

Fr. Joseph Bernard HACKETT 83 USA

* Sept. 1, 1905, Philadelphia * Jan. 28, 1989 Cornwells, PA

After six years at Cornwells, 1922-28, he pronounced his first vows at Ridgefield, Aug. 15, 1929. For his senior studies he attended Ferndale, where he was ordained by Archbishop Le Hunsec Sept. 21, 1934.

His first assignment took him to Holy Ghost, Opelousas, LA, for one year as an assistant. It was there that he got his baptism in ministering in the Southern missions to blacks--a work to which he would devote most of his active years as a priest. Transferred to Tuscaloosa, AL, he served for three years at St. John Baptist, before being made pastor of St. Mary Magdalene in the same city, 1939-42.

Next, we find him in Sanford, NC, in 1942 to start the new mission of Our Lady of Lourdes. He had barely done so when illness drove him back North and he spent two years at Cornwells. By 1944 he could resume work in the South and replaced an ailing pastor at St. Monica's, New Orleans. A few months later he got word that he was to become the founding pastor of a new mission in Arlington, VA. He built the church there and dedicated it to Our Lady Queen of Peace; it was an integrated church in a predominately black neighborhood.

Three years later, he was back in Cornwells and, after some time "on loan" at St. Alexandre College near Ottawa, he became in 1950 pastor of St. Joseph's Herndon, VA, serving a dirt-poor congregation. It was the fourth time he had to build a parish church and after two years he got ulcers and begged to be relieved.

His superiors gave him two years of relative rest, aiding the mission procurator in Washington, DC. After a brief stay at St. Mary's, Sharpsburg, PA, in 1954, he asked to return to the South and became pastor of Our Lady of Mercy, Charleston, SC. It was a new parish in a mostly black neighborhood with few prospects of immediate development. Asking for a change a year later, he took a temporary assignment at St. Catherine's, Little Compton, RI, and then became pastor of O.L. of the Blessed Sacrament, Shreveport, LA. He lasted five years there. He obtained a transfer to the Ann Arbor, MI, junior seminary in 1960. We find him three years later in New Orleans as administrator of the St. Francis de Sales parish, which the archbishop was considering to entrust to the Spiritans. When the archbishop was transferred the plan did not materialize and in 1966 Fr. Hackett went to Sacred Heart, Lake Charles, LA, where three years later he became pastor.

By then he was ailing again and received an assignment to more peaceful St. Augustine's, Isle Breville, LA. He loved his work there, but he was nearly 65 years old then and suffering from assorted ailments and asked to be relieved of his pastorship. His wish was granted and he could go to peaceful St. Joseph's, Conway AR, in 1970. He was later assigned to St. Catherine's, Riverside, CA.

He was next reassigned to the USA-East Province in 1971. He spent the next two years in short-lived appointments in Washington, Dayton, Pittsburgh, Powhatan, VA, Portsmouth, RI, and Ferndale. By his own calculations, the last-named was his 24th assignment.

When he was 68 in 1973 his retirement began. He spent it as a companion to a priest in a one-man parish in Florida, in Sarasota, Philadelphia's St. Peter Claver and assorted other places. In 1980 he entered the community retirement home at Cornwells, being also in and out of nursing homes during the nine years that remained. Almost to the very end he continued to be actively involved in all kinds of issues that drew his attention. He died of heart failure in a local hospital. Interment took place at the Cornwells community cemetery.

Fr. Hackett repeatedly earned glowing praise from his superiors for his solid and often pioneering labor as a priest and for his ever-ready availability to help out in emergencies.

USA-East Newsletter, Feb. 1989 Archives 30B-23 to -25