

FATHER KEVIN COLE

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James Robert was born on March 18, 1928, at St. Mary's Hospital in Decatur, Illinois, to Russell and Marie (Foley), who farmed in nearby Dalton City, Illinois.

His older brother, Russan, had entered Mt. St. Francis Seminary in 1938 and James followed him to the Mount in 1940. The brother had been greatly influenced by Fr. John Loftus, also a native of Decatur.

He entered the novitiate at Angola in 1945 and received the name Kevin. He professed solemn vows on August 16, 1949, at Carey, Ohio. Having completed his theological studies at Saint Anthony on the Hudson, Kevin was ordained to the priesthood at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Louisville, Kentucky, on June 6, 1952.

Kevin was blessed with secretarial skills and thus began his priestly ministry as secretary to the then Provincial, Wencelous Hertvik. But within a year or so, he began his pilgrimage through the parish friaries of the U.S.A., mostly in the upper midwest. He was the associate or pastor in Broken Bow, Nebraska; Frenchtown and Lorain, Ohio; Lansing, Michigan; Valley Station, Kentucky; Terre Haute, Indiana; Milwaukee and Waupun, Wisconsin.

In the 1960's, Kevin taught at Toledo Central Catholic for a short period, and was a professor for a longer period of time at Bellarmine College, Louisville, Kentucky.

As a kind of personal sideline, he was chaplain (reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel) for the Kentucky Air National Guard (and the U. S. Air Force). He spent time with the Guard in Korea during the "Pueblo" incident. He enjoyed telling a "thousand" stories about his Korean experience (and also about the Guards' weeks of "summer camp" in Biloxi, Mississippi. The Air Guard, their C47's and the winds of Korea blew and the storms over the Pacific "cured" him of flying. After he left the Guard, Kevin never flew again.

His last years of service were in Waupun, Wisconsin, where he was associate at Saint Joseph and also administrator of the nearby missions of Brandon and Springvale. He loved doing priestly work, and was loved in turn by many of the parishioners.

Kevin contracted lung cancer, phlebitis, an aneurysm and a gangrenous toe around the age of sixty-one. He had two major surgeries (cancer and aorta replacement) and one minor one, removing a clot in his left groin.

His body and spirit struggled valiantly for over two years, but there was too much wrong with him. Fr. Robert Bayer went to Fond du Lac to "hear his confession". The Provincial, Wayne, went up and had a private, comforting, encouraging tete-a-tete with him.

Kevin died at 11:00 in the evening, Monday, September 25, 1991, at the Grancare Nursing Center in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin (one of his favorite cities). There was a funeral Mass in Waupun; and then one at Mt. St. Francis on September 30, where he was buried on a grand and glorious day.

May he and all of our departed brothers, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

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