

Father Leo Joseph Kettl 86 USA
* February 23, 1906, Ford City

† August 24, 1992, Pittsburgh

After attending grade and high schools in his native town, he went to Duquesne University's School of Music in 1924. He found his vocation there and entered the novitiate in Ridgefield, CT, where he could pronounce his first vows on August 27, 1927. Going to Ferndale for his senior studies, he was also ordained a priest there on September 17, 1932. Meanwhile he had continued his musical studies at Duquesne, earning a Bachelor's degree. Later, he would also obtain a Master's degree in education.

In 1933 his first appointment sent him to Cornwells as a teacher and as chaplain of St. Francis Industrial School at nearby Eddington, PA. (This school had been founded by the famous Drexel sisters in 1886 and since 1898 its chaplaincy had been taken care of by the Spiritans from Cornwells.) Father's gentle and jovial personality endeared him to the boys, who also greatly appreciated the excellent retreats he gave them over the years. In 1941 he had to give up the chaplaincy because at that time he was named director of the junior seminarians at Cornwells.

After fifteen years at Cornwells a lingering illness following an operation forced him to resign in 1948. He went to Emsworth, PA, as pastor of Sacred Heart, but was still too weak for the job and was sent to Hot Springs, AR, to recuperate.

By 1950 he could resume work at the African-American parish of St. James, Alexandria, LA, and he did it with gusto, especially in teaching at the high school of the parish.

Six years later we find him teaching at the Congregation's junior seminary of Ann Arbor, MI, and then at Notre Dame High School, Riverside, CA. In 1958 he returned to Cornwells as a teacher and as chaplain of the St. Francis Vocational High School. He served there with his usual zeal and kindness for another thirteen years.

In 1971 his teaching career came to an end. For the next four years he had a series of short emergency or interim appointments to various works, but then he was sent to Duquesne as an assistant university chaplain. This ministry fitted him perfectly. He continued in this function for another sixteen years, earning the "deepest gratitude for his magnificent service."

Retiring in 1991, he died of cancer the following year in nearby Mercy Hospital, just a few weeks short of his diamond jubilee as a priest. Burial took place in the Spiritan section of the St. Mary's, Sharpsburg, PA, cemetery.

Father Leo Kettl's life as a priest stood out in many ways by his ever-ready willingness to serve, his steadfast kindness and good humor. He was also a great community man, and unsurpassed in his steady visits to the sick and his attendance at funerals.