



Francis McDonnell: Wise pastor was a sports fan

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BY JEANNE MAY
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The Rev. Francis R. McDonnell, who served as a pastor three times at St. Clare of Montefalco Church in Grosse Pointe Park, died Monday (2-23-04) at the Mother Theresa Home in Lemont, Ill.

He was 90 and had recently been treated for pneumonia and congestive heart failure.

He also taught at Austin Catholic High School in Detroit from 1953 to 1961. He was chair of the Religion Department and director of athletics.

"He was approachable and had a gentle way of discussing even firmly held viewpoints without putting down those who saw things differently," his friend Brother Thomas Taylor wrote in a tribute to Rev. McDonnell.

"He was insightful and had an ample supply of common sense. He was a voracious reader and an avid sports fan."

Rev. McDonnell's first tour of duty at St. Clare began in 1971. After two years as associate pastor, he became pastor, a job he held until 1979.

In 1982, he returned as associate pastor, staying until 1989.

In 1994, he began his last term at St. Clare, serving as associate pastor until he retired in 1995.

He lived at St. Clare until 2001, when he moved to Our Lady of Grace Community, an assisted-living center in Homer Glen, Ill.

During one of his absences from St. Clare, he moved to the Midwest headquarters of the Order of St. Augustine, where he raised money for Augustinian missions in northern Peru.

Rev. McDonnell was born in Centralia, Pa., grew up in the area and studied at Temple University in Philadelphia for two years. Then he moved to the Augustinian Academy on Staten Island, N.Y., where he studied Latin and began his career with the order.

He earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy at Villanova (Pa.) University, studied theology at Augustinian College, Washington, and earned a master's in education at the Catholic University of America, also in Washington.

After that, his entire career was spent in Michigan and Illinois.

Survivors include several nieces and cousins.

Friends may call from 6 to 8 tonight at the Marian Village Chapel, 15624 Marian Drive, Homer Glen.

The funeral will be at 10 a.m. Friday at Our Mother of Good Counsel Church, 16043 S. Bell Road, Homer Glen, with burial in the Augustinian plot at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Alsip, Ill.

The family suggests memorial donations to the Augustinian Guild, 20300 Governors Highway, Olympia Fields, IL 60461.