



Fr. Robert E. McCreary, OFM Cap.

January 2, 1937 - March 24, 2021

FATHER ROBERT E. McCREARY, O.F.M. Cap.

Capuchin Franciscan Father Robert E. McCreary, 84, died peacefully on Wednesday morning, March 24, 2021 at Canterbury Place Nursing Home. His Provincial Minister, Father Thomas Betz, OFM Cap., his cousin Father Robert L. McCreary, OFM Cap. and his sister Charlotte kept company with him during the days prior to his death, supporting him with prayer and the sacraments of the Church.

The first of four children born to Judge Robert McCreary and his wife Ellen (Cain), young Robert grew up in Monaca, PA. He was baptized at St. John the Baptist church in Monaca and attended the local public elementary school and one year at Monaca High School before enrolling at St. Fidelis High School and College Seminary in Herman, PA.

Upon the completion of his second year of college at St. Fidelis, Robert entered the Capuchin novitiate at Annapolis, MD where he was invested with the Capuchin habit on July 13, 1957 and received the religious name Brenan, which he held until 1968 when he chose to reclaim his baptismal name. He professed the Gospel Counsels of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience on July 14, 1958 before returning to Herman for the completion of his collegiate studies. Upon graduation Frater Brenan moved on to Capuchin College in Washington, DC begin priesthood studies in Theology. He earned a Master's degree in 1964 and was ordained on February 8, 1964. One year later, in

1965, he received a Master of Arts in Religious Education from The Catholic University of America.

Having completed formal studies, Father Roberto, as he became affectionately known, began twenty-two years of missionary work among the people of the island of Puerto Rico, serving almost exclusively in parish ministry. He was very committed to adult education among the faithful there and made good use of his graduate degree to upgrade the level of catechesis of the local parishes in which he served. He worked to see that his parishioners were kept up to date on the events and teachings of Vatican II, especially by translating the various Council documents into Spanish so that they could more easily read, hear and understand this profound moment in the history of the Church.

He was an energetic and dynamic pastor, truly appreciating the grace of his missionary ministry, but he began to consider that he was called to do more yet. In 1985, writing to his Provincial Minister, he reflected: "From ages 1-14 I was a child at home; from 14-28 enclosed in a seminary, and from 28-48 in a foreign culture. I would love to spend some years participating in American life as an adult." As with most things, he offered his request to return to the continental U.S. fully submitting himself to the prudent decision of the Provincial leadership and the will of God. This was, in fact, the last word in much of his correspondence with his religious superiors over time. It took a couple of years, but in 1987 Father Roberto began an extensive sabbatical in Europe before coming to Washington, DC and eight years of parochial service at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart, where he served as pastor from 1990 until 1995 – an especially challenging period for the District of Columbia and for his largely Latino parish, which served an area fraught with civil unrest at the time. Father Roberto was up to the task, though, and helped his parishioners remain centered on missionary service to a troubled community.

Bishop Donald Lippert, OFM Cap. writes of Father Roberto:

I served with him as a deacon in Utuado, PR, and later as parochial vicar at Sacred Heart when he was the pastor there. He was a zealous and tireless

parish priest... very creative in his pastoral approach. He was at the forefront of involving lay leaders in the church and taking them seriously. Taking the time and effort (as a kind of second career) to learn Haitian creole to be able to serve the Haitians at Sacred Heart is praiseworthy to say the least. He was humble and self-effacing... in fact, I believe that he never really appreciated the pastoral impact that he had on the lives of so many.

Even though his great energy and creativity were well used during his time in Washington, late in 1995 he accepted assignment to the vastly different environment of Cresaptown in western Maryland to fill the developing needs of the Province, serving as pastor of St. Ambrose there for two years that were filled with challenges for him. He faithfully served the people of the parish but found the slower and more deliberate pace of a much smaller parish a difficult fit for his very lively and creative pastoral style.

In 1997 Father Roberto was reassigned to St. Joseph parish in York, PA, a very large and vigorous parish that proved to be a much better match for his talents and energy. He spent twelve satisfying years serving as parochial vicar, finding the variety and pace of the parish activities and celebrations to provide plenty of outlets for his creativity and ministerial vitality. Beyond the available opportunities for service in the parish, Father Robert began a prison ministry to the Chinese detainees incarcerated at the York County Prison, victims of the Golden Venture smuggling tragedy of 1993, and instituted Landings, an outreach to non-practicing Catholics.

It was at this point in his life, though, that his eyesight began to fail, and in 2009 he took on his last regular assignment returning to the Beaver Valley to assist the Diocese of Pittsburgh by celebrating Spanish language masses in Muse, PA. After fifty years of priestly service, though, failing eyesight defeated his desire for active ministry. At his Jubilee celebration in 2015, he remarked that he was quite surprised by this development: "losing my eyesight and not being able to evangelize more widely – I began a more contemplative existence."

Father Roberto's contemplative life indeed kept his heart and mind focused on Christ during the last years of his life, which he lived peacefully at St. Augustine friary in Pittsburgh until Sister Death called him home last Wednesday morning.

Father Roberto was preceded in death by his parents, and is survived by his brother Charles, of Coral Springs, FL, and two sisters: Suellen (Hassett) of Kenmore NY and Charlotte Marie of Columbia SC.

Visitation will be held at St. Augustine church, 225 37th Street, Pittsburgh beginning at 7 PM on Sunday, March 28th. A Vigil Service will be conducted beginning at 8 PM

The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10 AM on Monday, March 29th at St. Augustine Church. Interment will be in the Friars plot of St. Augustine Cemetery immediately following the funeral liturgy.

Contributions in memory of Father Roberto may be made to the Capuchin Friars, 220 37th Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15201.

Professional services trusted to D'ALESSANDRO FUNERAL HOME and CREMATORY LTD., Lawrenceville. www.dalessandroltd.com.

Cemetery Details

St. Augustine Cemetery

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 28. 7:00 PM (ET)

St. Augustine Friary
221 36th Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201

Mass

MAR 29. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Pio of Pietrelcina, St. Augustine Church
225 37th St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15201

Graveside Service

MAR 29. 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Augustine Cemetery

Tribute Wall



“ *Fr. Robert E. McCreary, OFM Cap.*

January 13, 2023 at 04:43 PM



“ *+Amen I Say To You.The Lord Bless You And Keep You.The Lord Let His Face Shine Upon You And Be Gracious To You.The Lord Lift Up His Countenance To You And Grant You Perpetual Rest.Pacivaj v Miru.+GOSPA.+g.michael rozman.*

g.michael rozman - October 26, 2022 at 04:00 PM



“ *We just loved Father Robert in his time @ St.Josephs in York.Always fun & very interested in our youth ministry & whatever was going on in the parish.I always remembered seeing him walking up quite a long steep hill near the rectory.He had great homilies & was a good confessor.I will pray for him during this Holy Week.My condolences to his family & brother Friars. Kathy & Nick Spagnola Langhorne Pa.*

Kathy spagnola - March 27, 2021 at 09:22 PM