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Fr. Charles J. FENNER 60 USA USW USE

*June 12, 1929, Homestead, PA

+September 30, 1998, Pittsburgh, PA

He did his high school and two years of college at Cornwells, 1943-48, before entering the Ridgefield, CT, novitiate. A special dispensation from the Holy See's Congregation for the Oriental church was needed because his father belonged to the Byzantine-Slavonic Rite. Professed on August 22, 1949, he did his philosophy and theology studies at Ferndale, CT, earning a B.A. and a B.D. IN 1955. Meanwhile he had been ordained there on September 23, 1955.

Sent to Rome, he earned his Bachelor degree in Canon Law at the Gregorian University in 1956. In later years he would complete his education by earning a M.Ed. at Duquesne in 1961 and a Ph.D. in Religion at the Catholic University in Washington, D.C., in 1968. After his return from Rome he served for three years as an assistant at Sacred Heart Parish for African-Americans in Lake Charles, LA, while teaching at its High School.

In 1969 he was assigned to Duquesne University's Department of Theology and, after earning his Ph.D., served as its chairman from 1970 to 1978. At the same time he became moderator and chaplain of the Tamburitzans, a position he held until his death. As such, he accompanied them to their month-long summer camp and many of their trips to perform demonstrations of Slavic culture.

At the same time he also became involved in many administrative duties, of which we may name secretary of the D.U. Corporation, secretary of the University from 1977 on and secretary of the Board of Directors from 1978 on. He also served as a member of the Provincial Council from 1994 to 1997.

In his final two years, he was diagnosed with cancer, but continued to work as much as he could until he collapsed in Trinity Hall and died in nearby Mercy Hospital. Two brothers and four sisters of the large family in which he was born survive him. Interment took place at the family's plot in St. Mary Magdalene Cemetery in Homestead.

All this tells us but little about Father as a priest, theologian and educator. Soft-spoken with an ever-ready smile, he was a "people's priest", known to be always available for service beyond the call of duty. For theology students in need of a few extra credits he would arrange a special reading course under his own direction. To one who had served in Africa for a decade and found it difficult to go back to study and delve into the new theology of Vatican Council Two, he gave "a tremendous amount of time" for extra guidance.

Having been himself a chaplain for several years, he earned official qualification for clinical pastoral education and pastoral care and became a board member of the U.S. Catholic Conference Commission of Certification and Accreditation. His beloved "Tammies" (Tamburitzans) idolized this priest who was available "twenty-four hours a day", to deal with their problems on a person-to-person basis.

As to his services as Secretary to the University, and its Board of Directors, they were so highly appreciated that he received the President's Award for Excellence in 1993; the year before that he was inducted into the Century Club of Distinguished Duquesne Alumni.