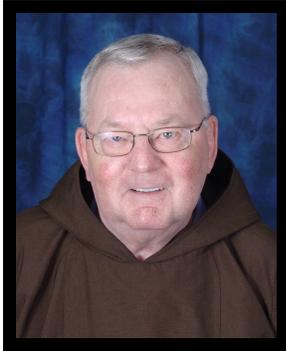


Neerology

Kenneth Reinhart
1941 - 2012



On the occasion of the canonization of Padre Pio on June 16, 2002, Kenneth Reinhart wrote: "When I was in grade school, in the early fifties, I was reading a book on Padre Pio and the parish priest 'caught' me, and reprimanded me for reading such things. Fifty years later, Ken reflected that he felt it most appropriate to celebrate Pio's life, for it truly reflects who he was and who we are and who he became and who we can become. He felt that Pio persevered because he knew what was true. He held fast to his beliefs, to the point of getting around the restrictions and doubts of his superiors and the Vatican to accomplish what Ken knew that which the Lord was calling him to do.

Fast forward to his reflections - in 2011 as he was preparing to celebrate his 50th jubilee as a Capuchin. He noted that "my vocation has enriched me spiritually, emotionally and educationally. It is often in conflict with the Capuchin Order and my province, and with the Roman Church. But it has sustained and deepened my relationship with Christ."

Kenneth Wayne Reinhart was born in Milwaukee WI on July 3, 1941. His parents were Albert Charles and Dolores Mary Krause. He was the oldest child, followed by three brothers, Richard, Albert and Gary, and two sisters, Karen and Kathy. After graduating from Mother of Good Counsel Grade school, he enrolled at St. Lawrence Seminary. Never known to be meek and mild, his attempt at leadership was not always appreciated by the faculty and fellow students. He told the story that one year it was doubtful that he would get a return card. However, his father, who was in refrigeration, came to his support. During a very hot summer, he installed two air conditioners in the rector and vice rector's office. Fortunately, that cooled the situation and he returned to Calvary.

When he entered Calvary, he did not intend to be a Capuchin. However, he was attracted by the friars' friendliness and down-to-earth attitude toward life and God. He cited Roger Zach, Crispin Weinberger and Donald Spitz as the most influential in his decision to become a Capuchin. On May 12, 1960, shortly before his graduation, he made his application for admission.

Along with twenty other candidates, he was invested at St. Felix novitiate in Huntington IN on August 31, 1960 and given the name of Lance. After a year in the novitiate he spent the next four years at the Capuchin Seminary of St. Mary in Crown Point IN. Then on to St. Anthony

Seminary in Marathon WI for the study of theology. The transfer of residences occurred in 1965, in the middle of the decade that changed the nation. The changes also affected the Capuchin seminarians at Marathon. They demanded changes in regulations, their course of studies and protested their academic, social and cultural isolation. During his first year at Marathon, an organization called Student-faculty Advisory Board was established to initiate dialogue between students and faculty. Ken Reinhart served as a key member of the board. Two years later, in March 1969, the students presented the paper, *Clerics Opinion Concerning the Future of Theological Education at Marathon*. The "brash" clerics, as they were termed by the faculty, were under the leadership of Ken Reinhart. He obtained the signatures of all the clerics except one, a minor miracle. The faculty was angered and embarrassed. However, the seminary was closed the following year. In September 1970 the senior class took up residence at Capuchin College in Washington, D.C. The freshmen and sophomores (there were no juniors) and others were transferred to St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee. For the record, it is interesting to note that Kenneth made his final profession as a Capuchin five years after simple profession, in September 1966. At that time it was customary to make it after three years, as did his classmates. He was ordained a priest on September 13, 1968 at Marathon. Shortly after his victory concerning the seminary issue, in June 1969, he was transferred to St. Joseph's Parish, Saginaw MI as an associate pastor. Two years later, he became retreat master at the Christian Brothers' Retreat House, Stillwater MN.

The provincial chapter of 1970 passed a resolution that called for the establishment of a commission of social justice and world peace. The effects of this resolution were far-reaching, but the growth process at times brought about pains and hurts, as well as some successes and hope. Such an office was opened in spring 1972. At the same time the council approved those working in the office to live together in a small community. A single family residence was opened on 3rd Street. The first local minister was Ken Reinhart. Later, Ken reflected that a big influence on his thinking was his working in the Justice and Peace Office. It was during this time that plans were made for a special justice and peace assembly to be held June 12 to 16, 1972. Many feared it would be a brainwashing experience and wondered if a vocal minority which included Ken, would pressure the majority to doing "its" thing. Eventually the assembly almost unanimously adopted the resolution that the province accept a province-wide vision and thrust toward justice and peace.

