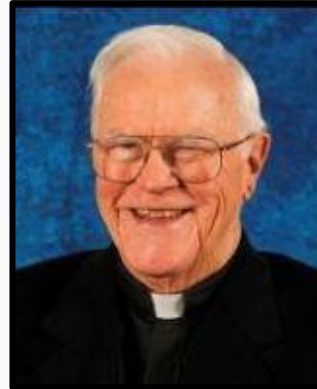




Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Soci t  de Marie
Via Latina 22, 00179 Roma



January 27, 2020

Biography of Death Notice No. 36 (2019)

The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **Kenneth J. SOMMER**, priest, of the Marianist Community at Siena Woods, in Dayton, OH, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 17, 2019, in Dayton, OH, USA, at the age of 91 with 72 years of religious profession.

Fr. Ken was a teacher, a chaplain, a powerful preacher and a trusted spiritual guide. He dedicated his life as a Marianist in consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary and felt it was a gift of God's grace that he was called to be a spokesman for Jesus' love for his Mother in the Church.

Kenneth James Sommer was born in Dayton, Ohio, on February 10, 1928. He was one of two sons in the family of Charles and Verona (nee Hoying) Sommer. He attended St. Mary's Parochial School. He first met the Marianists while attending Chaminade High School in Dayton. He entered the Marianist Novitiate in Beacon, New York, on August 16, 1946, and took first vows a year later on August 17, 1947. He earned a bachelor's degree in education from University of Dayton, Ohio, in 1950.

Fr. Ted Cassidy recalled the story of Fr. Ken going to the novice master in October of his novitiate year and telling him he was having doubts about his calling to religious life. The novice master told him he was welcome to leave but advised him to go to the chapel and pray about it. In that prayer, Fr. Ken said that the Lord showed him that He had a special calling for him and that he should give his life to it.

Fr. Ken's first teaching assignment was at Cathedral Latin, in Cleveland, Ohio (1950-1956). He took perpetual vows on August 15, 1952. In 1956, he entered the seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland and was ordained on July 19, 1959. He returned to the United States in 1960 and was a theology student at Mount Saint John, Dayton, Ohio. In 1961, Fr. Ken was assigned to teach at Marianist Preparatory in Beacon, New York. He served as a teacher and chaplain at North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1961-1965). Fr. Ken then went on to minister in the same roles at St. Joseph High School in Cleveland, Ohio (1965-1972). He then was a member of the campus ministry team at Cleveland State University (1972-1976). In 1976, he was assigned to campus ministry at University of Dayton, Ohio, where he served until 1981. Fr. Ken undertook the administration at Pinecroft House of Peace, a retreat center in Cincinnati (1981-1985).

From 1985-1988, Fr. Ken served as associate pastor at St. Francis De-Sales Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. During his time there, he was the director of the Woodburn Marianist Community (1985-1988). He then served as a chaplain to various ministries in Cincinnati, including Archbishop Moeller High School and in charismatic ministry for the former Cincinnati Province (1988-1998). Fr. Ken ministered for many years to the Catholic Men's Fellowship of Greater Cincinnati, Ohio.

Fr. Ken moved to the Marianist Community at Mercy Siena in assisted living in June 2013. Fr. Thomas Schroer wrote, "Fr. Ken often said to me that his last few years at Siena Woods were his happiest as a Marianist. What a testimony to him and the Society of Mary. His faithfulness and commitment to service as a Marianist bore fruit most wonderfully and were blessed in a special way in the last years of his life. It was truly an honor to know Fr. Ken and live with him as a Marianist."

Fr. Ted Cassidy recalled, "I became a friend of Ken during the last five years of his life. He initiated, with Bro. Phil Aaron and myself, a monthly discussion on spirituality or theology for the brothers at the Siena Woods Community. He was passionate about the Lord Jesus Christ, Mary, contemplative prayer, masculine and feminine theology and spirituality. He devoted much of his life leading men's prayer groups and very large gatherings of men in prayer. He was a strong leader in the charismatic movement."

Fr. Ken reflected at the time of his 70th jubilee, "The greatest gift God has given me in the Society of Mary is our consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary — to be called by God's grace to make a vow to be a spokesman for Jesus' love for his Mother in the Church. What a gift."

We thank God for Fr. Ken and his Marianist vocation of faithfulness, commitment and passion for Jesus and his mother, Mary.