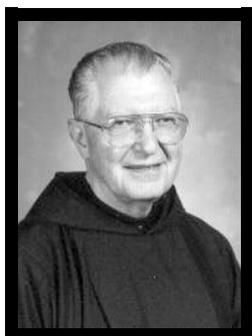


Neerology

William Alcuin
1925-2015



Retreat ministry in the St. Joseph Province grew like a tiny mustard seed. The clericate at Marathon, Wisconsin hosted retreats in 1923, which became so popular that they were moved to St. Francis Friary in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Gilbert Heuel was put in charge, and ground was broken on 15 July 1934 for a retreat center in Appleton, Wisconsin. Retreats began the following year and received much of its impetus because of Bill Alcuin's dedication to the ministry for thirty-three years.

John William Schutkovske was born 3 October 1925 in Elwood, Indiana. His parents were Herman Schutkovske and Edith Mae Holtsclaw

Schutkovske. Mercy hospital's cornerstone was laid in 1925, and ten years later Continental Can Company located a plant there. The people were thrilled when Wendell Willkie, who was born there, accepted the Republican nomination and ran for President of the United States. Elwood also had a steel mill which moved to Gary, Indiana. William's family moved there when he was nine-years old. He attended the local Catholic school of Holy Angels and later he and his brother Richard traveled on the South Shore train to Catholic Central High School in Hammond, Indiana. His mother found out that eighty-five percent of students who attended the school went on to college. William never knew how his parents paid for those trips because the family was poor.

When the principal of the high school, who was a priest, found out that William was interested in becoming a priest, he suggested St. Lawrence Seminary, at Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin. The priest paid for his tuition the first year because his parents could not afford it. The Third Order in Detroit paid it his second year. Since his studies occurred during the Second World War, students could not stay out of school for over a month, so William took two years of college in one year.

After graduating from Mt. Calvary, he went to St. Meinrad Seminary to study for the Fort Wayne Diocese. After six months he longed for the fraternity at Mt. Calvary and left to join the Capuchins. He told the rector, Gerald Walker, that some people thought that he was too idealistic, and Gerald responded, "You can never be too idealistic with an ideal like Christ." Gerald praised William to the provincial minister Clement Neubauer as one of the finest men he had the privilege to recommend. Anselm Schaaf, OSB, the rector the St. Meinrad Seminary, concurred in that assessment, writing that he was outstanding scholastically and that he would be a credit to the order.

William entered the novitiate at St. Felix Friary, Huntington, Indiana on 7 July 1945, and received the name Alcuin, which he later changed to Bill Alcuin. He treasured his time there. Leopold Gleissner, a classmate, comments that in novitiate Bill was a silent but a very intelligent novice. In August 1946, Alcuin traveled to Mary Immaculate Seminary, Garrison, New York, for his philosophical studies. He missed a year of studies because he found the studies devoid of spirituality. He then went to St. Anthony Seminary at Marathon, Wisconsin for theology and was ordained in 1952, and a year later was assigned to teach at St. Lawrence Seminary, Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin, a professor of Latin, religion, prefect and director of the lay friars.

Bill was Ken Smits' religion teacher in his third year of high school at Mt. Calvary. Ken recalls how Bill spent all his time on the person of Jesus Christ, bringing together religion and spirituality in a deeper and profound way. Ken did not remember the topics of the other religion classes, but Bill left an abiding imprint on his religion and spirituality. Ed Hagman remembers Bill as a sophomore where he taught second-year Latin. Alexis Luzi taught the grammar while Bill taught the translation, which included the *Argonauts* and the Sunday Gospel reading. His third-year religion class had a good reputation which motivated Ed to look forward to having him the following year. Keith Clark recalls that one of his classmates asked Bill a question during Latin class, and he replied, "I don't know." Keith never heard a teacher say that, which stunned and impressed him so much that he still remembers the incident. Bill was well admired by the students because of his friendliness and accessibility coupled with a marvelous singing voice, plus a prayerful style of liturgical celebration. Ed maintains that Bill is one of the reasons he is a Capuchin today.

