

FR. CLEM AND HEMET

- Fr. J. Kelly

Fr. Clement Lachowsky, 85, has been in Hemet for fifteen years, but he was born in Conway, Arkansas, on Dec. 12, 1920. Sometimes the Holy Spirit gives more than one vocation to a family. After finishing elementary and high school at St. Joseph's in Conway, Clem, followed in the footsteps of his cousins Frs. Anthony and Frederick Lachowsky, and went to Cornwells in 1938, was professed in Ridgefield in 1941, studied Philosophy and Theology in Ferndale and was ordained there on March 3, 1947. Then Fr. Clem made his Apostolic Consecration to the Spiritan Apostolate in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City on June 8, 1947.



Fr. Clem's first appointment brought him back to Cornwells as Head of the Science Department where he taught while pursuing a Master's Degree in Science which he obtained from the Villanova University in Philadelphia. After teaching for nine years he took a year's course at the Gregorian University in Rome. This prepared him for his next appointment as Novice Master in Ridgefield from 1957 to 1963 and then in Glenwood Springs, CO. to 1968, when he became Principal of Gerard High School in Phoenix, AZ.

One of Fr. Clem's four sisters, Sr. Mary John, SSND, became a missionary in Japan and he, himself, became a missionary to the Huastecan Indians in Tanlajas, Mexico in 1971 for 12 years. That put him right at home in cattle and farming country, but two dogs got into a fight during his first homily in Spanish. After he returned to the States in '83, he became Pastor in Tucson, AZ, for three years until he became Provincial of the Spiritan Western Province in 1986 to 1989. He was then assigned as Chaplain at the Vets. Hospital in Tucson, AZ, and a year later as Administrator of St. Anthony's in Riverside, CA. In 1991, he became Assoc. Pastor of Our Lady of the Valley Parish at Hemet CA., until shortly afterwards when he retired there at Hemet.

HEMET

Hemet, with an altitude of 1500 feet, was once the home of the Cahuilla Indians. Later, with 342 days of sunshine a year and water from the dammed Lake Hemet, it became orchard country for citrus fruits and row crops. In 1946 Spiritan Frs. James Hyland and Paul Lippert opened a Mission there for a spiritual harvest which soon began to be reaped from the then 43 families and a growing population, while the fields continued to produce grapes, walnuts, olives and citrus fruits.

The original ranch house became the original rectory which is now the quarters for the Mission Procurator, Fr. Joseph Gaglione. A beautiful church was erected with its marble altar and seating capacity for over 600 people at each of the weekend's 6 English and 3 Spanish Masses for the large parish. Over the years other units were built at the parish which does not have its own school, but has 12 classrooms for evening CCD classes for 800 students on Primary and Secondary School levels taught by a full-time CCD coordinator with assistants. The parish, 80 miles from Los Angeles, also has a hall for other activities for the still growing parish of mainly young families. A number of our confreres have served in Hemet, including Fr. James Burnie who is now Superior of Libermann House at Bethel.

There is a large plot at Hemet. The Parish uses some 4 acres and the Spiritans have the rest for a Spiritan Cemetery with over 30 confreres already buried there and the Spiritan Retirement House which has 15 rooms with six retirees who are presently residing at Hemet.