

Reflections for

+Fr. Steve Wiese, SCJ Funeral Liturgy

Condolences: to Family Members, Friends, and to all the members of our SCJ Province

Brief Biography:

Born in New Jersey into a farming family in 1935. After high school, his pastor advised him to study at Dehon Seminary in Great Barrington, MA, It was just opening in the Fall of 1952, for "belated vocations.," its seminarians had completed high school, but had not completed college.

After two years of introductory studies, including Latin, Greek and spirituality, he decided to further test his vocation to become an SCJ, a member of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart by entering Sacred Heart Novitiate at Ste. Marie, IL. After completing his novitiate year, he made his first profession of vows on September 8, 1955, 62 years ago.

He completed his philosophy and theology studies at Sacred Heart Monastery and was ordained in 1963, 54 years ago.

His ministry: A synopsis of his varied and diverse ministry is listed on the back of his obituary card. I'll underscore a couple of these involvements.

The SCJ community applauded Fr. Steve's willingness to serve in many capacities, including the foreign missions here in our own country, namely, with the Lakota Indians of the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation located at Eagle Butte, SD. As pastor of All Saints Mission Parish he oversaw the building of a new Church, combined with a hall and four classrooms for religious education classes. This very practical building continues to serve the families in Eagle Butte to this day.

Fr. Steve also served in the kingdom of Lesotho within the Republic of South Africa. There he served as a pastoral minister, reaching out to families and the population in general. Some other SCJs were also missionaries in Lesotho. They ran a technical school, teaching many different mechanical skills to the local students. Fr. Steve found this a difficult mission, learning new languages, living apart from other community members, traveling over a wide area. Still-he was faithful in reaching out to the local people.

I recall that Fr. Steve directed an annual retreat for a number of religious Sisters at Sacred Heart Seminary/School of Theology each summer. He was blessed with a marvelous speaking voice and had a wonderful way of describing theological images in understandable language.

When we were moving out of our former retirement home, Villa Maria. Fr. Steve was asked to be the principal celebrant of the Farewell Mass in what used to be the convent chapel. He told us that he was asked because 40 some years previously he offered his very first Mass in this chapel after his ordination in 1963. Fr. Steve blessed all of us present with a powerful image of what that day meant to him, and how the years of Masses in this chapel, blessed our Province. He reminded us that as this chapel and house closes, these same blessings would continue in our new place: Sacred Heart Monastery Lake.

Our Farewell: Today we are privileged to say good-bye to our brother, Fr. Steve. We are encouraged to remember, as Fr. Steve did his life, that the Loving Lord constantly gives us the strength to wipe away our every tear. No matter how much suffering and/or difficulty that Fr. Steve experienced in his life, {and he had more than his share, as he often told me, "Tom, don't get old."}, nonetheless he was ever sustained by God's strength. Fr. Steve know that he, as well as each of us, must give an account of oneself before God. He understood that the greatest challenge in our lives is to live for the Lord, to praise Him, to share ourselves for the good of others.

Fr. Steve appreciated the hospitality his sister and family members shared with him when he was able to be with them. He welcomed the kindness of local friends, especially Dr. Richard Peres, as well as S H M Lake staff and visits by SCJs. He appreciated, usually after the fact, the care and directives of the caring staff of the Congregational Home. Fr. Steve's tastes in food tended to be gourmet whenever possible. He had no interest in sport events. I never understood why he didn't root for the "Church," meaning Notre Dame.

The Gospel reading reminds us that the Lord's house has many dwellings. We SCJs are not all homogenized, fitting into the same place, in the same way. Fr. Steve is a prime example of being unique, one of a kind. The Lord respects our individuality. Our Loving Lord asks one thing of us: that we put our faith in Him. He reminds us, as He reminded Fr. Steve, that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Each of us comes to the Father through Jesus.

With that powerful reality in our hearts and minds, we wish Fr. Steve a most blessed journey to his heavenly home, as we thank God for his life and ministry.