Ken left the Justice and Peace Office in spring 1973. He was asked by the provincial, Lloyd Thiel to become the local minister of St. Francis Friary and to head the post novitiate formation team for the theological students who now lived there. The next three years were very trying for Ken. His style of leadership was not acceptable to some members of the community. The forms of prayer and Franciscan vision of the two separate groups, the seminarians and the older solemnly professed members differed. Ken felt that much of the spirituality and Franciscan vision he had to offer as superior was not relevant to the majority of the older members of the community. The inability to agree on a common prayer form led Ken to "interdict" the chapel, an action that he had no power to command. In his letter of resignation written March 6, 1976 he felt that the job and his own present physical condition had become burdensome to the point

of hindrance to personal stability and growth, and this naturally resulted in both frustration and a sense of isolation.

Lloyd accepted his resignation, but Ken remained the head of the formation team. Plans were being developed to move the residences of the theological students from St. Francis into other communities. Already negotiations were being made to purchase a home in Milwaukee on Sherman Boulevard and establish a second residence with the students and likewise a third with the chaplains at Trinity Hospital in Cudahy. Ken moved temporarily into the Third Street Community. In August the council approved the renting of an experimental formation house on Sherman Blvd. Ken was appointed to bring the community together and organize it. The community was abandoned a year later, August 15, 1978, when the other community, the Trinity chaplains' community was established in Oak Creek. Ken asked not to be transferred there. Some had interpreted that such a move would serve his self-interest plans. Because of his own close personal relationship with Lloyd, it would be seen as the reason of him "getting what I want," and would put pressure on Lloyd as provincial.

It is interesting to note that when Lloyd accepted Ken's resignation, Lloyd also asked him to look into the future of St. Francis Friary. Someone had indicated to the provincial that the province was seriously asked by the city to abandon the St. Francis Friary site. The city would build another church more in accord with the actual need. Ken was asked to investigate privately and quietly the city plans and options. If this were the case "we wouldn't really want to put up any obstacles for them!" The old St. Francis Monastery lost its last residents when St. Fidelis Friary opened at the former Capuchin Fraternity House in old St. Rose convent.

Next followed two appointments as pastor. The first was St. Anthony Parish in Saginaw MI. He served in that capacity from August 1978 to June 1983. The parish was composed of Mexican Americans and Caucasians. He zealously worked with both, learning Spanish. He also built a tri-level rectory. Because of his willingness to be of service of all, a non-parishioner whom he assisted left a large part of her estate to the parish. This assured the financial solvency of the parish for many years to come. Five years later, in June, 1983 he became local minister and pastor of St. Mary Magdalen, Hazel Park. On June 28, 1984, the provincial chapter elected Myron Kowalsky provincial minister to succeed Ron Smith. Ken Reinhart was elected to the council on the third ballot with 145 votes out of a total of 212. With his involvement in formation and justice and peace movement, the added responsibility led the province to lessen his pastoral load by appointing Jim Leary as co-pastor on July 15, 1984. In reality, the appointment changed little.

Ken celebrated his silver religious jubilee as a Capuchin in 1986. Myron wrote the obligatory congratulation letter to him, thanking him for the service and ministry that he had performed. He hoped that the suffering Ken had gone through was appreciated and lauded him for the talent and spirit that he brought to the brotherhood. At the same time as his jubilee celebration, in summer 1986 Ken was made director of the post-novitiate formation at DePorres Community in Chicago IL. Two years before, Lester Bach had been appointed formation director. His

council, including Ken, had revised the formation program. The structure to be replaced was based on an academic and psychological support system that no longer existed. The new structure was to incorporate an approach grounded in the concept of "conversion."

The chapter of 1987 was held at Mt. Calvary on June 1-4. Although Myron was eligible to be re-elected, Ken Reinhart was chosen to be provincial on the second ballot with 111 of the 207 voters. During Myron's term, the province accepted the Chepo, Panama mission, successfully sponsored a workshop on the Constitutions of 1982, decided not to join the Social Security program, and looking forward to the aging of the province, bolstered the Health Fund and began the Retirement Fund. Because of his kind and caring nature, Myron was universally loved and respected, but the friars judged it was time to move forward, to rekindle the enthusiasm of the justice and peace era and to bring order out of the chaotic conditions of the world. Ken Reinhart again proved a leader in this movement, as he had years earlier as a Marathon cleric. His success as pastor, his involvement with the formation program and Justice and Peace Council showed he was a man of action. He could get things done, but perhaps not always in the most gentle manner.

