

Fr. Joseph Gerard NOPPINGER 84 USA TZA

\* Feb. 18, 1905, Baltimore, MD

+ Feb. 13, 1990, Bethel Park, PA  
"in the odor of sancity"

In 1925 he entered the Redemptorists' novitiate, but his health was judged too weak for the strenuous life awaiting him in that order and he had to leave. The Redemptorists' loss was the Spiritans' gain, for he was accepted into the Congregation in 1927. Meanwhile he had spent half a year attending Loyola College in his hometown.

He pronounced his first vows at Ridgefield Aug. 15, 1928 and pursued his philosophical and theological studies at Ferndale, where he was ordained Sept. 7, 1932.

The following year he sailed for the Kilimanjaro mission in Tanzania. The Redemptorists would have been surprised if they had been foretold that their "weakling" was destined to spend about half a century enduring strenuous work in a tropical climate without any serious illness, but that is what happened.

His first eight year tour of duty was spent teaching in the junior seminary, and evangelizing in Gare and Tanga. While he was home on leave in 1941, the war prevented his return and he served for four years at St. Anthony's, Millvale, PA, and in Washington's provincialate.

In 1945 he could sail back on a two month voyage to his beloved Africa and resume his work in Kibosho and Singa Chini. Six years later he became education secretary for the vicariate of Kilimanjaro.

In this capacity he was in charge of the school system of the Spiritan missions there. In those years, the number of schools rose dramatically from less than 20 to over 75, attended by 25,000 pupils.

The year 1957 found him in charge of the Kilema parish with over 11,000 Catholics. He soon also became vicar general of the Moshi diocese as well as principal religious superior of the Spiritan district of Kilimanjaro.

Later we find him residing in Umbwe, Korongori, Samanga and Mbahi-Arisi. "Residing" is only a technical term, for wherever he was, he worked indefatigably, instructing and forming converts, building no less than six large churches, educating laity and clergy, fostering vocations for the budding East Africa province of the Congregation, and acting in all things as the bishop's right hand in the marvelous development of the old Spiritan mission into vibrant new dioceses of a native church.

All the development that he guided required large sums of money, and much of it came from the one-man mission bureau set up by his younger brother Anthony. A printer by trade, Tony circulated about 1,200 copies of Father Joe's Kilimanjaro News, a quarterly newsletter for his relatives and many friends, to raise funds for his works. In 1982 Tony could travel to Tanzania to attend Joe's golden jubilee as a priest.

By then the end of the untiring missionary's career in Africa was at hand. He was ailing, and together with Tony he returned to the States to seek a cure. It soon became apparent that he lacked the strength to go back to Africa. Although very disappointed by that inexorable fact, he accepted the decision with the obedience that had characterized all his life.

Entering the Bethel Park retirement facility, he lingered on for seven more years while Alzheimer's disease ravaged his body and mind. He died there in his sleep, a few days short of his 85th birthday. Interment

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took place at the Sacred Heart Parish cemetery in his hometown.

He left behind the memory of one who had realized the ideal of what a priest, missionary and religious should be.

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Archives 29C-1 to -8 and 34F-3 ff.