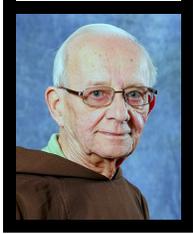


# Neerology

Kenan Siegel  
(1930-2019)



Abbott and Costello were one of the best-known comedy duos of all time. The trio of Tinkers to Evers to Chance were legendary Cubs' infielders who famously completed many a double play. The Beatles, often called "The Fab Four" were a quartet of rockers who changed popular music forever. And then there was the Capuchin quintet of Lloyd Thiel, Campion Baer, Bertin Samsa, Bob Udulutsch and Kenan Siegel. Less famous than the above duo, trio and quartet, but these five Capuchins led lives that impacted the Province of St. Joseph in significant and varying ways.

In his Testament, St. Francis wrote that "And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel." From Francis of Assisi down to the present day, no friar can be understood apart from his brothers. We are not formed in isolation. If healthy we do not live in isolation. And God willing, we do not die alone. Kenan Siegel was given brothers the day he was invested with the Capuchin habit. That is why it seemed appropriate to bring them together to celebrate their shared 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee in the presence of the students of St. Lawrence Seminary in 2009.

Lloyd was the first to die in 2010, followed by Campion in 2016, and then Bertin and Bob in 2018. Kenan was the last man standing of the group. This may have surprised the others who had admonished Kenan to give up his smoking habit; but then the ways of the Lord are mysterious. Of the five, Kenan was probably the most reserved. Lloyd served the province as provincial minister. Campion was elected to the Provincial Council for more terms than any other friar in recent history, and his intellect served the province in so many ways. Lloyd was a well-known figure in Detroit as director of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. Bertin was a military chaplain who saw action in Vietnam. Bob was the artist and traveler. Kenan kept the books and raised money for provincial ministries. These are sometimes underrated, but essential tasks if our Capuchin ministries are to thrive. Important as these are, this quiet friar did so much more.

Kenan was born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin in 1930 to George and Erma Siegel. He was given the name Roland at birth and by his baptism. Roland was the oldest of four children. His brothers were Richard and Norbert. His sister Marianne would follow her older brother into religious life as a School Sister of Notre Dame. Young Roland Siegel enrolled in St. Lawrence during the latter years of World War II and graduated from the high school division in 1948. He then entered the Capuchin novitiate at St. Felix Friary in Huntington, Indiana on August 31, 1948. He made his first profession of vows in September 1949. Kenan and his classmates then headed east to begin their college studies at Mary Immaculate Friary in Garrison, New York.

Perpetually professed in 1952, the year the province was split into two provinces, he completed his college studies at St. Felix Seminary in Huntington. Kenan continued his studies at the Capuchin Seminary of St. Anthony in Marathon, Wisconsin and was ordained a simplex priest

(without faculties to hear confessions or preach sermons) as was the custom on October 10, 1956.

Upon completion of his final year of theological studies at Marathon in 1957, Kenan was assigned to the mission office in Detroit. Four years later, in 1961, Kenan began ministering at St. Lawrence Seminary. There he served as a Latin teacher, business manager and in the development office. It was during this period that Kenan earned a master's degree in classical languages from Loyola University in Chicago. Following the election of his classmate Lloyd Thiel as provincial minister in 1973, Kenan was asked to serve as provincial treasurer and provincial secretary, as well as provincial director of finances. This necessitated a return to Detroit. While in Detroit, Kenan also served for a time on the "Phase 1" formation team.

Upon leaving provincial service, Kenan was assigned to serve as the pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in St. Paul, Minnesota. He then returned to St. Lawrence to once again teach Latin, work in the business office and head development for the seminary. Shirley Horn, a Capuchin affiliate who worked with Kenan, described him as "very knowledgeable and organized about business matters." He retired as director of development in 2001. Following his retirement, Kenan ministered in the Arabian Gulf until his health no longer permitted him to travel. It was obvious to those who knew Kenan that he found great joy and satisfaction ministering to the expatriate community in the oil camps. Periodic visits by several parishioners from the Gulf to St. Lawrence Friary testified to the affection many of the nurses, doctors and others had for Kenan.

One of those from the expat community in the Gulf who made the effort to visit Kenan was Maha Hurdle. Maha was the longtime secretary for the parish in Dhahran. She shared a story that reveals Kenan's pastoral sense: *Once I knew there was in the basket at least one SR 500 (Saudi Riyal) note because I saw the person who donated the SR 500. When we were counting the money on Sunday, Sue Belvo and I, we finished counting and didn't see the SR 500. I was furious. I wanted to call the person I saw put the SR 500 only to make sure what I saw what correct. Fr. Kenan came to greet us that Sunday. I told him that I was mad as we had no SR 500 which meant the basket was little but also, that someone took the SR 500 out of the basket. Fr. Kenan said to me: "Maha, don't be mad at the person who may have taken it. Instead pray that he has an SR 500 to return to the basket someday." That I would never forget. I shared it with his family at his Jubilee!*

Paul Craig describes his invitation to Kenan to take on ministering in the Arabian Gulf: "Sometime early in 2000 I asked Kenan, then retired, to consider coming to help me in the Southern Area of our ARAMCO ministry in Saudi Arabia. After some thought, he agreed. He finally retired from that ministry in December of 2013. At that time, I sent him this note: *What can I say? I still remember you pulling up to me in your car in the parking lot behind St. Lawrence, rolling down the window, and telling me that you would be willing to come to Saudi to minister. I believe that was in 2000. Where does the time go? I am now 3 years older than you were then. God has been good to us. Your time in Abqaiq and Udhailiyah has been a win-win for everyone, for me personally and for the communities and, I trust, for you. I know that your pastoral presence has been a God-given gift to many in the kingdom and in the Gulf area. For me personally you have been a perfect collaborator. I pray that God will continue to bless you with good health. Ad multos annos! Indeed, this echoes St. Francis who said "And after the Lord gave me brothers..."*

Kenan's final year witnessed a steady decline in his health. Although he lived to celebrate his 70<sup>th</sup> jubilee as a Capuchin friar, it was clear to his Capuchin brothers and to Kenan that the end was near. Gracious as always, the friars at St. Lawrence did their utmost for over six months to care for Kenan. Truly, in these final months it was clear that the Lord God had given Kenan brothers to tend to him in his need. Nurses from the Visiting Angels assisted the friars in their care of Kenan. They too found Kenan to be a gentle and grateful recipient of their help.

However, eventually it became clear that Kenan's needs were becoming too great and he accepted the need for his transfer to St. Fidelis Friary in Appleton. Three days later, Kenan died on October 11, 2019 at the age of 89. This was 63 years and a day after his ordination as a priest. His funeral was celebrated in the student chapel at St. Lawrence Seminary, and he was buried in the friar's cemetery.

Three months before his death, Kenan summed up his seventy years of Capuchin life with these words: "Celebrating a jubilee is another way to express my appreciation for my vocation to serve God and his people as a Capuchin friar of the Province of St. Joseph. Together with that appreciation is the acknowledgment of being inspired by the example of St. Francis of Assisi and the many with whom I have been associated. I have been truly blessed and thankful to be called to serve God and His people for so many years in a variety of ways."

~ David Schwab