

Father Arthur C. Anderson
December 28, 1932 -
October 1, 2011



Arthur Anderson was born in Hope, NJ, on December 28, 1932, the son of the late Arthur and Helen Cummins Anderson. He grew up in a house on Alphano Road in nearby Great Meadows, NJ that had been built by his father. He attended local schools and graduated from Hackettstown High School in 1951. Arthur went on to attend Montclair College (now University). During a 2003 interview he stated that his family had no religious affiliation and that during his first year at Montclair College he chose to become a Catholic. Three years later, he entered Maryknoll in Chicago, the American Foreign Mission Society. Arthur attended their Formation Houses in Illinois, Massachusetts and Ossining, NY. Due to illnesses, he realized he couldn't become a foreign missions priest, so he worked for a year "street preaching", in his words, as a seminarian at rural missions in Alabama.

Arthur first attended a seminary in Massachusetts and then went to the Diocese of Rockville Centre where he entered Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington, NY. He was ordained a Roman Catholic priest on December 22, 1962 in St. Agnes Cathedral, Rockville Centre, New York. In the 2003 interview, Father Anderson recalled that an enormous snowstorm struck northern New Jersey the night before his ordination, but friends and neighbors of the family, many of them Protestant, helped dig out his father, who also chose Catholicism as an adult, so that he could

make it to his ordination. Father Anderson offered his first Mass on December 23, 1962, at The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the church where he had been baptized. Several classmates from Hackettstown High School shared that occasion with him.



Father Anderson celebrating his first mass on December 23, 1962 at St. Mary's.

Father Anderson's first assignment was associate pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Church in Elmont, L.I., from February to June 1963. Next he taught at St. Pius X Preparatory Seminary in Uniondale, NY, where he remained a member of the faculty for 19 years. Father Anderson was a multi-talented teacher. "Long before PowerPoint presentations, Father Anderson mastered audio-visual techniques of teaching which captivated the interest and attention of the students," said Monsignor John Nosser, pastor of St. Patrick's, Bay Shore, NY. Msgr. Nosser was a seminarian with Father Anderson, taught on the faculty at St. Pius X, and later became rector of St. Pius. "You do what you can to reach young people's minds" Father Anderson said. "To see the brightness on a young man's face when you know he understands the material, that's a teaching moment," he added. Father Anderson fought hard to add Spanish to the curriculum in addition to French. He developed a program to attract seminarians of Hispanic and African-American backgrounds and presented an apologetics course to prepare students to defend their Catholic faith. More than 100 of Father Anderson's students became priests. "I was proud to see them ordained and to know that I could be just a part of their experience," he said. During this time Father Anderson also found time to continue his own studies and received his Masters Degree and PhD. in English and American Literature from Fordham University.

For 20 years he served as Administrator and Associate Pastor of St. Paul The Apostle Church in Brookville, L.I. Another testament to Father Anderson's influence and abilities came from Father Robert Clerkin when he arrived at St. Paul the Apostle to succeed Father Anderson. Father Clerkin had attended St. Pius X Preparatory Seminary in Uniondale, NY, and was a ninth-grade student in Father Arthur Anderson's literature class. When Father Clerkin arrived at St. Paul the Apostle Church as pastor, Father Anderson became his teacher again. "He taught me the nuts and bolts about the operation of the parish," said Father Clerkin. "Even though he is a parish priest, he never stopped being a teacher," Father Clerkin said. At the 8 a.m. daily Mass, he walks up and down the center aisle talking to the people. "He has a question-and-answer homily, like he is teaching a class in Scripture," Father Clerkin said. "Father Anderson worked behind the scenes, humbly and quietly," said Father Clerkin. "His devotion to the Lord and the parish inspired the people."

Over the years, Father Anderson officiated at the weddings of classmates Emmett Landiak in Great Meadows, Michael Ozyjowski on Long Island, and Peg Kirby Freeborn's daughter Sue, who married his nephew in Tranquility, NJ. Father Anderson retired on June 25, 2003. His 70th birthday, 40th anniversary as a priest, and his "well-deserved retirement" were celebrated by the appreciative parishioners of St. Paul The Apostle Church at the 11 a.m. Mass on April 6, 2003 followed by a parish party held at the Milleridge Inn, Jericho, NY. After his retirement Father Anderson moved back to his family's home in Great Meadows where he resided at the time of his passing. Since his retirement He had assisted regularly with the celebration of Mass at the neighboring parishes of Assumption, Hackettstown and Sts. Peter and Paul R.C. Church, Great Meadows, and St. Theodore in Port Murray. By assisting these one-priest parishes "It all comes full circle," Father Anderson said.

Prepared by Raymond Lemasters
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