

Father Arthur Connell, C.Ss.R. (1928-2012)

By MC Havey, Archivist

Under a sunny autumn sky on October 2, members of the Knights of Columbus provided an honour guard for the burial of Rev. Arthur Connell in his beloved Miramichi, New Brunswick.

Provincial Superior Mark Miller concelebrated with four long-time priest friends at the Mass of Christian Burial in St. Michael's Basilica, the church of his Baptism, First Communion, Reconciliation, Confirmation, First Mass as well as celebrations for his 25th and 50th anniversaries of ordination.

After the Mass, family and friends followed the casket for burial behind the basilica in the priests' plot at St. Michael's cemetery, where many of his family are buried.

Fr. Connell died on September 25 in Scarborough General Hospital from complications after a fall at Bendale Acres, where he had been living. A Mass of Christian Resurrection was celebrated on September 29 at St. Patrick's Church, Toronto, with Fr. Miller as the celebrant.

At St. Patrick's, homilist Rev. William Fitzgerald described Fr. Connell "as a faithful, devoted Redemptorist, a zealous and dedicated missionary."

"Fr. Art was a thoroughly good and kind man, a dedicated Redemptorist priest with much positive and pastoral care to give. He truly loved to be with people," Fr. Fitzgerald noted.

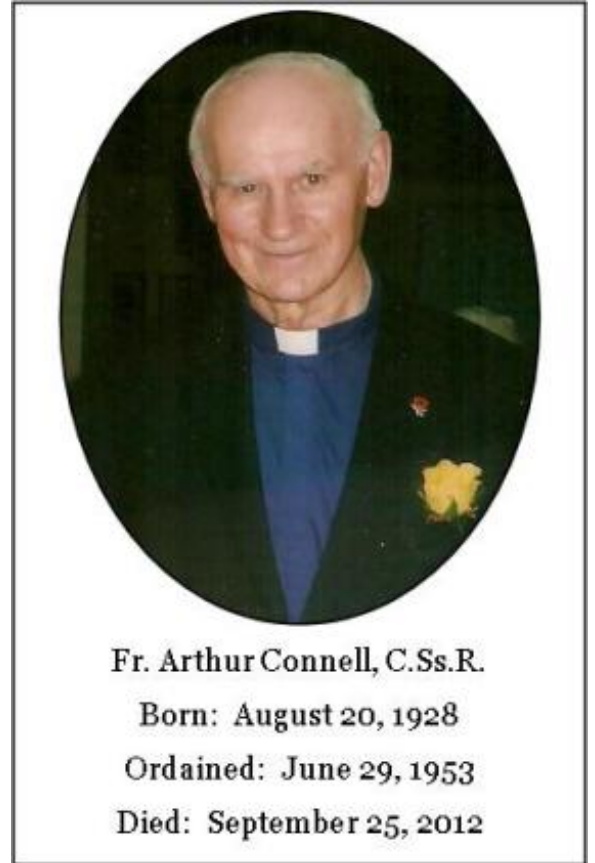
This included social events.

Nicknamed as the Chaplain to all Church Suppers at harvest-time in New Brunswick, Fr. Connell would try to make the rounds of most of them. Fr. Fitzgerald recalled that "from one Sunday to another, he would be at a salmon dinner in Kingston Peninsula, or lobster in Dipper Harbour, or roast beef at Chapel Grove."

A devoted New Brunswicker, Arthur Bernard Connell was born in Chatham, NB, now Miramichi on August 20, 1928. The youngest of the eight children of Frederick Connell and Margaret Phelan, he attended local school of St. Michael's Academy for primary and elementary education. During high school at St. Thomas College in Chatham, he was introduced to the Redemptorists, who preached the annual school retreat during Holy Week.

Following graduation, he entered the Redemptorist juvenate in September 1946, temporarily relocated on St. George Street in Toronto, and professed first vows in August 1948 after Novitiate at St. Alphonsus seminary in Woodstock.

Seminary studies followed at St. Alphonsus, where he was ordained on June 28, 1953 by Bishop John Cody of the London Diocese. He continued studies, graduating with a bachelor of arts degree from Assumption University in 1954, a masters of divinity degree at the University of St. Michael's College in 1955, and a teaching degree from the Ontario College of Education, the University of Toronto, in 1956 along with studies in history that summer at Fordham University, New York City.



With all these academic qualifications, Fr. Connell began a 11-year appointment as professor of history at St. Mary's College, the juvenate just outside of Brockville, ON. Besides teaching, he also served as the college's rector (1964-1967).

Fr. Fitzgerald, a student during Fr. Connell's first year of teaching, recalled that "Fr. Art was well-prepared and with a no nonsense approach. ... In time, like all professors, he mellowed!" After St. Mary's, Fr. Connell completed studies at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, graduating with a master's degree of education in 1967.

In 1968, Fr. Connell realized his ambition to be a Redemptorist missionary. Assigned to St. Peter's, Saint John, NB, (1968-1984), he preached renewal missions, retreats, Forty Hours and Triduum across the Maritime Provinces and eastern part of Ontario. He continued his missionary assignments from St. Patrick's in Quebec City (1984-1991).

Fr. James Mason described him as a "clear, logical and calm preacher ... and was a welcome retreat master at many Motherhouses and convents of religious women."

Off the missions, Fr. Connell enjoyed music, collecting records and sheet music, loving a sing-a-long, especially in his hometown.

Back at St. Peter's, he joined the parish staff (1991-1996) and returned to the missions (1996-2002). He combined both assignments for the next four years until the Redemptorists left St. Peter's in 2006. Fr. Connell retired to Toronto – the provincial residence (2006-2007), La Salle Manor (2007-2011) and Bendale Acres for the last year until his death.