

Fr. Anthony S. Kliche, 81, Poland, FR, USA  
\* October 20, 1918, Chodziej (Kolmar) PLD

+ February 2, 2000  
Philadelphia

The youngest son of a teacher of German origin and a Polish mother, he received his education at Bydgozcz and then was sent to France for his novitiate and senior seminary studies. Professed on September 7, 1939 at Orly, he studied at Langonnet – because of the war the students had been evacuated from Chevilly – but they returned to Chevilly after Paris had fallen. He was ordained there in June 1944.

Return to Poland was out of the question as that country was ruled by Communists. He took up chaplain ministry among Polish refugees first in Paris and then in the Pas de Calais region. After the collapse of the Nazi regime, Superior General Le Hunsec advised him to go to the United States. With a visitor's visa he did so and arrived here in late 1945. The Superior General had told him that the American Provincial would secure a permanent visa for him. This was done after he had gone for half a year to Canada to comply with American visa regulations. Subsequently he obtained U.S. citizenship in 1951.

After half a year in St. Anthony's, Millvale, PA, he was sent to Holy Ghost Parish, in Opelousas, LA, in mid 1946 and five months later to St. Paul's Lafayette, LA, where he lasted again only five months. Undoubtedly, his lack of fluency in English played a role in this quick succession of assignments. He was then placed in the more congenial surroundings of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a Polish parish in Pittsburgh in 1947. He worked there zealously until in 1953 he was assigned to Holy Ghost Parish in Louisiana. Illness and an operation led to

his transfer back to St. Anthony's, Millvale, in 1957. Six years later he was sent to St. John's, Dayton, OH.

In 1964 he went to St. Joachim's, a French-Canadian parish in Detroit as its pastor. He was destined to retain this position for 25 years. When urban renewal demolished the church, the parish was transferred to another location, where a suitable building could be remodeled into a church seating 250 people. He supervised the transformation and the construction of a rectory. The new church became the religious and cultural center of all French-Canadian people in the Detroit area. He celebrated Mass with them in French, homily included.

His health declined in the 1980s; the doctors diagnosed peptic ulcers, diabetes and other diseases, but he carried on his work. In 1985 the parish celebrated its centennial, which was also the centennial of the arrival of the Spiritans in the parish. A total of 50 Fathers had served there. Three years later, he reached the obligatory age of 70 for retirement in the diocese. He was asked, however, to carry on as the entire area where the church stood was on the verge of being taken over for the expansion of the airport.

The diocese then decided that the French-Canadian parish would be closed and that there would be a Mass and homily in French for those people who desired so in another church. It fell to him to pass on this sad news to his parishioners. He did it so tactfully that they accepted sadly but peacefully. Cardinal Edmund Szoka, the Archbishop of Detroit, sent him a glowing letter of thanks for the many years of outstanding service he had rendered to St. Joachim's.

In June 1989 Fr. Kliche retired at Spiritan Hall, Bensalem, PA. He celebrated the golden jubilee of his priesthood there in 1994. His final months were spent at the St. John Neuman Nursing Home in Philadelphia, where he died of diabetes. Interment took place at the Spiritan cemetery in Bensalem. His only surviving relatives were a niece and a cousin, both in the U.S.A. His personal dossier does not contain a single complaint about him, but many letters praising him for his spirit of obedience and generosity toward the Congregation.

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