

Celebrating

THE ETERNAL LIFE OF . . .

Fr. Paul H. Besanceney, SJ, served as provincial of both the Detroit Province and the Eastern Africa Province. “He was well known for his firmness mingled with gentleness,” says Fr. Binamungu Faustine Mukasa, SJ, of Monze, Zambia. “He was strict but fair and truly Jesuit in his decisions.”

Born in Toledo, Ohio, Fr. Besanceney was ordained to the priesthood on June 13, 1956. In 1971 he was appointed as fourth provincial of the Detroit Province. In 1980 Fr. Besanceney went to Africa, serving at St. Paul’s National Major Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya. In 1988 he was once again appointed provincial, this time of the Eastern Africa Province. He remained in this position until 1994. “It is quite an honor for an outsider, particularly an American, to become a provincial in a foreign environment,” says Fr. Robert Scullin, who served as the ninth provincial of the Detroit province from 2001 to 2008. “Fr. Besanceney must have won their minds and hearts. He is a very traditional leader, in the very best sense of the word.”

Fr. Clement C. Metzger, SJ, is remembered as a longtime pastor and spiritual director. Born in Shelby, Ohio, Fr. Metzger was ordained to the priesthood on June 17, 1965. Beginning in 1978 he worked as a chaplain at several correctional facilities in Ohio and Michigan until 1985. Fr. Metzger then went on to serve as associate pastor of St. Mary’s Parish in Toledo, Ohio (1985–1986); substitute pastor in parishes in the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan (1986–1988); and Pastor of Gesu Parish in Toledo, Ohio (1988–1998). In 2000 Fr. Metzger moved to the Jesuit Retreat House in Parma, Ohio, where he served until 2008.

“Fr. Clem was an inspiration to me always,” recalls Mary Jo Lupica, who worked with Fr. Metzger at the Jesuit Retreat House for seven years. “When you looked at Fr. Clem, you could see the face of Christ. He was the most humble, kind, holy and inspirational person I have ever been privileged to have known. My children just loved him. I believe my oldest son’s desire to be a priest one day is partly attributed to Fr. Clem’s example.”

Fr. Stephen A. Meder, SJ, served as a Jesuit librarian for many years. A native of Cleveland, Fr. Meder was ordained to the priesthood on June 16, 1943. He then went on to serve as a teacher and librarian at St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati. In 1955 Fr. Meder moved to St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland, where he was a librarian until 1963. In that year he

moved to Colombiere Center in Clarkston, Michigan, where he served as librarian, adding the role of minister to those duties in 1989. It was in these capacities that Fr. Meder served for the rest of his life.

“I have wonderful memories of our uncle Fr. Steve,” recalls Fr. Meder’s niece Jean Meder of Holland, Michigan. “He was such a joy to be around. He always had a smile on his face. He would visit our family and always took a bus all the way into his later years. He was truly a wonderful inspiration to anyone who knew him and he will be missed.”

Fr. Ernest G. Spittler, SJ, a native Clevelander, was ordained to the priesthood on June 14, 1962. His major ministry occurred from 1965 through 1993, when he taught chemistry at John Carroll University. In his final years he became involved in “Marriage Encounter” which he continued through 2001. For many of these later years, he was also pastorally active in the Cleveland diocese.

“I was honored to meet and know Fr. Ernie,” recalls Ceil Sledz-Greenwell of North Royalton, Ohio. “His quiet, humble exterior belied the wit and knowledge within. I am blessed to have known him. He will be missed by more people than anyone can even imagine.”

Fr. John W. Witek, SJ, internationally renowned scholar of East Asian history and native of Chicago, earned an M.A. in history from Loyola University Chicago in 1964, embarking on a subject that he studied for the rest of his life. Fr. Witek was ordained on June 10, 1965. He earned his Ph.D. from Georgetown University in 1973. Later that year he went on to Xavier University to teach in the department of history and political sciences. In 1975 he returned to Georgetown University, where he taught in the department of history until his death. Fr. Witek authored and edited many books and articles about the history of East Asia.

Victoria Roehrich, a student of Fr. Witek at Georgetown University, recalls, “He was really serious about his identity as a Jesuit, and you can tell he really lived the Jesuit values.”

“I said to him a number of times over the past couple weeks, ‘You are loved and esteemed by many, many people,’” says Fr. John Langan, SJ, a friend and colleague of Fr. Witek. “I think sometimes when I said that to him, he was a little surprised because he didn’t think about himself that way. But it was true.” ■



Fr. Paul H. Besanceney, SJ
1924–2009
Grand Blanc, Michigan



Fr. Ernest G. Spittler, SJ
1928–2010
Cleveland, Ohio



Fr. Stephen A. Meder, SJ
1911–2009
Pontiac, Michigan



Fr. Ernest G. Spittler, SJ
1928–2010
Cleveland, Ohio



Fr. John W. Witek, SJ
1933–2010
Washington, D.C.

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