Father Walter Downs



Walter Downs Obituary

Father Walter J. Downs, MSC
BETHLEHEM
Father Walter J. Downs, MSC was born on Feb. 29, 1932, in Boston, MA, to Edward and Lillian Elizabeth (Cruise) Downs, both now deceased.
He did his primary and secondary education in Boston, graduating from high school in 1949. He then attended Sacred Heart Seminary in Geneva, IL, for one year before entering the novitiate program of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Youngstown, OH, in 1951. Father Downs professed his first vows in 1952. He then continued his studies for the priesthood at Sacred Heart Seminary in Shelby, OH, and made his perpetual profession of vows in 1955. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 31, 1958, in Toledo, OH.
His first assignment as a priest was as parochial vicar at Holy Family Parish, Nazareth, PA, in 1959. In 1960, he moved to Holy Cross Parish in Batavia, IL. In 1961, he began a preaching ministry which he continued for many years in various parishes, monasteries, and convents throughout the United States. In 1964 to 1965, he was superior of the MSC community in Sparta, WI. He then moved to Oceanside, CA, and was superior of that MSC community from 1965 until 1972. From 1972 until 1977, he was pastor of St. Francis Parish, Warwick, RI.
From 1980 until 1987, he was director of novices in Youngstown, OH. He also carried on an intensive retreat, renewal, and spiritual direction ministry until he left Youngstown in 1998. He was superior of the Youngstown community for several years. During that time, in the 1980s, Father Downs was also chairman of the Provincial Formation Board. In 1988, he became a member of the Provincial Council, and, in 1991, became vice-provincial.
Father Downs spent part of 1999 in Namibia, Africa, where he was chaplain to the MSC Sisters there. He then ministered at St. Joseph Parish in Upland, CA, until he joined the formation team in Chicago, IL, where he worked for a short time.
In 2001, he returned to California and served in various parishes in the San Bernardino diocese, and continued giving retreats and making mission appeals. He enjoyed spending his winters in California and loved taking many trips to visit his family in Boston, MA. In 2010, Father Downs returned to assist at Holy Family Parish, Nazareth, PA, where he treasured his time until he decided to spend his retirement at Sacred Heart Villa, Center Valley, PA, in 2015. Before his death, he had been a resident at Manor Care Center in Bethlehem, PA.
Father Downs peacefully entered into Eternal Rest in the Heavenly Kingdom on Tuesday, April 16, 2019, at the age of 87.
He is survived by sisters, Mary Cullen of Arlington, MA, Ruth Downs of Arlington, MA, and Irene Jahnle of Littleton, MA.
Calling hours will take place on Tuesday, April 23, 2019, from 6 to 8 p.m. and Wednesday, April 24, from 10 to 11 a.m., both times in Holy Family Parish, 410 W. Center St., Nazareth, PA, 18064. Followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in Church on Wednesday starting at 11 a.m. After Mass, burial will be held in Holy Family Cemetery, of Nazareth.
In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Sacred Heart Villa, 3300 Station Ave., Center Valley, PA 18034, in c/o the funeral home.
Online condolences may be offered at www.jfreichelfuneralhome.com.

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