

# IN REMEMBRANCE: David Tobin, C.Ss.R.

Dynamic West Coast preacher Fr. David Tobin suffered a massive heart attack and died last Friday, June 27 in Whittier. A tireless and enthusiastic preacher, he maintained an active pace despite having had triple bypass heart surgery a year ago. He was 77, and had served in preaching ministry for almost five decades.

“He was a great friend,” said Archbishop John Quinn, archbishop emeritus of San Francisco. When his giant presence strode to the pulpit, parishioners knew they were in for a “courteous, kind and impressive” message.

Born on February 15, 1937 in Fort Fairfield, ME, Fr. David had two brothers and two sisters. They grew up in Ocean Beach, CA, where the Carondelet nuns made a lasting and loving impression. Perhaps they even inspired Fr. David’s love for statistics, which were peppered throughout almost every one of his conversations.

He followed his brother, noted social activist Fr. Joseph E. Tobin, C.Ss.R., into the seminary in 1951. At 14 years old, Fr. David weighed a mere 92 pounds. “Not only was he the smallest kid, but he was the most homesick. Football was his salvation,” his brother remembered, years before he died in 2003.

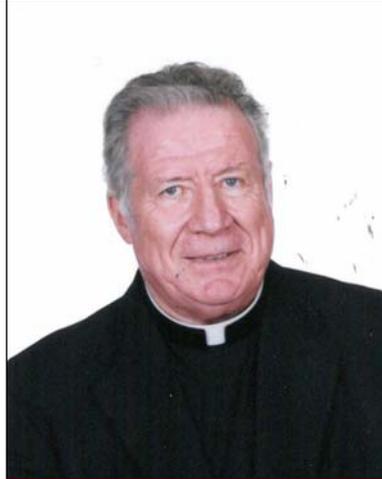
Classmates remember him as a strong, robust student who designed and built a massive raft for summer camp. It had a raised diving board on top, and could handle as many as 20 people. It was so large that officials had to close the streets in Oconomowoc when it was hauled to camp. Eight years and 100 pounds later, he was ordained as a Redemptorist priest on July 2, 1963.

After completing Tirocinium at St. Alphonsus “Rock” Parish in St. Louis, Fr. David taught and worked with the young seminarians at Holy Redeemer College in Oakland in 1965-68. During this time he also ran the energy packed St. Theresa summer camp from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish on the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska. Families vied with each other to put their youngsters into the program. Fr. David also conducted memorable parish missions in Anchorage, Juneau and other areas throughout the state, making solid friendships with families who generously supported the charities he recommended in the USA and abroad.

Fr. David always had zest for preaching the Word of God, and began his long preaching career in 1968 at St. Gerard Parish in Great Falls, MT. He was assigned to St. Alphonsus Parish in Fresno in 1970, and served as a missionary in California for the next 44 years. He covered both sensitive and controversial topics during those tumultuous decades, and was so popular that he booked missions three years in advance. He and Fr. Jim Farrell and Fr. Jim Schuster drew crowds of young people to hear their joyous and hard-hitting presentation of Catholic faith. He made lasting impressions on those who heard him preach in Portland, Santa Barbara, Oakland, San Francisco, Berkeley and Whittier. Several religious and diocesan priests attribute their vocations to him.

“So many people are suffering needlessly,” the kind and generous Redemptorist often said. “They need to hear the Good News: You have been redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus. You are a son or daughter of God because Jesus is alive and growing within you.”

Fr. David also promoted *Liguorian* magazine, and never failed to mention missionaries working in Brazil, Thailand



A recent portrait of Fr. David Tobin (*above*), and posing as a missionary preacher in the 1980s.

*Photos courtesy of Denver Province Archives*



and Nigeria. He listened to thousands of hours of religious workshops by eminent theologians as he traveled from parish to parish. Many people sought him out to seek his counsel in their daily lives. He inspired one woman to join the United Farm Workers of Cesar Chavez, and another to join one of St. Mother Teresa's foundations serving the poor throughout the world.

Fr. David's funeral Mass was held at 11:15 a.m. on July 3 at St. Mary's Assumption Parish in Whittier. He will be cremated and interred with his brother, Fr. Joe, at Resurrection Cemetery in Montebello, CA. May he rest in eternal peace.

*Submitted by Kristine Stremel, with contributions from Fr. Don MacKinnon and Fr. Terry McCloskey*



Fr. David Tobin and his brother, Fr. Joe Tobin, in 1987.