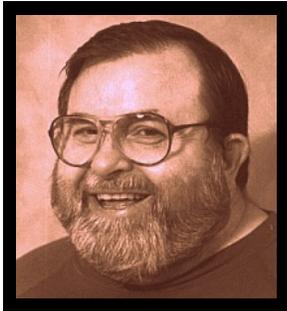


Neerology

Daniel Vena
1935-2006



Daniel Vena was born on July 8th 1935 in Long Beach California. His father, John Vena; his mother, Jeannie Padula, were both Italian born. Dan's father died when he was six years old. Dan dropped out of school after 8th grade to work full time to help support the family. He later moved to Indiana where he worked for twelve years in the kitchen at Notre Dame University. An old classmate, Frank Kronewitter, was stationed in Huntington, Indiana and introduced Danny to the friars at the Capuchin novitiate there. After having a wonderful lunch with the friendly friars, and finding out that they were followers of St. Francis, he thought about the brotherhood for a while and soon decided to join the Capuchins.

He had the following assignments: St. Felix Friary, Huntington, as a novice; Capuchin Seminary of St. Mary, Crown Point, in formation; St. Anthony Friary, Marathon, housekeeping; St. Francis Friary, Milwaukee, portering; St. Elizabeth Friary, Milwaukee, teaching art to senior citizens and small children; St. Bonaventure Friary, Detroit, guest master; Fountainview Terrace Apartments, Warren MI; and St. Fidelis Friary, Appleton.

Lloyd Thiel, provincial minister, turned down Dan's first request for perpetual vows, asking him to consider the challenges that religious life would have for him. He wrote that he needed to reflect on: "accepting your own limitations and being comfortable with those limitations. Your spirit of generosity often prompts you to want to do so much more than you are actually capable of doing with the result that there is great frustration for yourself and for those living and working with you."

Sometimes the brothers encouraged him to do things that were beyond him. The most obvious was the friar who thought it would be good for him to know how to drive. His frustration on the road led him to some notoriously poor decisions. Once getting on the freeway in Detroit he was insistent on merging into the next lane despite the fact that a large truck was already occupying that space. He came home with a "redesigned" car, complaining about the truck driver's unwillingness to move over. The most famous incident was his grand entrance to his jubilee celebration at Mt. Calvary. He had gotten lost and was running late, so he drove as fast as he could. Officer Olig of The Fond du Lac Sheriff's Department attempted to stop and ticket him, but Dan completely ignored the police car's flashing lights and sirens. Danny drove right up to the chapel with the police hot in pursuit. On getting out of the car, he proceeded to berate

the officer for not tending to more important things. He was then arrested and taken to the jail in Fond du Lac. Fortunately, Keith Clark was able to post bail and bring him home that evening.

Dan Vena's care for the poor, the rejected, and the little ones came from his self-perception that he was truly a lesser brother himself. He had a compassionate heart. He related well with many troubled individuals whom others found difficult. His fellow Capuchins were attracted to his simplicity, but often did not quite know how to meet his needs.

His passion was his art work. He would spend many hours working on his paintings and sketches. He did pursue artistic training both in Wisconsin and in Michigan. He was given the commission to design and execute a work for the centennial of the St. Bonaventure Secular Franciscan Fraternity. Some of his artwork continues to adorn our friaries.

Daniel Vena died on December 1, 2006 and is buried at Mount Calvary.

— David Preuss