

**Fr. Matthew C. EVANSTOCK**, 77, USA, USW  
\* June 1922, Bridgeport, CT

+ May 15, 2000  
Hemet, CA

A brother of Fr. Philip D. Evanstock, he received his primary schooling at St. Cyril and Methodius School in his hometown and graduated from Warren Harden Public High School in 1940. He then attended a technical school and worked for some time as a mechanic. Attracted to the Holy Ghost Congregation in nearby Ferndale and Ridgefield, he entered their college level school at Cornwells Heights, near Philadelphia, in 1942.

He made his first vows at Ridgefield on August 15, 1945 and did his senior seminary studies at Ferndale, where he was ordained a priest on June 2, 1950. The following year he began his active ministry among African-Americans in Louisiana, where he was destined to work for many years.

His first assignment took him to St. Monica Parish in New Orleans as associate pastor to some 1200 people. Tall and strong, he gave himself to the ministry assigned to him, taking over the administration of the parish when the pastor became ill. Previous to that he had already done the same at Moreauville, and subsequently he filled similar interims at Plaisance, Marksville and Shreveport when illness or death required a short but quick appointment.

Then in 1955 he himself became ill, but after a thyroid operation and a rest at his sister's home in Texas, he resumed his ministry as associate pastor of St. Edward's parish in New Iberia. This was a fast-growing parish with a congregation of about 3,500, to which 14 missions were attached. The place became known as the "mother of churches", as nine of its missions developed into autonomous parishes. In 1961 he was transferred in the same capacity to St. Paul's Parish in Lafayette, LA, for five years. He enjoyed his many years of work in Louisiana. "What Louisiana lacked", he wrote to the Provincial, "in the way of climate and beautiful landscape, is more than made up with the warmth, friendliness and hospitality of its people."

Just then in 1966 he was transferred to St. John's Parish at Tucson, AZ. "What a difference", he exclaimed, "from a flat 25 feet above sea level at Lafayette to a mountainous high of 2,400 feet in Tucson, from a very damp climate to a very dry atmosphere, from an African-American parish to a predominantly Mexican one". And he did not even know any Spanish. But he admired the patience of the people in putting up with the ignorance of their Yankee padres.

Two years later he went back to New Orleans to Holy Ghost Parish for one year, followed by a brief appointment as seminary director in Glenwood Springs, CO, and filling brief gaps at Riverside, CA, and Rifle, CO, in White parishes. By 1970 he was back in his beloved Louisiana, this time as pastor of the African-American parish of St. James, Alexandria. Though the grade school had to be closed in 1971, C.C.D. programs secured religious instruction for the children.

In 1975 he became formation director of the Spiritan Seminary in Houston, TX, but two years later he was back again in Louisiana as pastor of St. Katherine's Parish in Leonville. On Christmas Day of the same year a fire gutted the church, but he constructed a new one and replaced the old parish hall with a new one. In 1982 he took a brief sabbatical for some studies at Notre Dame, IN, before returning to St. John's Parish, Tucson, AZ, as associate pastor. This time he lasted there till 1991. "You have touched the lives of many there", wrote the Provincial, "by nine years of dedicated service". The parish was then handed over to the diocesan clergy.

Father's final assignment was to Our Lady of the Valley Parish in Hemet, CA. He served there as associate pastor and bursar. The diabetes from which he had suffered for years flared up, but the doctors managed to save the foot that was in danger of having to be amputated. He was a fourth degree Knight of Peter Claver as well as the Knights of Columbus and acted as their chaplain.

In 1976 he retired in Casa Laval, Hemet. He died there on May 15, 2000, just a few weeks before the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination. Of his 45 years of active ministry, 26 had been dedicated to African-Americans, nine to Hispanics, six to mainly Whites and four as formation director in seminaries.

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