

Fr. John R. MARX 95 U.S.A. KEN TZA USA PR

\* April 8, 1900 Port Huron, MI

+ April 29, 1995 Bethel Park, PA

He had done two years of studies at the University of Detroit when in 1922 he entered the novitiate. On August 15, 1923 he pronounced his vows at Ridgefield. In his final year of theology at Ferndale he was ordained there on August 27, 1927.

The following year he was assigned to East Africa's Vicariate of Zanzibar and stationed at Bura. To his dismay his missionary work would also include teaching, for both government and church authorities agreed that schools were the key to the future. However, he himself also came to see the importance of the schools.

After eight years at Bura when he went on leave in the U.S.A., Bp. Heffernan wrote him a very nice letter telling him to take a year of rest and recuperation, but he spent much of it visiting public schools to learn more about the task of running them.

After his return to Kenya we find him at Giriama in 1937, in Riruta in 1938, in Tete in 1940 and in Kabba in 1944. At Giriama and Riruta he was in charge of the teachers training centers. Then World War Two caused the internment of the Italian missionaries in Kenya when Mussolini entered the war on Hitler's side. He became one of the priests who went to replace them until 1944 when he was posted to Kenya.

He possessed a gift for languages and became fluent in Swahili and Kikuyu as well as several dialects, such as Kitaitu and Kikamba. He knew them so well that he was often asked to translate papers into them by government officials. Being paid for these jobs provided him with enough income that he did not need to set up a support organization among relatives and friends in the U.S.A. He also published a Kikuyu catechism in 1942.

Yet, he felt out of place in Kenya, due to the changes in personnel and methods. Irish Fathers armed with university degrees were arriving in large numbers and he did not have any. (When he was in Ferndale in the 1920s this

seminary could not yet confer any official bachelor's degrees). Thus he felt it was time for him to leave. "At his own request," wrote Bp. Heffernan in 1945, it was granted, but the bishop added, that he felt he "was losing a friend of long standing." He had served in Kenya for sixteen years.

Back in the U.S.A. he assisted the mission procurator for one year and then went to Puerto Rico for a brief stay. In 1946 he was assigned to St. Joachim's, Detroit until in 1952 he became pastor at Uganda Martyrs, Okmulgee, OK, for four years.

He then had a series of brief assignments until in 1958 he was posted to Blessed Sacrament Parish in Philadelphia, where he served for fifteen years.

At the age of seventy-three he retired, first in the Washington community and then in 1979 at Stella Maris, Sarasota. As his infirmities increased, he was transferred in 1987 to Bethel Park, PA, where daily nursing care was available. He celebrated the sixty-fifth anniversary of his ordination there in 1992 and died three years later of heart failure.

Possessing a voice that might have made Stentor, of Trojan fame, envious, he was nonetheless gentle and unruffled in his letters even in the face of adversity. How well he was appreciated in Kenya was illustrated by the fact that some forty years after he had left Bura, the Institute of African Studies at the University of Nairobi still consulted him about the history of that area.