

Father Frank Klamet lived his life in perpetual motion: Regina Brett

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By **Regina Brett, The Plain Dealer**

If the tombstone of Father Frank Klamet, M.D., ends up bearing the words

Rest in Peace, it will be a lie.

Rest?

Never.

Father Frank ran on prayer, not sleep. Fully alive, that's the speed at which he lived every day. As a priest. As a doctor. As a friend.

His buddy Father Kevin Conroy told me, "He knew he wasn't due for a long life, so he lived fully all the time."

Because of a heart condition, men in Father Frank's family rarely live past 59. Father Frank dropped dead at his rectory in Greenfield, Ohio, on Sunday. He was 57.

The doctors called it a heart attack. Those who knew him would tell you he wore that heart out. In a memorial Mass, Father Mike Paraniuk called Father Frank's life a love story for us. "His heart stopped because it couldn't hold all the love he had for us," he said.

Father Frank was a rare combination of priest and medical doctor. Before he was ordained in 1978, he would sneak out of the seminary to go to the emergency room at St. Vincent Charity Hospital to help out.

In his first assignment as a priest, he ended up at St. Raphael in Bay Village. He drove a motorcycle. He shot hoops. He played in a band. He took kids to rock concerts. He made it cool to believe in God.

Then he served in El Salvador for eight years as a missionary. Father Kevin served with him and shared their

survival stories. One day, Father Frank tried to teach a nun how to drive stick shift. Unfortunately, the

Salvadoran army decided to start a battle. When the shooting started, the nun froze. Frank had to jump out and drive.

One day, the guerrillas took him away for a meeting. He came back with a photo of them all sitting down for a chat. He didn't fare as well at a mall in San Salvador.

After eight years in El Salvador, two days before he left for home, in the safest place in the country, a man with a machete attacked him in a

shopping mall. Father Frank loved to tell the story of the police lineup to identify the suspect who left a gash in his shoulder. The police brought in seven men. Six wore army boots; one wore handcuffs.

That was Father Frank, a priest who could tell war stories that made you laugh.

Why did he become a doctor?

"He saw so much death, he wanted to see life," Father Kevin said.

Father Frank ended up shepherding St. Benignus parish in Greenfield and St. Augustine parish in Jamestown while he practiced family medicine in southern Ohio. He delivered 100 babies a year and baptized many of them.

He wrote prescriptions for sick patients, then handed them the money to buy the medicine. He delivered babies, then helped their poor parents pay for the cost of delivery. He bought diapers, milk and food for the single

moms he ran into at Kroger's.

Whatever money he earned, he constantly gave it away.

He gave his life away.

In eulogies and online tributes, some are calling him a saint. I once heard a saint described as someone who knows how much God loves them.

Father Frank lived a different definition: A saint is someone who shows how much God loves them. They laid him to rest last week.

Rest?

Don't believe it.