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Our Lady of Lourdes' Rev. Donnelly dies

By Mike Bailey
FLORIDA TODAY

The Rev. Cyril John Francis Donnelly, a priest at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Melbourne since 1969, died Saturday at the West Melbourne Health Care Center. He was 83.

Father Donnelly spoke several European and African languages and was an accomplished pianist, avid fisherman and tennis enthusiast.

Born in Hull, England, he was ordained a priest Dec. 23, 1933, in Belgium. He entered the Society for African Missions and immediately was assigned to West Africa.

Before World War II, he became military chaplain in the British

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Colonial Service. During the war, he was senior chaplain to the West African Expeditionary Forces in India. He served behind the Japanese lines with Gen. Wingate in Burma and was evacuated to India after several months when his unit suffered heavy casualties.

After the war, Father Donnelly continued his missionary work in West Africa. When Nigeria gained its independence, he transferred to the Nigerian Army and established its Chaplaincy Corps. He served with Nigerian U.N. peacekeeping

forces in the Congo and other trouble spots.

Father Donnelly left Africa in 1964 and came to Port Orange, where he served the Church of the Epiphany parish before coming to Melbourne.

Survivors include his brother, Bernard Donnelly, and niece, Veronica Donnelly, both of Hull.

A scripture service will be held at 7:30 tonight at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, followed by visitation at the church. A funeral Mass will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Wednesday at the church, with burial in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Palm Bay. Davis Funeral Home in Melbourne is in charge of arrangements.

■ Obituaries, 3B.