

Fr. George A. HARCAR

USA

* Oct. 24, 1911 Trenton, NJ

+ April 7, 1991 Houston, TX

The oldest of eleven children, three of whom became priests and one a nun, George entered Cornwells in 1924. He made his profession at Ridgefield, July 25, 1931. His senior studies at Ferndale were interrupted by one year of prefecting at Duquesne, where he also earned a Master's degree. His ordination took place at Ferndale, Sept. 8, 1937.

The following year he was appointed to Duquesne, where he served for 22 years, first as an instructor and then from 1943 on as head of the School of Education. In this capacity he became very active in professional educational organizations in Pennsylvania. St. Francis College, Loretto, Pa, awarded him an honorary doctorate for his distinguished services. In 1952 he became executive vice-president of Duquesne, a function which he fulfilled for eight years.

Going West, where the Congregation was preparing the founding of a new province, he served as principal of Notre Dame High School, Riverside, CA, then as pastor at St. John's, Fort Smith, AR, and at St. Catherine's, Riverside.

In 1967 his confreres elected him Superior of the USA-West Province. He performed this function so well that he was twice re-elected for another three year term. Outside the USA, he extended the work of the Congregation to Peru and, when this venture did not work out, to Mexico in the service of neglected Indians.

When his tenure as provincial came to an end in 1976, he became interim administrator of the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in Lake Charles, LA, before assuming the directorship of the collegiate house of studies in Houston, TX, till 1980.

Not interested in retirement, he then served as an associate pastor, first at St. John's, Tucson, AZ, where he worked among Hispanics, and then among African-Americans at Holy Ghost in Marksville, LA. In 1986 we find him at St. Joseph's, Conway, AR, where his brothers and sisters came to surprise him by their presence at his golden jubilee as a priest.

In 1988 he returned to Houston, still serving as local superior till his death of cancer. Interment took place at the community cemetery of Hemet, CA.

This bare outline of his life does not do justice to Fr. George as a man and a priest. He was essentially a simple and unpretentious man, who never hesitated to offer his apologies when he had made a mistake nor to praise and thank people for the way they performed their tasks. He governed in a democratic fashion, carefully considered the impact his decisions would have, and ever ready to correct his wrongs.

He cared about people, and not about things or pets. When he had to deal with people who were upset or ill at ease, he invariably told them: "Relax. Don't worry. Everything will work out." Not given to "preachy" approaches, it was his way of saying: "Trust in God." And then he did his best to find a solution for their difficulties. Small wonder that he was held in high regard and venerated with profound respect by his confreres.

He died without a struggle, very simply as he had lived, not even leaving behind a pair of shoes and a good suit for his burial. Yet he would never forget to compliment the housekeeper on how nice she looked when she appeared wearing a new dress.