Keith relates that while he was in the choir, Irvin Udulutsch made a recording of the "Seven Last Words." Because Bill was blessed with a beautiful tenor voice he was the narrator. In those days, the recording had to be done flawlessly — no splicing possible. Bill sang very distinctly, "And they brought him to the *hise* of the *how* priest," instead of the *house* of the *high* priest. The tape had to be rolled back to a spot where there was complete silence so the re-recording could be done.

In June of 1956 Bill was assigned by Gerald Walker to Monte Alverno Retreat Center in Appleton, Wisconsin. It came as a shock and surprise to him because he felt so incompetent and inexperienced, but he saw it as an opportunity to be obedient. Bill had never given a retreat and was challenged to live by himself. When the cook at the center saw Bill she commented, "He is so young." He was thirty-years old and admitted that this assignment was one of the most difficult times in his life because he felt that he was over-responsible.

Gerard Hesse helped him better understand the retreat movement and he valued his advise. Earl Goeden, who later joined him, was an inspiration for him. Ellis Zimmer worked well with him, and Austin Schlaefter taught him how to minister to the marginalized. He admitted that the laity helped him extensively during his crisis and taught him much about their spirituality.

Bill spearheaded the retreat ministry in the province developing Monte Alverno retreat center until 1969 when he was given a year of recuperation at St. Felix Friary in Huntington, Indiana. Bill had a pattern of nervous breakdowns in his life. He was so intensely spiritual that the body and mind suffered. It was a cross he lived with.

In August 1970 he was assigned to St. Anthony Retreat Center at Marathon, Wisconsin, where he helped to start the center. He was director and promoter of programs as well as diocesan director of the Cursillo movement from 1972-1975. The most satisfying part of retreat ministry for him was directing people on a one-on-one basis. He had short stints as a member of the San Damiano community in Madison, Wisconsin, as well as on the mission band at St. Conrad Friary in Milwaukee from 1975 to 1976. In June 1976 he was assigned to Monte Alverno Retreat Center to assist Roland Dusick. Later that year in November, he was appointed temporary administrator of the center as well as the community while reviving the retreat movement there.

1975 brought him a new adventure when he met the Focolare Movement in the city of Loppiano, near Florence, Italy. Bill was impressed by the number of the laity, especially young people, who committed themselves to live the Gospel and bring the Good News to others. He felt a calling to this group and wondered if such a "little city of Mary" could not be established in the United States. In 1982, he attended a Focolare school for men in Castelgandolfo, Italy.

He was granted a one year sabbatical in 1983, and then was assigned to Capuchin Retreat in Washington, Michigan as director and promoter of retreats. The following year he became director at Queen of Angels Retreat Center in Saginaw, Michigan, where he tried to revive the center. Martin Pable is very grateful to Bill for "breaking him in" to retreat ministry there. He found him an excellent mentor and model. One of his humorous lines that Bill used on the opening night of the weekend retreat was, "My mother named me Bill because I arrived at the beginning of the month." He also quipped, "One fellow thought my name was Father Al Quinn."

As he finished his stay there in 1991 he was asked by the Focolare Movement to act as director of the Center for Priests and Religious at Mariapolis Luminosa near Hyde Park, New York. He was granted permission by Kenneth Reinhart. Bill remained there until 1997 when he moved to St. Fidelis Friary in Appleton, Wisconsin, because his health was failing.

Leopold was stationed with Bill at St. Fidelis where he witnessed Bill's gradual physical decline, losing his eyesight and the ability to speak. He recalled a conversation about the time they went on a preaching tour using a van. Leopold stated that Bill continued to show meekness and gentleness as he spent his final years at St. Paul's Elder Service in Kaukauna, Wisconsin. Once a week his Capuchin brothers brought him to St. Fidelis to visit with them for part of the day. Jerry Schroeder said that Bill could not talk at the end, but when he would ask him what the Holy Spirit up to in him, his eyes would grow large and radiant. Jerry was convinced that he

preached without words, like St. Francis. He died peacefully on 5 March 2015 and is buried at St. Joseph Cemetery in Appleton.

— Richard Hart