The chapter directed two committees to be formed, the first to produce a mission statement, and the second to study the quality of life of the friars resulting from the 'graying of the province'. The Mission Statement committee said it would issue a statement that would lay the foundation for a provincial pastoral plan, but not the plan itself. Confusion followed. What was a mission statement and what was a provincial plan? The resolution asked for a new mission statement, with a detailed pastoral plan. No completed pastoral plan was presented although attempts were made. The second committee proposed rules for retirement, and suggested a retirement facility responsive to the needs and rights of senior friars. Kenneth agreed and a new "St. Fidelis Friary" in Appleton was built at the cost of \$1.6 million and dedicated in 1991. Ken & his council also investigated some sort of self-insurance plan. The council and representatives of Intermountain Administrators of Missoula MT worked out a self-funded health care plan still in effect today.

The next provincial chapter was held on June 11-13, 1990. Eustace McSweeney, the Irish born general councilor from New Zealand was appointed president by Flavio Carraro, the general minister from Rome, and John Corriveau was chairperson. Ken was re-elected on the first ballot with 178 of the 209 votes. In his address to the members, he said the overall direction of his administration had been the need and desire to create a new sense of unity as a province in the midst of pluriformity. He felt that the province would soon face a crisis because of a shortage of personnel. The chapter business was confined to four proposals: once again, to develop a mission statement which would call on friars to develop innovative ways of meeting the needs of God's people, a provincial plan, a pastoral plan that would deal solely with setting priorities for the ministerial development and direction of the province, and a change in its by-laws. Although there was some confusion concerning the need for a pastoral plan, all proposals were approved. The plan was to be presented to the 1993 chapter for ratification. However because of other more pressing problems that schedule was never realized. Ken's successor, Tony Scannell,

wrote in 1994 "one of the problems in addressing the challenges of evaluation of various ministries is the lack of clear pastoral plan for the province."

At an assembly in 1992, Ken and his Provincial Council proposed the creation of a "second novitiate" experience to give the friars significant amount of time to renew and reflect on the spiritedness of the past. The program was named "Renov." The programs took place at St. Anthony Retreat House, Marathon WI.

Reinhart was a multi-dimensional leader, interested in almost every aspect of administration. At times his actions were misunderstood and criticized as insensitive and imposing. He challenged the findings of his Capuchin superiors, including those of Flavio and Eustace, on their reflections on the life of the province. He acknowledged their recognition of the province's strengths and weaknesses, but found difficult their criticism of the fraternal prayer and the friars' life of prayer. "We find ourselves caught between the legitimate observations of our superiors and the recognition of the lack of comprehension of some of the cultural differences between the European and American models of religious and Capuchin life. " Yet his own physical condition and his "stiff upper lip" were inspirational as was his dealing with his rheumatoid arthritis that caused pain to be his constant companion.

Even as he accepted his election in June 1990 to a second term, he had already acquired some knowledge concerning improper sexual activity on the part of some of the friars. That revelation overshadowed his provincialate. After the story broke on December 20, 1992, Ken told the *Milwaukee Journal* that the Capuchins "are committed to addressing the sexual abuse "promptly, frankly and decisively." He hired E. Champion Kersten to conduct an independent investigation of all allegations of sexual abuse of students at St. Lawrence and elsewhere in the province. In addition he sought advice on how such conduct could be prevented in the future. Thousands of letters were sent to identify the victims and to offer them assistance. When a number of civil suits were filed, the lawyers of Catholic Mutual told Ken that his actions in making public the Kersten Report were due to "inexperience and foolishness." But Reinhart refused to stop its release, since "it was the ethical and moral thing to do." He kept his word, regardless of the consequences. Shortly after its publication, *Time* magazine put an unflattering picture of Ken in an article entitled "The Secrets of St. Lawrence." Although generally non-complimentary, the author lauded Ken for his display of courage "in commissioning the independent investigation aimed at preventing future abuse." About the same time *Time* published the article, June 2, 1993, Ken's term ended. He later reflected: "It was an incredible time of stress and inner turmoil for me and for the province.... It has to be one of the lowest and most embarrassing points in our history."

