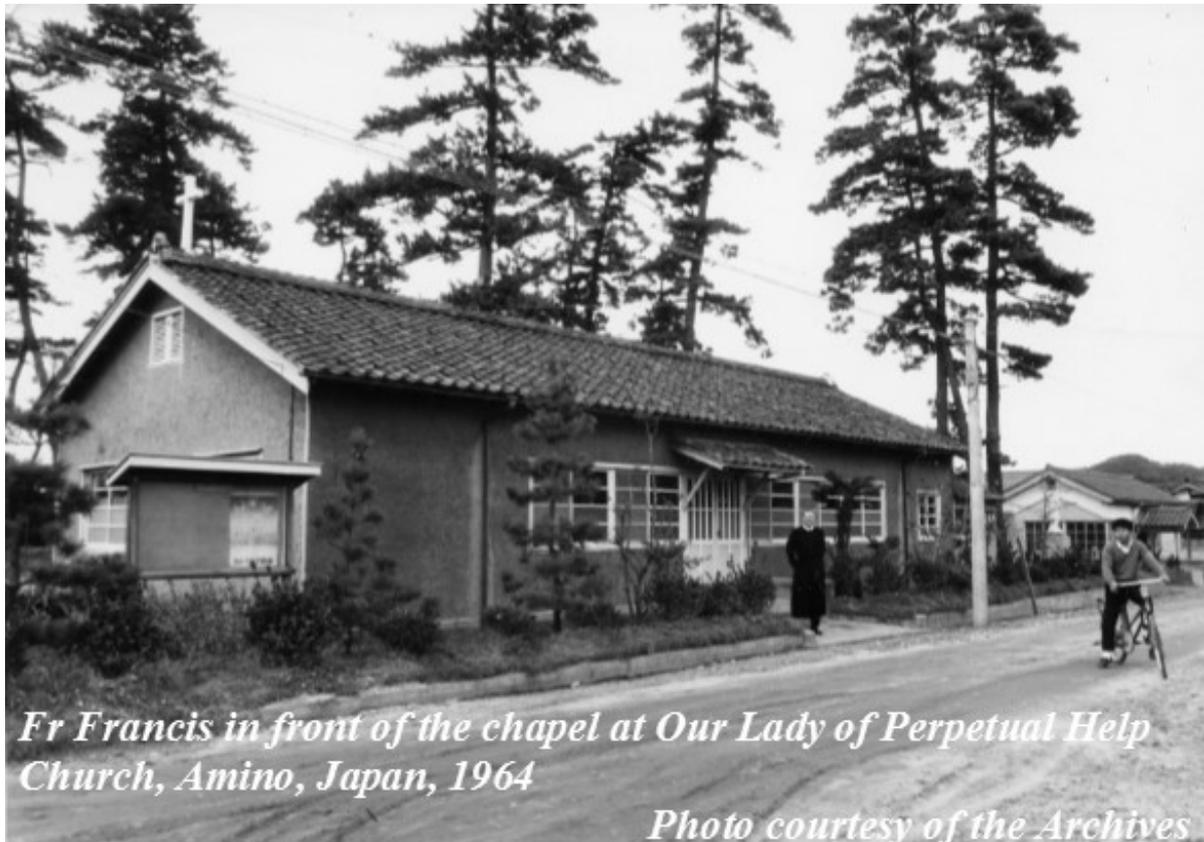
A promising missionary, Fr. Cunerty attended Second Novitiate at St. Ann's, Montreal shortly after seminary and returned to St. Peter's, Saint John (1951-1954) and was assigned to the mission band.

In 1954, Fr. Cunerty was selected along with ordination classmate Fr. David Weir for the Toronto Province's Japanese mission. After language training for two years in Kyoto, he received pastoral training in the Japanese culture at the central Redemptorist house in Maizuru (1956). Further parish appointments followed at St. John the Baptist, Miyazu (1956-1957); pastor at Higashi (1957-1958, 1959); St. Gerard's, Fujidori Iwate (1957, 1959, 1960, 1962).

In a 1958 article in Madonna magazine, Fr. Cunerty wrote of the need of lay missionaries in Japan. "The number of missionary priests is entirely inadequate for the gigantic task of converting the pagan world. Vast areas and many sections of the inhabitants cannot be reached by the missionary priest. ... As is well known, Japan stands in the foreground with the other highly cultured and industrialized nations. So the catechist of today needs a much better preparation in regard to his religion, character and cultural outlook."

Fr. James Mason noted Fr. Cunerty's height of 6'4" astonished the Japanese people. "Frank was a big man spiritually and physically. ... He did possess a very generous spirit and an attractive personality which endeared him to the people of our Maizuru mission in Japan."





Fr. Cunerty assumed responsibility for the Our Lady of Perpetual Help church (1964-1966) in Amino and its three mission chapels at Kuchiono, Mineyama and Kumihama south of Maizuru. Back in Canada (1966) to speak of the Japanese missions, he also sought funds for the construction of a seniors home in Maizuru.

Remaining in Canada with declining health, he died on March 9, 1968 in St. Joseph's Hospital, Toronto, of hepatitis at the age of 44. Archbishop Philip Pocock celebrated the funeral Mass in St. Patrick's church, which was attended by an estimated 75 priests. Burial followed at the Redemptorist plot at Mount Hope cemetery, Toronto.