

In Memoriam

Fr. Schreiber: Frequently a superior, always with a smile

Redemptorist missionary, Father Gerard Schreiber, remembered most especially for the twinkle in his eye and his ever-present smile, died September 13, 2012 surrounded by prayers from the members of his family and his religious confreres at the St. John Neumann Residence, Stella Maris, in Timonium, MD.

Father Schreiber was born on November 8, 1928 in Baltimore, MD; professed his first vows as a Redemptorist on August 2, 1949; and was ordained a priest on June 20, 1954.



He attended St. Mary's College, the Redemptorist Preparatory Seminary, in North East, PA, completed his novitiate year in Ilchester, MD and finished philosophical and theological studies at Mount St. Alphonsus in Esopus, NY where he was ordained.

Father Schreiber's first missionary assignment began in 1956 at Campo Grande in Brazil. Two years later he assumed the responsibilities of teacher and eventually superior at the Redemptorist minor seminary in Ponta Grossa where he served for eleven years. In 1969 he became the rector of the Redemptorist major seminary in Curitiba where he again served for almost another decade. In 1978 he transitioned from formation ministry to parish ministry but maintained the responsibilities of superior for the community in Telemaco Borba. His final parish assignment in Brazil was to serve in Miranda in Mato Grosso do Sul.

Having spent nearly the first 24 years of his priestly ministry in the foreign missions, Father Schreiber returned to the United States where he continued working in parish ministry at St. Wenceslaus in Baltimore, MD and at St. Anthony Parish in Lancaster, PA.

In April, 1981 Father Schreiber moved to the Provincial House in Brooklyn, NY as consultant to the Provincial. In addition to this official office he also accepted the added responsibility of serving as a Vocation Director for the Baltimore Province.

In 1984 he relocated to another borough in New York City where he continued to serve as a province vocation director along with the additional work of preaching missions from the Immaculate Conception Parish in the Bronx. In 1989 he continued his extraordinary preaching ministry for the next four years from the upstate New York location of the Redemptorist Retreat Center in Esopus.

June 1993 found Father Schreiber — now a member of the Vice-Province of Richmond — once again assuming the responsibilities of superior for six more years as the rector of Holy Family Retreat House in Hampton, VA. He continued to serve in the Chesapeake Bay area in both parish ministry at St. Joseph's Church and retreat work at Holy Family until 2007 when he returned to the Baltimore Province to assist with some parish duties at Our Mother of Perpetual Help Church in Ephrata, PA.

Finally, on June 22, 2011, he began to bring his apostolic ministry to completion, through recollection and prayer with his religious community, when he moved to the St. John Neumann Residence at Stella Maris.

"We were close friends since around the age of five," declares his confrere, Father Jerry Oberle. "As a priest, he was a very spiritual man who prayed as much as he worked and he worked very hard. He always had many good friends throughout his ministry. Even in his senior years, especially when he was stationed at Ephrata, I noticed that a lot of these friends were among the sick and the elderly whom he visited and served in the parish. In a word, I would describe him as zealous, which is probably why he was so often appointed as a superior."

Another confrere, Father Harry Harrison, admits, "We were never actually stationed together in Brazil, but we met several times each year for formation meetings since I was serving in the minor seminary and he was superior in the major seminary. He had several endearing personality characteristics that stood out strongly, like his genuinely warm smile and that welcoming glint in his eyes. He also had a great sense of humor, but not the type that would play tricks on other people. Those who really knew him knew how organized he was. He exercised every day and at exactly the same time every day. You could set your watch by his daily routine. That's how meticulous he was."

"I was one of the vocation directors for the province," recalls a third confrere, Father Joe Krastel. "While he was a member of the Ordinary Provincial Counsel, he also took on the responsibilities of a vocation director as well, and I believe he was the first man who held this position ever to do that. We worked together for four years on the vocation team. Since he had been in the formation apostolate for so many years in Brazil, he brought a great deal to the ministry — particularly his solid understanding of our overall formation system and his keen ability to make solid appraisals of the candidates who came to us. He was excited about our Redemptorist life. He was ambitious about vocations for the future. He worked very hard and he was good at what he did."

"He also had a humble side," continues Father Krastel. "For example, he never bragged about his good fortune to be classmates in St. James Grammar School with a youngster who grew up to be an NFL football player for the Dallas Texans and the Baltimore Colts. His lifelong friendship with George Young Jr., even before he became General Manager of the New York Giants, was the real reason why Father Schreiber got some top-notch seats at the Meadowlands."