

Fr. David Thomas RAY 70 USA

* Jan. 25, 1913 Haverhill, MA + Oct. 10, 1983 Fredericksburg, MD

He studied at Cornwells 1926-32, made his profession at Ridgefield July 16, 1933, and did his seminary studies at Ferndale. He was also ordained there Sept. 15, 1938.

The following year he began his ministry at St. Anne's Millvale, to continue it three years later at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Philadelphia. From 1943 to 1947 he served as an Army Chaplain, first in the European theater of war and then in the USA.

His war time experiences had not left him unaffected, both physically and mentally. He needed repeatedly hospitalization, and the short assignments he received proved to be more a matter of rehabilitation than of regular ministry. By 1952, however, he was back again in good form and he did fine work at St. Joachim's, Detroit, and St. Monica, Tulsa, OK.

In 1958 he became pastor of Our Lady of Peace, Arlington, VA. There he really came into his own. For 25 years he served there in a way that made people marvel. When he got there, his black church was at the end of an unpaved street in a slum area. His congregation was unhappy with their segregated status and had begun to fall apart. Fr. Ray obtained integration, adding a mostly white neighborhood to it, and he did this so smoothly that only about three percent of the added parishioners used the option of joining another parish. Next, he instilled a sense of community into the parish. He established a thrift shop for the needy and then a day-care center, which developed into a full Family Activities center for the young, teenagers, adults and the elderly, as well as a place for social gatherings. Newspapers, politicians and universities took notice of what was going on there.

To instill love of work in the young he opened Our Acres, a large farm, where children came as to a summer camp, but also learned the value of work and where indigents could learn skills to secure employment.

He used his rectory as a kind of dormitory, taking in addicts, the homeless, runaways, etc., treating all of them as valuable human beings endowed with a personal dignity worthy of respect, and helping them to give a human meaning to their lives.

On October 25, 1983 the parish celebrated the 45th anniversary of his ordination as a priest as well as the silver jubilee of his pastorship among them. One week later a collision with a truck on Highway 95 put an end to his life.

Throughout his stay in the parish he had also served as chaplain to the Army's Arlington Hall Station. Interment took place in the Arlington National Cemetery.

The Washington Times, Nov. 2, 1983

Archives 30C-57 ff., 18A-5 ff.