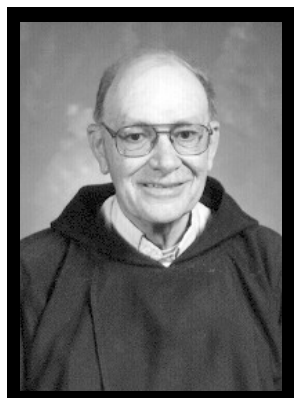


# Neerology

## **Joseph Doerfler 1929 - 2008**



The Province of St. Joseph has influenced many blood brothers to join the order. So it was no surprise that Joseph Doerfler followed his brother Camillus into the Capuchin way of life. In his ordination class, there were three other Capuchins who had brothers in the order. Unlike his brother Camillus, Joseph was involved in a variety of ministries.

Joseph Frederick Doerfler was born on 22 February 1929 in Appleton WI, to Henry and Elizabeth (Welbes) Doerfler. His siblings were Dorothy, Henry, Camillus, Catherine, George and Therese. He attended St. Therese Grade School, and after graduation went to St. Lawrence Seminary in Mt. Calvary WI. After four years of high school, he join the Capuchins and went to St. Felix Friary in Huntington IN, where he professed his first vows on 31 August 1947, and received the name Kilian. He went to Garrison NY, our house of studies, in 1948 and made his perpetual vows on 1 September 1951. From there he traveled to St. Anthony Seminary in Marathon WI for this theology courses, and was ordained on 8 September 1955, celebrating his first mass on the following Sunday at St. Therese Parish in Appleton.

Joseph Smetana writes, "My first remembrance of Joe was at Marathon, and he was a year ahead of me, so when I was in the process of learning how to celebrate Eucharist, he would give me some comments on how I was doing. He always, and I mean *always*, celebrated the same way: hands just so wide apart, etc. Well, I had a final exam with him, and the only comment on my celebration of the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin was that I had bowed my head at the name of "Joseph" in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke. He was a "stickler" for little things."

Joe's first assignment was as assistant hospital chaplain and assistant Third Order director at St. Francis Parish in Milwaukee WI. In September 1956 he was appointed assistant pastor of St. Elizabeth Parish in Milwaukee. Two years later he went to St. Lawrence Seminary as a professor and bookkeeper. In 1961, he was appointed local minister and rector at St. Francis Brothers' School at Calvary Station WI. In 1967, he went to St. Fidelis Friary in Marquette MI as a hospital chaplain, and religion teacher at Bishop Baraga High School. Shortly after this, in 1968, he was assigned to Abqaiq, Saudi Arabia, as chaplain to the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) which became an adventure as well as a challenge. He covered nine camps from Abqaiq to Udhailiyah 98 miles away. He wrote to the provincial minister, Ron Smith, that "a steady diet (weekly) of that schedule traveling

and saying mass and preaching nine times a week can drive a man crazy after awhile. I've been doing it for almost two years; I suppose I really should be off my rocker by this time. I think, along with ARAMCO, that this is too much for one man. A schedule can be worked out so that each man has at least an equal share of duties." He believed that a tour of Saudi Arabia should not last longer than six years. He requested a change of ministry in April 1973, so he could be close to his ailing mother, but because an ARAMCO supervisor asked him to stay on a temporary basis and be stationed at Udhailiyah which would cut down on his work load, he accepted.

In March 1979, Joe returned to the U.S. and became associate pastor at St. Bernard Parish in Pirtleville AZ, and then administrator of Sacred Heart Parish in Wilcox AZ where he joined Philip Casper and James Magnan who assisted him. The bishop, Francis Green, wrote to Joe: "I am pleased to be able to entrust the care of Wilcox to the Capuchins. The fact that the three of you will be together will provide you with the opportunity to maintain the discipline and practice of your community." In 1984, he asked to be excused from the chapter and tendered his resignation as administrator. He wrote that the "diocesan clergy seems to have a negative attitude toward this parish. A couple of them mentioned to me shortly after I arrived here, "I wouldn't take that parish if the bishop paid me a million dollars." He returned to Appleton to attend Fox Valley Technical Institute where he wanted to learn Spanish with the hope of going to Panama. He was assigned to St. Joseph Parish in Appleton as associate. The following year he helped out at St. Bartholomew Parish in San Manuel AZ, St. Joseph Parish in Hayden AZ, and was assigned as parochial vicar of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Dallas TX. In 1986, he attended a three-month theological and spirituality institute in Santa Barbara CA, and then helped out at St. Bartholomew Parish in San Manuel AZ, and in St. Joseph Parish in Hayden AZ.

In September 1986 he was appointed hospital chaplain in Warren MI. He wrote to the provincial minister about this appointment that "his agreement with Larry Abler in May 1986 was that "I would sacrifice myself and force myself to be the hospital chaplain until the chapter of 1987." He disliked this ministry and found it depressing. He felt that he had done enough of this ministry at St. Mary's in Marquette and elsewhere. Joe was hoping that a friar who had taken a CPE course and never used the experience would be assigned.

In November 1987 he was assigned to St. Joseph Parish in Appleton. Two years later he went to San Damiano Friary in Madison WI where he was did helpouts. Because of health problems, Joe was transferred to St. Fidelis Friary in Appleton. He spent a short time at St. Bonaventure Friary in Detroit MI before being assigned to Casa San José in Tucson AZ. He picked up Joe Smetana in Milwaukee and wanted to visit Leo Petrimoulx in Madison, but got lost and ended up at the Madison airport.

While in Tucson he insisted on going two or three blocks to get the oil changed in his car. He left about nine o'clock one morning and got back after everyone was in bed! The local minister, Michael Graf, called in a missing person advisory. When Joe Smetana got up in the morning he saw Joe's car parked in front of the friary instead of the usual place. Joe

had gotten lost, even though he had visited Tucson when he was ministering in Wilcox. Joe stayed there about a year before returning to St. Fidelis Friary in Appleton because of his health. He was accompanied by Timon Costello who drove, but received the wrong directions from Joe. They ended up in El Paso instead of Albuquerque NM.

While at St. Fidelis he was described as a recluse and was seen only at prayers and meals. He went to Mary Hague, the nurse, about a sore toe. A trail of blood was found in his room. He did not take care of his toe, and lost his foot and eventually his leg, attributing this to a scorpion bite. In reality it was due to illness and infection. Later he lost his other leg, and was fitted with two prosthesis. Since he could not take care of himself at St. Fidelis, Joe went to the Franciscan Care Center in Appleton. He did not complain about his situation and seemed to like staying in his room, not even visiting his brother Camillus who also was there. Occasionally he came to St. Fidelis for a meal, but after awhile those visits were discontinued because he seemed to like his hermit-like life. He lived a simple and uncomplicated life.

Joe loved the “Bob Newhart Show” and whenever people asked him how he was doing, his response was “Fine and dandy,” a line that Bob Newhart always used. He also loved to talk about his classmates from novitiate, especially Declan from the St. Mary Province who did an Irish jig, as well as his ministry at the Brothers’ School and his stay in Saudi Arabia. Whenever I visited him he was cheerful, and loved to talk about the “good old days.”

Joe died on Friday, 12 September 2008 at the Appleton Health Care Center, formerly known as the Franciscan Health Care Center. His funeral was celebrated at St. Joseph Parish in Appleton on 15 September 2008, and he was buried in Mt. Calvary Cemetery.

— *Written by Richard Hart*