

Fr. Roy A. **BURKHART** 85 PR USA
* August 9, 1918, Etna PA

+ July 30, 2004
Hemet CA

Fr. Roy A. Burkhardt was born on August 9, 1918 in Sharpsburg, PA, one of eleven children. His mother died when he was two years old. Fr. Roy joined the Congregation of the Holy Ghost after completing his secondary studies at the Holy Ghost Apostolic College in Cornwells Heights, PA, and his philosophical studies at St. Mary Seminary at Ferndale in Norwalk, CT. Following his novitiate at Ridgefield, CT, Roy professed his vows on August 15, 1942. After completing his theological studies at Ferndale, Fr. Roy Burkhardt was ordained to the priesthood there on June 16, 1944.

After celebrating his first mass at his home parish of St. Mary in Sharpsburg, Fr. Burkhardt was appointed to Puerto Rico in 1945. He served at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (Barceloneta) and San Fernando (Tao Alta). In 1948 ill health due to a bout with tuberculosis forced him to return to the mainland U.S. for a year of recovery at St. Gabriel's Sanitarium in Lake Placid, NY. Well on his way to recovery, he was appointed to serve in the desert climate of Tucson, AZ, at St. John Church (1949-51). In 1951 he was appointed to Sacred Heart in Lake Charles, LA; in 1954 to Immaculate Heart in the same city; and in 1954, to Our Lady of the Valley in Hemet, CA. In 1956, ill health again forced him to spend another year in T.B. hospitals in Monrovia, CA and Tucson, AZ. He returned to pastoral ministry and hospital chaplaincy at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and Kern County Hospital in Bakersfield, CA, from 1958-67. After a temporary assignment at the Spiritan Novitiate in Glenwood Springs, CO, in 1967-68, Fr. Roy was appointed to St. Catherine of Alexandria Church in Riverside, CA, where he served first as parochial vicar and then as administrator.

In 1970, he became the first Spiritan pastor of St. Anthony Church (Casa Blanca) in Riverside. Fr. Burkhardt returned to Tucson in 1975 to serve as chaplain at the VA Hospital. In 1976 he was appointed as chaplain at Holy Cross Hospital in San Fernando, CA, where he would serve until 1981. At that time he returned to serve as parochial vicar at Our Lady of the Valley in Hemet, CA. In 1984 he served in the same capacity at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Indio, CA.

Although he was always especially mindful of the sick and homebound in his parish assignments, his heart was truly with the sick in hospital ministry. In 1985 he returned to his beloved Bakersfield and served as chaplain at Mercy Hospital until his retirement in 1999. In recent years he had been in residence at various rest homes and convalescent centers in Bakersfield. "His profound simplicity, his generosity, his love for the poor and his welcoming smile" were qualities used in his obituary to sum up Fr. Roy. All who knew him knew that his admonition to always "keep smiling" was made to one and all!

Fr. Roy passed away peacefully in his sleep on July 30, 2004 ten days shy of his 86th birthday. Funeral Masses were held on August 3 at St. Philip the Apostle Church, and August 4 at Our Lady of the Valley Church. He was buried in Holy Ghost Fathers and Brothers Cemetery.