

# Fr. Michael van der Peet, SCJ

## 1924-2010

Professed in 1946 and ordained in 1953, Fr. Michael once joked that he “joined the family business.”

“Of my mother’s family, there was a brother who was a Trappist Monk, another who became a religious brother and a sister who became a nun,” he said. “Three of my father’s cousins were SCJs.”

At the age of 13 he entered the SCJ seminary in the Netherlands. However, his studies came to an abrupt halt in 1940 when World War II reached Holland and the seminary was forced to close.

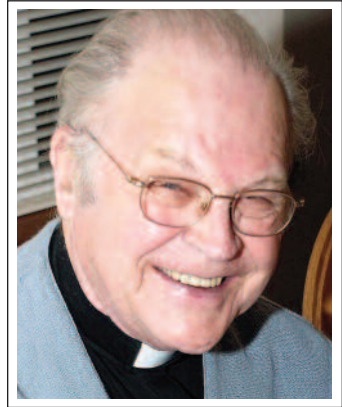
Fr. Michael returned to his hometown and spent time in hiding to avoid German troops seeking men for the factories. When Holland was liberated, Fr. Michael returned to the seminary. He hoped to be a missionary in Chile, but his provincial superior decided that that he could be better used in the United States where the young U.S. Province was in need of seminary instructors.

“I arrived, unable to speak English, on loan to the U.S. Province for five years,” he said. Soon, Fr. Michael was at the minor seminary teaching Latin, French and music.

In 1964 he attended a retreat that opened a new chapter in his life. Six years later he moved out of the classroom and into full-time retreat ministry. Among those to whom he gave retreats was Mother Teresa and members of her religious order. She and Fr. Michael became friends after an accidental meeting at a bus stop in Rome. Their friendship included regular correspondence; he later helped to promote her cause for beatification.

Fr. Michael became a parish priest for the first time at the age of 62. In 1986 he was named pastor of St. Matthew’s parish in Houston. “It helped me to really appreciate what most of my brothers in priesthood do,” he said.

In retirement, he served part-time as a spiritual director at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology.



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