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Father Thomas J. Wopperer 1938-2023



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Father Thomas J. Wopperer passed away on Aug. 21, 2023, at Brothers of Mercy Campus in Clarence after a brief illness. He was 85 years old.



Father Thomas J. Wopperer

Born on Feb. 9, 1938, in Buffalo, Father Wopperer was the son of Frank C. and Rose M. (Durshordwe) Wopperer. He attended St. Joseph's Elementary School and the Diocesan Preparatory Seminary in Buffalo, and then Our Lady of Angels Seminary at Niagara University, completing his studies for the Priesthood at St. John Vianney Seminary in East Aurora. He also took special courses in Scripture and Pastoral Counseling at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

He was ordained on Feb. 22, 1964, at St. Joseph's New Cathedral by Bishop James A. McNulty. Except for one summer directing the religious vacation schools of the diocese, he spent his entire priesthood in parish work, serving at St. Helen Parish, Hinsdale; Nativity of Our Lord Parish, Orchard Park; St. Joseph Parish, Buffalo; St. John Vianney Parish, Orchard Park; St. Christopher Parish, Tonawanda; St. Gabriel Parish, Elma; and finally pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Dunkirk, for almost 20 years.

During his years at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, many innovative programs and ministries were initiated and still continue today. While in Dunkirk, he served for many years at the Chautauqua County Home as chaplain. In retirement, he served as temporary administrator of Blessed Mary Angela and Holy Trinity Parishes.

Father Wopperer held memberships in the Knights of St. John and Knights of Columbus. He was a member of the Dunkirk Yacht Club and served on the Citizens Advisory Board of Brooks Memorial Hospital.

In addition to his priestly work, his interests included working in stained glass, gardening, the art of bonsai, cooking, world travel, fishing, camping and sailing.

He is survived by his brother Raymond Wopperer and sister Mary Ann Jeffery. He is predeceased by five brothers: Robert, Frank, William, Charles and George. He is also predeceased by two sisters: Dorothy Ketterer and Jeanne Brady. Father Wopperer also has 51 nieces and nephews and over 160 great-nieces and great-nephews and many great great nieces and nephews surviving him.

Father Wopperer will lie in state at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, 328 Washington Ave., in Dunkirk on Thursday, Aug. 24, from 6 to 8 p.m. and Friday, Aug. 25, from 2 to 8 p.m. Arrangements were made by the McGraw-Kowal Funeral Home in Dunkirk.

A funeral Mass will be held at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Dunkirk on Saturday, Aug. 26, at 11 a.m. He will be interred at Assumption Mausoleum at St. Mary's Cemetery in Dunkirk.