

In Memoriam

Fr. Ed Foley: Vintage grace

Redemptorist missionary, Father Edwin Gerard Foley, remembered as a priest, whose affirming, grace-filled presence hallmarked his 70 years of religious life, died April 20, 2012 surrounded by the voices of his praying confreres in the community at St. John Neumann Residence at Stella Maris in Timonium, MD.

Father Foley was born on March 5, 1921 in Brooklyn, NY. He professed his first vows as a Redemptorist on August 2, 1941. He was ordained a priest on June 22, 1947.



He served as a missionary for more than 12 years in cities in Puerto Rico which included Guayama, San Juan, Caguas, and Mayaguez, and as a personal assistant to Bishop Thomas Reilly, C.Ss.R. in the Dominican Republic.

He worked as a parish priest for three years in Tampa, Florida and as an associate pastor in churches administered by the Redemptorists in Annapolis, MD; Buffalo, NY; at Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Fatima, and St. Michael's in Baltimore, and at Most Holy Redeemer in New York City.

He was appointed superior of the Redemptorist community in Lima, Ohio and OLPH in Baltimore. He served as socius to the Master of Novices in Ilchester, MD, retreat director at the Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua, NY, and still managed to find time to obtain a graduate degree in Sociology while studying at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

“Some people could look at his tremendously varied career and wonder why he moved around so much,” remarks his former superior, Father Arthur Gildea. “They might erroneously assume that so many relocations would indicate he was a difficult person in some way. Actually, the truth is exactly the opposite. Father Ed was extremely easygoing and accommodating — possibly to a fault. He was the type of priest that superiors could call upon to move at a moment’s notice in order to bring tranquility and stability to his new assignment. They knew his positive and cheerful presence would always have a calming effect on those around him. He was a gentleman who said yes whenever he was asked to serve. And when you’re an administrator facing tough challenges, it’s important to be able to count on these kinds of virtues in people you can trust.”

“He stood tall and was pleasant to everybody,” says one of his classmates, Father Ray McCarthy. “And although he was generally quiet, he could be quite a character if you got to know him and appreciated his unique sense of humor.”

“He was at the younger end of our large ordination class — 26 priests — and I was among the oldest,” admits another classmate, Father Jim Lundy. “Even so, it was obvious to all of us that he was a very bright and a very kind fellow. After ordination we didn’t keep in touch too much because I went to work in Brazil and he was off to Puerto Rico. But we did correspond in more recent years.” Then, after a slight pause, he chuckles, “After all, we were both seeing the same doctors!”

Possibly because of his sociological expertise, but more likely because of his caring attitude toward his fellow Redemptorists, Father Foley devoted years of investigation into the notion of retirement within the context of a vowed life. Together with his contemporary, Rev. Syl Feeley (+ Jan, 2010), Father Foley shouldered the task of studying and crafting pioneering policies on aging and ministry, to the benefit of the missionaries who would come after him. Recognized for his many years of labor and insightful contributions into these matters, he was asked to serve on a newly formed Secretariat for Senior Confreres less than one month before his ninety-first birthday. He answered just as gracefully as he did at his first profession — 70 years ago, when he was 20. He said yes.