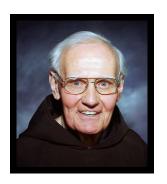


Ron Jansch 1925 - 2014



When I accepted the assignment of writing a necrology of Ron Jansch, I didn't think about it too much, but I should have. After all, he was a giant in our province, and I don't feel worthy to attempt to capture his life. In fact, at one time, he was named the official necrology writer for the province in the time of Ken Reinhart. Remember his 42 page necrology of Louis Biersack with two pages of foot notes in 1983? It was monumental in its scope and detail. Ron was a consummate historian — that is how he served the province for over 70 years of his Capuchin life. He believed that we needed to understand the historical context first to understand the people who lived the history. In 1981

Ron wrote a detailed biography of *Three Capuchin friars of the Calvary Province : Fr. Louis Biersack, Br. Philip Schwartz, Br. George Lenk,* and in 1991 he wrote a similar biography of Marion Roessler.

Ron was born on January 30, 1925 in Neisse, Silesia, Germany, which is now part of Poland. He was named Francis Joseph for his father. His mother, Anna Stupin (nee Jahnel) and Francis Joseph baptized their son at St. James Church in Neisse on February 8th, 1925.

Ron's family immigrated to the United States when he was five years old, after Ron's father died. He was enrolled at Our Lady Queen of Angels School in New York City, which is a Capuchin parish. He received his first communion and was confirmed there in 1936 also, taking the name Richard. Afterwards he studied at Mary Immaculate Seraphicate in Garrison, New York. He was inspired to enter the order by such friars as Frederick Cameron, Luke Crawford, Innocent Foerstler, Sebastian Schaff and Godehard Wolff.

In Ron's application for admission to the order he stated that he had thought of a religious vocation since the seventh grade. He gave the classic response to why he wished to become a religious: "To save my own soul and the soul of people in the world." He made his application on August 1942. At this time he was residing in Long Island City. His novitiate was at St. Felix Friary in Huntington, IN from August 31st, 1942 to September 1st, 1943 when he took his first vows. After novitiate he studied philosophy at Mary Immaculate Friary in Garrison, NY. He professed his perpetual vows on September 1st, 1946. He then studied theology at St. Anthony Friary in Marathon, WI. After his ordination to the priesthood on August 23rd, 1950, Ron was sent to St. Labre in Ashland, MT where he worked as the assistant pastor at Lame Deer, Busby and Kirby and was a teacher at St. Labre High School teaching sociology and religion. After only one year in Montana Ron was transferred to St. Francis Friary in Milwaukee, WI where he worked for a year in the vocation office as the assistant vocation director. Then in 1953 came his

final transfer to the place that would be his home for the rest of his life – St. Lawrence Friary in Mt. Calvary, WI.

When I received news that I was going to be transferred from Mt. Calvary to Chicago after 21 years at St. Lawrence, I was visiting with Ron at Villa Loretto where he lived for the final months of his life. I mistakenly stated to him that I didn't want to be one of those friars who never leave "The Hill." Ron's reaction was swift and to the point, as I realized that I had just put my foot in my mouth. He loved The Hill very much.

At Calvary, Ron taught history; he earned his masters in history from Notre Dame University. He also was a dorm prefect in St. Francis Hall and the athletic director and basketball coach at St. Lawrence. Peter Kutch remembered him as someone who cared for his charges but wouldn't suffer any meanness or silliness from them. Ron had a powerful voice and good command of the English language. As a teacher, Ron had the ability to bring history alive with fascinating anecdotes and connections from his vast reading. In 1961 Ron began to assist the Newman chaplain, Louis Zick, at Ripon College. And in 1964 Ron began teaching history at Marian College (now University), a ministry that he held for the next 39 years, also teaching ethics, natural theology, and Christology. He retired from Marian in 2003. He was also the chaplain at Marian from 1968 until 1985. He served as the local minister of St. Lawrence from August 1984 to 1990. While in that position he also served as the novice director for Dismas Seward when he (Dismas) entered novitiate in order to profess vows in the first order. In 1990 he took on the responsibility of the Franciscan Library, which had been transferred from St. Anthony's in Marathon to St. Lawrence.

Ron was a scholar and dedicated his day to study and research. For the provincial chapter of 1978 Ron was asked to write a history of the order and province: *The History of the Capuchin Order from 1528-1978 – Its Origins, Trials and Future.* He also did translations from German, especially *The History of Mt. Calvary* by Corbinian Vieracker for the sesquicentennial of the province in 2007. He also worked very hard on the wording of the plaque about the history of The Hill at Mt. Calvary that was placed opposite the friars' cemetery at the sesquicentennial celebration of the province.

After Ron retired from Marian University he spent his time in research, translating and writing. In 2012 he finished translating, with Vernon Wagner, *The Journal of Fidelis Steinauer* (1863-1882) which provided fascinating details of the early development of Mt. Calvary and St. Lawrence Seminary. He also served as the house chaplain for St. Lawrence Friary, celebrating Sunday Mass and especially Capuchin saints with detailed biographies. Even when he moved to the Villa Loretto he was still translating a book on religious customs of the of the Eifel region of Germany where most of the early settlers of Mt. Calvary came from. While at the Villa, friars visited Ron regularly. He would chastise me if I didn't bring a newspaper with me for him to read. He was always a great conversationalist. He became a chaplain for many of the CNAs at the Villa.

At the time of St. Lawrence's sesquicentennial, when asked why St. Lawrence has been able to stay open, Ron replied. "It's just amazing that St. Lawrence has been able to survive, and is on the eve of its sesquicentennial, while nearly all similar Catholic high schools in the United States have shut their doors over the past 30 to 40 years. It's like osmosis." "Graduates — even students who were on the Hill for only one year — take away something that is intangible," Ron explained. "It's a spirit that is visible in their relationship with other students. And they are very, very loyal. Even after a separation of 30 to 40 years, former students find that there is something there."

Death came peacefully to Ron on Monday, 28 July 2014 at the age of 89. He was buried at Mt. Calvary at the friars' cemetery on the hill that was his home for 61 years.

John Scherer