

Fr. Joseph Kiefer, OP



Obituary for Fr. Joseph Cletus Kiefer, O.P.

Joe was born on May 6, 1932 in Los Angeles and raised in our parish of St. Dominic's, Eagle Rock, his parents being very active there over the years. After graduating from high school he entered St Mary's College in Moraga as a pre-Dominican student. In those days the custom was that young men interested in the order went for two years to College at St. Mary's for Latin, Greek, Physics and other required courses so that after the normal three years of philosophy at St. Albert's we would get our B.A. degree. About 15 of us lived in Benilde Hall, and six of us first year students were from the Los Angeles area four of whom had entered through St. Dominic's, Eagle Rock. Among those living at Benilde Hall in those years were Tom Hayes, Vincent Forestler, Louis Robinson, Peter Miles, Eugene Sousa, Tom Croal (later a diocesan priest), and myself. We elected Louis Robinson as our dean.

Life at St. Mary's was utter joy, for most of us our first freedom from home. Joe, I and a few others worked gardening jobs on weekends, and went frequently in my 1939 Mercury coup to movies in Orinda. Joe was always good at sports. About fifteen of us entered the novitiate in August, 1952, the last year of operation for the ferry boat from Richmond to San Rafael. Together we plowed our way through the novitiate and studentate, always getting renewed by time on the

football field and basketball court. At St. Albert's we had work days three days a week, but on other afternoons we gathered on the lawn near the front of the chapel, which is now impossible to do because of the fruit trees planted there. Joe was always "going long" for passes and skillfully hauling them in.

After his ordination in June, 1958 he was assigned to his home parish in Eagle Rock. Because of the pressures of being so well known there and his family so involved, that proved not a wise decision and he was assigned after one year to Daniel Murphy High School in Los Angeles. Not having any previous experience of teaching or discipline in a classroom it took him a while to gain some confidence and control of the students. In 1963 he was appointed athletic director. As tennis coach he could boast that two of his students, Bob and Don Lutz, went on to be outstanding pros. In 1967 he was asked by Fr. Cavalli to be director of the Parents Association, and from 1969 - 72 he served as Fr. Vincent Lopez' vice-principal. He taught English and Theology, two of his students being Reginald Martin and Donald Bramble. He was beloved by all the students and parents as he was a gentle soul, concerned always for the underdog, and possessing a subtle sense of humor. Needing time away from such a public ministry he spent weekends either at home with his family or ramping in the desert. He found peace and joy in being in nature.

In 1972 Joe moved to our community in Riverside, Calif. and taught at Notre Dame high school. After two years he returned to Daniel Murphy High, once again serving as Fr. Lopez' vice-principal. In 1977 he was elected Prior of the community, but when in 1981 the Dominicans withdrew from the school Fr. Kiefer moved to our new house in Santa Ana, living there and working until 1987 at Rosary High School in Anaheim Hills.

Sadly for those of us who loved him, he slipped away from us to spend the rest of his life in the quiet of nature in the woods up by Lassen Park in northern California. Because of his many years of service the province kept him on our health plan throughout his life. He was visited there by his nieces, nephews and friends, but unfortunately cut ties with his Dominican family. We are grateful to the

Kiefer and Searci family for caring for him, especially in his final illness. He died peacefully and in union with the church on August 31" as a result of cancer.

By: Fr. Paul Scanlon, O.P

Born	Professed	Ordained	Died
6 May 1932	15 August 1953	13 June 1958	31 August 2012

Archive Record: _____