He returned to his Capuchin Community at Boston Blvd. Then the new Provincial Council granted him a sabbatical which lasted from August 1, 1993 until July, 1995. Most of the time was spent at the University of Notre Dame. During the spring of 1995, he gave a number of retreats to other provinces. Also, Tony Scannell asked him to interview people related to St. Lawrence Seminary about the structure of the seminary. He was then appointed director of the

St. Anthony Retreat Center on July 15, 1995. He looked forward to the assignment, noting that “the collaborative style and the creativity of the programs and staff personnel is very appealing.” Because of his administrative skills, he was also invited to be the “overseer” of the three retreat centers. He asked that the assignment be given to another or “put on hold.” He preferred the latter, since it would give the other directors an opportunity to know his viewpoints, etc., rather than come into the scene as a new comer with a new job description.

Before the chapter of 1996, Ken informed Tony and the council that *in conscience* he could not attend the chapter. He cited his experience of the last chapter where some friars treated him with rudeness, cruelty and simply hatred. He felt it would be hypocritical to go through the formality of the chapter, but promised to continue to do as he had always done – be upfront and direct in his communication. “It is that which has given me my reputation, both good and bad. It has led to friendship and caused much pain.”

Ken resigned as director of St. Anthony Retreat Center for reasons of poor health in September, 1997. Perry McDonald, then provincial vicar, thanked him for all the effort he made to direct the myriad of programs and activities of St. Anthony Center, and to place it on a strong financial footing.

During the course of his directorship, Ken had met a certain Mr. Plein who offered to sell his multi-million dollar mansion-like home at 200 Limekiln, Neenah WI and donate the sale price to St. Anthony Retreat Center. It was not to be sold until January, 2000, but any unsolicited efforts to purchase the property before that time would be considered. Ken was assigned to Plein Home as caretaker and hospitality host with ministry of preaching and help-outs, primarily at St. Joseph Parish, Appleton. He was also attached to the friary there. In June, 1999 Ken wrote Dan Fox, the provincial minister, that he believed he was doing the province a service by acquiring the property with the sale price intended to go to St. Anthony’s and by working on preparing it for sale in January. He promised to continue to consult with realtors and listen to suggestions as how best to market the property. Earlier he had written Dan expressing his disappointment of reading that Dan felt the money from the sale of the Neenah house was to go for *all* ministries. Ken noted it was unfortunate that our attorney made a mistake of not putting in writing the intentions of the donor that the profits from any sale would go to St. Anthony Retreat Center.

Ken was next appointed the temporary administrator of St. Joseph Parish, Appleton on July 1, 2003 serving until October 1, 2003, when Larry Abler took over as pastor. Ken continued to assist, and lived in a private apartment. In June, 2007, he was assigned as administrative director of the Capuchin Retreat and Spirituality Center, Washington MI. A year later, on August 15, 2008 he was officially appointed director of the Capuchin Retreat and local minister of St. Crispin Friary. The provincial minister, John Celichowski, expressed his gratitude for Ken’s courage and generosity in responding to these calls to service. He noted that “you have withstood some real challenges to your health and with it your spirit over the past several months.”

The spirit was willing, but his physical health grew worse, including the debilitating effects of his rheumatoid arthritis. His kidneys failed, and he was forced to go to Mayo Clinic for a serious kidney transplant operation. His sister Kathy was the donor. On his return to Michigan, his weakened immune system resulted in a variety of other painful afflictions, including macular degeneration. He spent time at Beaumont Hospital in Troy MI and St. Paul Home, Kaukauna WI., seeking recuperation. John Celichowski recalled in Ken's funeral homily, "Just a month ago, as a number of us gathered to talk and pray with him around his bed...Ken was making plans for a two month rehab in Wisconsin and his return for another year as program director at Capuchin Retreat."

It was not to be. Shortly after his return to St. Paul Home in Wisconsin, his attending physician summoned Larry Abler, Ken's designated power of attorney for health care, and asked him to tell Ken that there nothing more they could do for him. Larry, with all the tact he could muster, relayed the message to Ken. Ken reflected for a moment and then replied: "Sez who?" God called this valiant friar to himself on Tuesday, May 22, 2012. He is buried in the Capuchin Cemetery at Mt. Calvary.

— Champion Baer