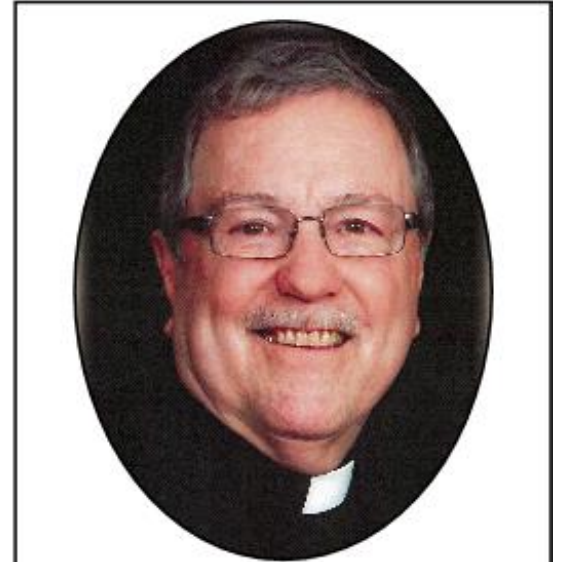


Father David Cottingham, C.Ss.R. (1940 - 2013)

By. Fr. Mark Miller, C.Ss.R.

David Cottingham was born in Moose Jaw, SK and raised in Caronport, on the open Prairie west of Moose Jaw. The Redemptorists served this area and often said Mass in his parents' home. He attended St. Louis College under Redemptorist guidance until 1954 when he went to Brockville where he completed his high school in 1959. After four years at Holy Redeemer College in Windsor (where he graduated with a B.A. from the University of Windsor), he went to Aylmer, Quebec (1964-67) where he learned French well while studying with the students of the Ste. Anne-de-Beaupré province. Many confreres from Quebec expressed their deep sorrow at the death of David, remembering him with great fondness from their years at the seminary and subsequent encounters.

David was ordained in Moose Jaw on June 18, 1966. I recall him telling me how he was sent to our parish in Nelson, B.C. that summer—and did not have a clue how to baptize a child, preside at a funeral, or bring the anointing of the sick (known then as 'last rites'). David was ordained just after the Second Vatican Council, so he went through the turmoil of change in those years and it affected his ministry significantly. After completing a B.Ed. at the University of Alberta, he taught at Holy Redeemer College, Edmonton (1968-70; he was also prefect of students for one year) and at the Canadian Forces Base in Edmonton (1970-71). He then spent a year seriously reconsidering his vocation, but returned with renewed enthusiasm to spend a year as chaplain at College St. Jean in Edmonton and then vocation director out of Saskatoon (1973-75).



Fr. David Cottingham, C.Ss.R.

Born: February 14, 1940

Ordained: June 18, 1966

Died: March 23, 2013

In 1975, the Redemptorists of the Edmonton province made a far-reaching decision to renew its approach to parish missions. Frs. David Cottingham, Claude Lemieux, Albert Sterzer, Al Rekowski, and Brother Jack Dowling gathered for several months and then launched the Redemptorist Mission Team which continued with various personnel until 2010. David & Claude were stalwarts of the team and made the daring move of inviting Bob & Joan Williston to join the team in 1978. Speaking as one who had the privilege of being on this Mission Team for several years, the power of the preached word, the witness of dedicated priests, brothers and lay people working as a team, and the simple truth of the Gospel moved hearts and minds during hundreds and hundreds of missions across Canada over the years. In the latter years, David and Bob teamed up and left an indelible mark across the West wherever they preached, taught and sang (see one testimony below).

David preached parish missions for nine years before taking a sabbatical at Duquesne University where he received an M.A. and the preparation needed for working in formation (1985-91). He was novice director from 1991-93 and guided some of our finest confreres presently at work in our province. He returned to the Mission Team from 1993-98, was then appointed pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Moose Jaw where he had the sad duty of informing the parishioners of the withdrawal of the Redemptorists from the care of the parish in 2002. Working out of Saskatoon, he then went back to preaching missions with Bob and, often, Joan.

Almost five years ago, very close to the time that Claude Lemieux died from multiple myeloma, David was diagnosed with the same disease. Chemotherapy brought him to the point where a stem-cell transplant was undertaken, to which he responded very well for about 8 months. The cancer returned, was kept more or less in check until January of this year. When I hear the first line of Psalm 132, "Oh Lord, remember David and all his many hardships!" I cannot help but think of what our David went through over this period.

And yet he always remained his cheerful, friendly self (with the occasional let-down due to pain or frustration). At his funeral my impression was confirmed that everybody who knew him liked him. And, indeed, there were many who spoke to me and others of the profound influence he had had on their lives through his preaching, his counseling, his personal witness, and his faith-filled dedicated life as a priest and a Redemptorist.



*Fr. David with Joan & Bob Williston
and Fr. Claude Lemieux
Photo courtesy of the Archives*

David's two sisters, Mary and Carol, accompanied him through his final weeks and his foster sister, Joyce, was there at the funeral, along with nieces and nephews. David was very close to them all. There was a sadness in the air that this good man would leave us when he seemed to have so much still to offer. However, he himself spent his whole life teaching us that the Will of God is not something to be feared, for it comes from the One who loves us unconditionally. We said farewell in the blessed confidence that his journey was now fulfilled and he would continue his kindness to all of us in the presence of our Father.

I add a testimony from Suzette Szumutku from Yorkton, SK who sent in the following to the funeral website:

"My sympathy to Bob Williston and other members of the Redemptorist Mission Team. You are surely mourning Fr. David's passing, but I too grieve his loss. The fact that he will not be able to preach any more missions is a great loss—not only to me, but to the many who may never have heard him. The Redemptorist Mission Team was a very significant factor in my spiritual growth—and Fr. David and Bob were an integral part of that team every time I attended a mission (and I had the privilege of attending many in those days). Fr. David, and the Mission Team's role in my life will not be forgotten and he will be in my prayers." (April 2, 2013)



Fr. David was part of the Mission team in 1977

Photo courtesy of the Archives