

Br. Gabriel Kersting, SCJ

1922-2017

Originally from Pittsburgh, Pa., Br. Gabe Kersting, SCJ, worked in the Merchant Marines as a deck-hand from 1942 to 1946 before following his vocation with the Priests of the Sacred Heart. He made his first profession when he was 26.

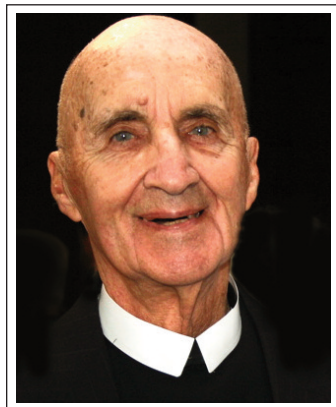
Br. Gabe spent much of his religious life as a support person to others. He served at the novitiate (Ste. Marie, IL), at Dehon Seminary (Great Barrington, MA), at Sacred Heart Southern Missions (Mississippi) and at Kilroe Seminary (Honesdale, PA).

In 1959, he moved to province administration, again as a support person, serving as provincial secretary for 14 years.

It was when he was provincial secretary that Br. Gabe began thinking of the missions. He went to the airport to pick up Fr. John Strittmatter, SCJ, a missionary from South Africa who was home in the United States for meetings. "He told me what he was doing in South Africa and it really stayed on my mind," said Br. Gabe. "He said I should come down and try it [missionary life] and by the end of that car ride I was ready to go!" In 1973, he was on his way to South Africa.

"My greatest pride and joy was the church that I painted," said Br. Gabe. He and an assistant re-painted the inside of St. Mary's Church in De Aar, the cathedral of the diocese. With hundreds of intricately designed tin tiles on the ceiling, needing two or three coats of paint each, the job wasn't an easy one. "We were on scaffolds at least 30 feet high for hours at a time."

After 20 years overseas, Br. Gabe returned to the United States. He spent two years with the novitiate community in Chicago, and in 1997, joined the Sacred Heart Community in Pinellas Park community. He was 95 at the time of his death.



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