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FATHER WILLIAM A.M. PETERS, SJ Priest, Philosopher and Ignatian Spiritual Director

April 16, 1911 – June 16, 1988



Father William A. M. Peters, S.J.

Father William A.M. Peters, a Jesuit priest born in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, on April 16, 1911 was an internationally recognized scholar and authority on Gerard Manley Hopkins, the great English Jesuit poet of the nineteenth century. Father Peters was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1942 after receiving licentiate degrees in philosophy and theology. The University of Amsterdam

awarded him a doctorate in English Literature in 1948. Father Peters was the author of *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Critical Essay Towards the Understanding of His Poetry* (1948); *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Tribute* (1984); and *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Exposition and Interpretation*.

Taken prisoner during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands during World War II, Father Peters escaped through France to England. He received the Medal of the British Empire for his ministry to British prisoners of war in the Netherlands.

In the twilight years of his life, Father Peters came to the Diocese of Sacramento in 1970 as a retreat master and spiritual director for laity, religious and clergy. He offered the 30 Day Ignatian Retreat to clergy of the diocese at the Mercy Mother House in Auburn. In 1974 I was one of five local diocesan priests who made the 30 day Ignatian retreat directed by Father Peters.

In later years, Father Peters helped out in local parishes. In January 1980 he began serving in various parishes throughout the diocese, including Clarksburg, Yreka, Colusa, Red Bluff and Sacramento. The last parish where he served as administrator was Saint Dominic Parish in Colfax. He asked Bishop Quinn to relieve him of this duty and he returned to the Mercy Motherhouse in Auburn.

Father Peters' 1984 Tribute to Gerard Manley Hopkins stands as he predicted, his contribution to the 1989 centennial celebration of the death of the celebrated English Jesuit poet. In the book's forward, Father Peters explained that "The reason for its early publication is that the writer is in frail health, and it is not likely that he will be privileged to participate in any anniversary celebration. In honesty he hopes that his admiration for and love of both poet and poems might inspire others to commemorate Hopkins in a way worthy of this loveable person."



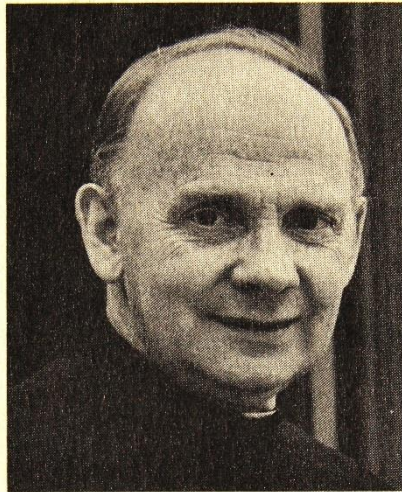
William Peter's premonition was accurate because he would not live to see 1989. As his strength began to lessen, he returned to the Mercy Motherhouse in Auburn where he lived in residence. He celebrated daily Mass with the Mercy Sisters at the convent and was available for spiritual direction for the sisters, priests and laity. Father Peters died on Thursday evening, June 16, 1988, at the Mercy Convent in Auburn at the age of 77.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Father Peters in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on Tuesday, June 21, 1988 with Bishop Francis A. Quinn presiding. Jesuit Fathers John Clark and Randy Roche were concelebrants with Bishop Quinn and Father Roche gave the homily. Burial was at Mount Calvary Cemetery near Citrus Heights.

Father Peters was survived by his sister, Catherine Swaans, of Maastricht, the Netherlands, and a nephew, Frank Swaans, of Los Angeles. Two brothers and sisters preceded him in death.

The Diocese of Sacramento was privileged to have this brilliant Jesuit priest living among us for 18 years. Father Peters was a man of great intellect and spiritual wisdom. He shared both of these gifts generously with many in the Diocese of Sacramento.

May he who preached the Gospel of the Christ's love and compassion both in season and out of season now know fully the joy and peace of God's Kingdom for evermore. Rest in Peace.



FATHER WILLIAM A.M. PETERS, S.J.

Born: April 16, 1911
First Professed: September 8, 1931
Ordained: May 13, 1942
Finally Professed: February 2, 1945
Died: June 16, 1988

*“Remember always, our highest
priority is:
'Hallowed be Your Name'.”*

(Final homily of Fr. Peters, S.J.)