

Fr. Peter BECKER 82 NGA USA

\* Feb. 15, 1907 Julich, Rhineland

+ March 5, 1989, Pittsburgh  
"in the odor of sanctity"

Coming from a family of eleven children, he studied at the junior seminaries of Broich, 1918-22, and Knechtsteden, 1922-27. He made his profession at Heimbach April 9, 1928 and then returned to Knechtsteden for his senior studies. His ordination took place there on April 23, 1933.

His first assignment took him to Nigeria, where he was stationed at Onitsha and in the Benue region. His work came to an abrupt end in 1939 when, together with all other German Spiritans, he was interned because of World War Two. Transferred to a camp in Jamaica, West Indies, he spent seven years behind barbed wire. It was only in 1947 that he and sixteen other Spiritans could come to the USA.

Soon after his arrival, he received his appointment as an assistant in St. Mary's, Sharpsburg, PA. For forty years he would hold this position, while six Fathers came and went as pastors. He would have made a marvelous pastor himself, but preferred to serve in the humble capacity of a simple assistant. Having celebrated his golden jubilee as a priest in 1983, he became ill a few years later and entered the Vincentian Home. He died there of cancer. Burial took place at the Sharpsburg community cemetery.

Whatever he did during those forty years was done with the touch of a deeply spiritual man. He loved to teach religion to children and especially prepare them for their first holy Communion. That event was always a highlight in his work. To add luster to the occasion, the pastor would invariably celebrate the children's Mass, and Fr. Becker would simply be a spectator. Great happiness was his when in the fiftieth year of his priesthood, the pastor asked him to celebrate the Mass for the children.

With tears in his eyes he did so and personally gave them their first Communion.

For many in the parish he excelled as a Father confessor. People looked upon him as their Cure d'Ars and would wait in long lines to get their turn, saying "When you go to Fr. Becker and he absolves you, you feel really clean and forgiven".

Visiting the sick filled the free moments other duties left him. Regardless of the weather, he would go around to them, bringing the consolation of the Eucharist or the joy of not being forgotten to the old and the shut-ins.

Throughout the parish he was regarded as a living saint, and there is nothing in the records that goes counter to that reputation. As the parish secretary wrote in 1985: "Father Becker of course is and always will be the most perfect example of what God wants his disciples to be."