

Father Francis Victor Gautreaux C.Ss.R.

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Former pastor of St. Nikolaus Church Pattaya, Father Francis Victor Gautreaux C.Ss.R., died on Friday June 19th and was laid to rest in the cemetery of his former church.

Francis Gautreaux was born in 1925, the youngest of twelve children. He lived his early years on a sugar plantation where his father was foreman, located on the outskirts of the town of Houma in Louisiana.

Father Francis Victor Gautreaux C.Ss.R. 1925 – 2015

Like his siblings he attended a local grade school for six years, but at the age of thirteen he entered the catholic minor seminary in Kirkwood, Missouri.

On Thursday June the 29th 1950 Francis Gautreaux was ordained a Redemptorist priest.

The young Father Gautreaux was one of six newly ordained priests who were selected to join overseas missions. He was hoping to be sent to Brazil, where 'they used God's alphabet, English', but instead was informed he would be off to Thailand.

Departing from Oakland California in 1952, the journey to Thailand took twenty six days and he often recalled his earliest memories of his new home, where the heat was unbearable and cattle were still grazing on Bangkok's Sukhumvit Road, now one of the busiest and most urbanized areas in South East Asia.

For the young priest his first six months in Thailand was spent in Chantaburi, studying the Thai language with teachers for three hours each day, plus another five hours completing homework.

This was followed by his first assignment, taking care of several parishes in the northeastern province of Nong Khai and getting from one part of the province to another was not as easy as it is today. "One day travel by bus from our base in the village of Xang Ming, wait for a merchant's boat and then travel by boat for two and a half days along the Mekong River – no travel at night and the last two hours by the river paddle boat. All was new and exciting."

Father Gautreaux spent many years in the northeast of Thailand, but, as is normal in the life of a missionary, was sent to work in parishes throughout the country; four years in Loei province, Pastor at Holy Redeemer in Bangkok, teaching the seminarians in Sriracha. as well as several years in Pattaya working alongside Father Ray Brennan who set up the Father Ray Foundation.

Francis Gautreaux died a few weeks short of his ninetieth birthday. He had spent more than sixty three years in Thailand. He was laid to rest near his good friends, Father Ray Brennan and Father Pat Morrissy, following a Mass which was attended by many, including more than forty bishops and priests, as well as many nuns who had traveled from all over Thailand.

Francis Gautreaux's final years were spent in poor health, but he will be remembered by everyone who met him as a man of faith, devotion, short in height but big in character.

