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FATHER CLETUS LaMERE, SDS First Vocation Director for the Diocese of Sacramento

From the Salvatorian Archives; edited by Father John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist



Father Cletus LaMere, SDS
1920 - 2013

Father Cletus LaMere, whose birth name was Edward Louis LaMere, was born in Eastman, in Southwestern Wisconsin, on September 18, 1920. He was one of thirteen children born to John and Anna (Gillitzer) LaMere. He attended elementary schools in his hometown.

Beginning in 1935, he spent two years at Campion Jesuit High School in Prairie du Chien and then transferred to the Salvatorian Seminary in St. Nazianz, Wisconsin where he became acquainted with the Society. Following his second year of college, he entered the Society's novitiate in St. Nazianz, where he made his profession of vows on September 8, 1942. He continued his studies for the priesthood at Divine Savior Seminary in Lanham, Maryland, and at Catholic University in Washington, DC. Fr. Cletus was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood at St. Gregory Parish in St. Nazianz, Wisconsin on June 4, 1948.



The Young Father Cletus LaMere

His first assignment was at Salvatorian Seminary, where he taught history, English, religion and science. From 1950 to 1955, he served as the first vocation director for Mother of the Savior Seminary in Blackwood, New Jersey. After one year of studies at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he went to California for eleven years as the vocation director for St. Pius X Seminary in Rio Dell and later in Galt. There, he also served as Vice Rector of the seminary.

While in California, he ministered as chaplain to the Catholic Daughters of America and the Serra Club and celebrated Masses occasionally on the local Army and Air Force bases. From 1967-1970, Father Cletus taught history and religion at Bishop Manogue High School in Reno, Nevada. During that time he also served as associate pastor at Saint Therese Parish in nearby Carson City. From 1970-1971, he ministered as the temporary pastor of Saint Mark Parish in Phoenix, Arizona.

The years that followed saw him assisting at parishes in Reno, Nevada (Our Lady of the Snows); Wauwatosa, Wisconsin (Saint Pius X); Janesville, Wisconsin (Saint John Vianney); and Verona, Wisconsin (Saint Andrew). In 1983, he became pastor of Saint Gregory Parish in Saint Nazianz, where he remained until 1990, when he began his semi-retirement years at Saints Peter and Paul Parish near Kiel.

Father Cletus fully retired from active ministry in 2006, when he moved to the Society's retirement community at Alexian Village in Milwaukee. He remained in generally good health until the summer of 2013. After hospitalization to help fight a bone infection, he had returned to Alexian Village where he died peacefully on November 13 at the age of 93. At the time of his death, Father Cletus was the oldest member of the Salvatorian USA Province.

He was preceded in death by his parents, John and Anna; his five brothers: Clarence, Roy, Leo, Raymond and Floyd LaMere; and his seven sisters: Sister Rosewitha, Loretta Martin, Florence Steinert, Genevieve Enkosky, Rita Noble, Eleanor Willmore, and Mary Curley. He is survived by many nieces, nephews and cousins as well as his brothers and sisters in the Salvatorian Family.



While teaching and ministering in parishes was his true vocation, he also showed a flair for cooking, photography and writing. His love for history, especially the early years of the Salvatorian presence in the United States, became the source of his 1963 publication *“Fr. Felix Bucher SDS – Indian Missionary of Grand Ronde, Oregon.”*

Upon notification of his death, a reflection came from one of Father Cletus’ former students at St. Pius X Seminary in California through an email from the Diocese of Sacramento:

“Although a member of the Salvatorians, he served the Sacramento Diocese for many years as Vocation Director for St. Pius X Seminary in Rio Dell and Galt. He was truly a man of faith and will be remembered by many of the alumni of SPX with fond memories. The Diocese of Sacramento owes much to this kind and gentle soul.”

In 2010, the native Sacramento diocesan priests who entered St Pius X Seminary during the tenure of Father Cletus as vocation director paid for his plane flight to Sacramento so he could spend a weekend visiting with them. Father Gerald Ryle hosted a Sunday afternoon dinner for the group at Saint Philomene Parish and the pictures below are from that happy event.





L to R; Fr Dennis Thiessen, SDS, Fr Jerry Ryle, Fr Joe Ternullo; Fr Pat Foley; Fr Steve Avella; Fr Cletus LaMere, SDS, Fr Jim Sheets; Fr Tom Perrin, SDS; Fr Roman Mueller, SDS; Fr John Folmer; Msgr Jim Kidder; Fr John Boll



L to R; Msgr Jim Kidder; Fr Cletus LaMere, SDS, Fr Pat Foley and Fr Jerry Ryle