

Fr. Edward J. Kelly 77 USA TANZ ETHI USA

* October 16, 1922 in Philadelphia

+ July 10, 2000 in Arlington, VA

Even as a young boy attending the parochial school of St. Columba Parish in his hometown, he always wanted to become a priest. So, when his one year older brother Harry found application forms for our junior seminary at Cownwells Heights while doing some work after school for a teacher, young Eddy also filled out a form. Both of them, with an interval of one year, entered the seminary, which then still accepted boys who had completed the eighth grade. Harry dropped out in 1945 when he was 24, but Ed persevered and earned very good grades. In 1942 he went to the novitiate in Ridgefield, CT, where he made his vows on August 15, 1943. In the final year of theology at Ferndale, Norwalk, CT, he was ordained on March 18, 1949, having earned a B.A. and a B.D.

Assigned to the Kilimanjaro district, he and six others sailed in October of the same year on the SS African Star via the southern route to East Africa. After teaching for a few years at the senior seminary in Kibosho, he took charge of the Useri station by 1953, followed by Arusha in 1957 and, three years later, he became director of the middle school for Maasai and Arusha boys at Burka, an annex of Arusha. He also played an important role in the new Diocese of Arusha as its first Vicar General and Procurator. He became one of the pioneers in the development of the apostolate among the Maasai.

After being in charge of the Loliondo mission, he was listed in 1963 as in charge of the Monduli mission; next he served as director of the catechetical center at Usa River until he became a staff member of the junior seminary of the Arusha Diocese in Oldonoyo Sambo.

After 23 years in Tanzania, he became the leader of a three-man team that in 1972 went to prepare a new mission in Ethiopia. It took three years of negotiations with the government to get its approval to work among the semi-nomadic Borana people and build a center among them.

By then his health began to fail and he returned to the U.S.A. He took a year of rest at Chicago's Spiritan community, but also used this time to be updated at the Catholic Theological Union. He then assumed a teaching position at Salve Regina College in Newport, RI. In 1979 the new Provincial, Fr. William Headley, showed his appreciation of Fr. Kelly's talents by naming him a member of his council, giving him the liaison role for education and specialized ministry, while also being secretary of the Council. As such, he produced a steady stream of valuable papers. He retained his membership of the Council until 1985, when a new Provincial was elected.

Meanwhile he had become administrator of St. Leo's African-American parish in Detroit in 1980. Two years later the reorganization of inner city parishes merged the pastorship of St. Leo's with that of St. Benedict the Moor, to be served by a diocesan priest. He then joined Fr. Leonard Tuozzolo as a team assigned to St. Joseph's African-American parish in Cincinnati, OH, earning the praise of the archbishop for the work they were doing.

In 1985 a cardiac bypass operation forced him to request retirement status and he went to our community in Sarasota, FL. He had been dreaming of returning to Tanzania, but this was out of the question now.

By 1989, however, he got tired of retirement and felt up to returning to active ministry, though not in a leading role. He became associate pastor of Our Lady, Queen

of Peace Parish in Arlington, VA. Originally an African-American parish, it was and is, open to all; and many people of various ethnic origins come to it for worship and take part in its activities. Yet it retains its special African-American flavor. Fr. Ed became fully involved in his work there and was much appreciated by the congregation. He even became its administrator for six months during the illness of its pastor in 1995. While at Arlington, he continued also to be involved on behalf of the African Faith and Justice Network, as well as the Mission Focus Group of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and contributing articles to the National Catholic Reporter and other papers.

After celebrating his golden jubilee as a priest in March 1999, he retired, but continued to reside in Arlington. In November of the same year he was hospitalized with kidney trouble. He died peacefully in his sleep on July 10, 2000. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Saturday, July 15, in the parish. Burial took place on July 17 in the Spiritan cemetery at Cornwells (Bensalem).