

Fr. Joseph B. MURPHY 89 U.S.A. TZA USE USW
* February 9, 1907 Pittsburgh PA + January 12, 1997 San Diego CA

After attending Cornwells for four years, he made his vows on August 15, 1928 at Ridgefield, CT and in his final year of theology at Ferndale, Norwalk, CT he was ordained there on September 14, 1933. Meanwhile he had earned a B.A. at Duquesne University and a B.D. at Ferndale.

Tall and robust, he received his assignment in 1934 to the Vicariate of Kilimanjaro in Tanganyika, which had just been entrusted to the American Province of the Congregation. After working first at Mashati, he was posted to St. Patrick's Teachers Training School in Singa Chini.

On leave in 1939, he was retained in the U.S.A. and stationed at St. Peter Claver's Parish for African-Americans in Charleston, SC, as assistant. When the U.S.A. entered World War Two in 1942 he became a military chaplain of the Army Air Corps and saw service both in the States and in the European theater of war. A physical disability led to his retirement in 1945 with the rank of major and a pension for life.

Assigned to the mild climate of California, he became the founding pastor of Holy Spirit parish in Riverside, CA. It was supposed to be a parish for African-Americans, but he did not want it to become a segregated church and managed to make it territorial, while taking special care of all Blacks in the city. In the few months he spent there he endeared himself so much to Catholics and non-Catholics alike that city officials and businessmen vainly joined his parishioners in an effort to keep him there.

He was then posted to Uganda Martyrs Church for African-Americans in Okmulgee, OK. The climate, however, put a severe strain on the sinus condition that had led to his retirement from the armed forces and he was moved to Tucson, AZ. He opened there St. John's parish serving a small congregation of Mexican origin. The parish grew fast and he built its complete plant, including a large school.

In the ten years he served there he brought the parish to a flourishing condition.

In 1955 he had made headlines in several papers: PRIEST DEFIES STATE ORDER when he refused to remove a 15 mile speed sign for the school zone which he had put up with permission from the county, and faced arrest. But Arizona's Governor sent him a telegram of support and the State Highway Commission had to give up the fight.

In 1960 he received a special assignment. The division of the Province of the U.S.A. into two provinces, USA-East and USA-West, was then in the works and he was asked to explore the West for a suitable location of a formation house. He finally found what he wanted in Glenwood Springs, CO, where a ranch was acquired for the purpose and stayed on for one year as its superior.

Thereafter he devoted his talents to the preaching of parish missions and retreats while being stationed first at Phoenix and then at Tucson, AZ. His very busy schedule took him to thirty-six dioceses on those missions. Always very loyal to the Congregation, he fostered vocations by giving special conferences in parochial schools.

In 1977 he moved to Mexico as pastor at El Pujal and Tanlajas, S.L.P., until illness forced him to return to the States three years later.

He then opened a retirement home in Gilman Springs, CA, and later moved to Sun City, CA, still rendering whatever services he could. Having celebrated the diamond jubilee of his ordination in 1993, he died one month before his 90th birthday. Interment took place at the community cemetery in Hemet, CA.