

Raymond Zsolczai, O.F.M. 1925-2018

*Rather than try to capture the life of Ray Zsolczai,
please allow him to tell you about his amazing journey.*

Thoughts and Reflections on My Ministerial Journey By Fr. Raymond Zsolczai, OFM

“Seventy-five years ago, it never crossed my mind the number of times that I would be asked to pitch my tent in strange and different locations in His world and work in a variety of vineyards. And it never crossed my mind that when I learned about my job in those vineyards and really felt comfortable doing what He would have me do, that I would be asked to pull up stakes, repack the tent, and head for another strange and different location.

The grand adventure and experiences began when I left the comfortable “womb” of home to enlist in the Navy back in 1942. It wasn’t easy. In fact, it was quite scary and a time to really zero in on one’s faith and the trust that the Master of the Vineyard would be walking the journey with you. The war was on and boot camp and training introduced me to the values of Navy life. Following that, it was a transfer to another vineyard, at the Naval Hospital in Annapolis, MD, where I was taught how to be the best field corpsman medic I could be. I didn’t want that experience to end; I had fallen in love with the place and the people.

But then came the call from the South Pacific for hospital corpsmen. Ah, the adventure in Okinawa. There were some very near-death experiences and even a Purple Heart. It may sound silly, but it was here that I fell in love with my ability to be useful to someone else in need. In Okinawa I was almost the victim of a hand grenade attack by several Japanese soldiers. The experiences of healing the sick and those who pretended to be sick were very interesting. Soon, V.J. Day came along and Okinawa was taken. We were quickly transferred to Guam and then to Tsingtao, China.

While in China I had applied to the Alexian Brothers Hospital School of Nursing and was accepted. God continued to walk with me on this journey until I had achieved my Master of Divinity degree. I spent the next 11 years in a post-graduate hospital in Indiana. Yet after a retreat I found that I was being drawn to religious life. I interviewed with the Friars of the Assumption Province and was accepted at 52! After my ordination and graduation I worked at St. Elizabeth Center in Rockford, Illinois with the poor. And then a call came from



Sister Marilyn from Oak Park Hospital. There was an opening for a chaplain. I applied and was offered the position in February 1987.

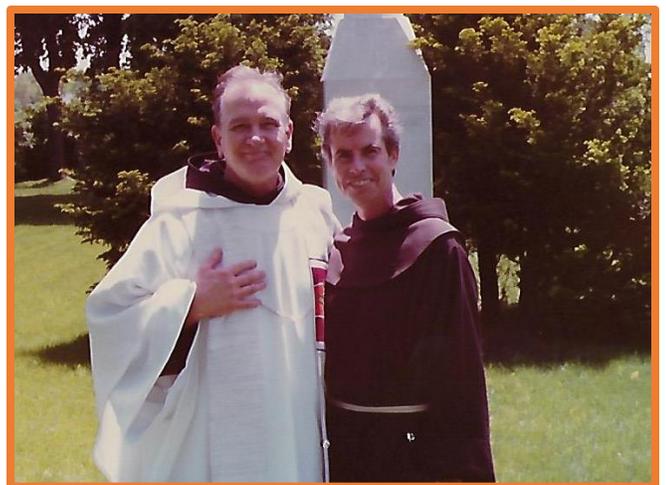
Being a corpsman, a nurse, and a priest and working with the sick and dying at the hospital, has made me aware that the Master Planner of the Vineyard is, has been, and continues to be at work in my life.

At seventy-five, I've noticed my health has waned and I will be retiring. The hardest thing in the world for me at this time, as I hang up my pruning shears is, as always, to leave the good people, doctors, and friendships that came with the vineyard territory. I've been asked to pull up stakes and pitch my tend in a new location. This time it will be at Queen of Peace Friary, Burlington, Wisconsin. A new vineyard, with a slower pace."

Ray is one of those friars who defied the limitations of age. His spirit was young, alive and wild, often too vigorous for an aging body to keep in step. A heart attack in 2000 was a sure sign that the two were not in sync. Even though his spirit soared, his physical strength did not allow the mobility his inner self would have liked.

Ray became a friar later in life. That fact, however, has not diminished who he was before embracing the Franciscan way. He was a man who loved people. He enjoyed being around others and he enjoyed giving himself to others. In his final years at St. Anne's Salvatorian Campus, Milwaukee, Ray not only received excellent care from the staff but was deeply grateful to Br. Michael May who visited him daily.

Fr. Raymond Zsolczai died early on the evening of June 5, 2018 at St. Ann Salvatorian Campus, Milwaukee, Wisconsin in the 93rd year of his life, the 38th year of his religious profession and the 35th year of his priesthood. The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at St. Ann Salvatorian Campus, Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Thursday, June 14, 2018 at 10:30 AM with viewing one hour prior to Mass. Burial was at the Provincial Cemetery, Pulaski, Wisconsin on Friday, June 15, 2018 at 9:30 AM. May his soul and the souls of all the faith departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.



¹ Experts from this obituary were taken from **Sandleprints** written by Jerry Tokarz, OFM

Raymond Zsolczai, OFM

Personal

Parents: Emre Zsolczai & Maria Skiba
Birth: January 8, 1925 – Lapeer, Michigan
Baptism: February 15, 1925 – Immaculate Conception Parish – Lapeer, MI
Confirmation: October 22, 1934 – Immaculate Conception Parish – Lapeer, MI

Scholastic Record

Elementary: Lapeer Grade School – Lapeer, MI – 8 years
Secondary: Lapeer H.S – Lapeer, MI – 4 years
College: Alexian Brothers School of Nursing – Chicago, IL—R.N., 1946
DePaul University – Chicago, IL – B.S., Nursing, 1949
Wayne State University – Detroit, MI –
College of St. Francis – Joliet, IL—
Theology: Aquinas Institute of Theology – Dubuque, IA –
Catholic Theological Union – Chicago, IL – M.Div., 1983

Religious Life

I Order Investiture: August 14, 1979 – Green Bay, WI – Roman Zbieranski
Simple Profession: August 15, 1980 – Green Bay, WI –
Renewed: August 15, 1980 – Lake Geneva, WI—**Presider**
Renewed: August 15, 1981 – Livonia, MI—John Kosinski
Solemn Profession: July 31, 1982, 1982 – Burlington, WI – William Gulas

Ministerial Orders

Acolyte: March 30, 1981 – Chicago, IL – Theodore Zarembo
Lector: January 4, 1982 – Chicago, IL – William Gulas
Diaconate: December 11, 1982 – Chicago, IL – Alfred Abromowicz (Chicago)
Priesthood: June 4, 1983 – Sturtevant, WI – Richard Sklba (Milwaukee)

Provincial Appointments

1983-87: Rockford, IL – St. Elizabeth Friary – Director of Senior Citizens Activities/
Clothing Center
1987-90: Rockford, IL – St. Elizabeth Friary – Chaplain, Oak Park Hospital, Oak Park, IL
1990-2000: Chicago, IL – Holy Name Friary – Chaplain, Oak Park Hospital, Oak Park, IL
2000-2011: Burlington, WI – Queen of Peace –
2011-2018 Ministry of Prayer/Retirement, St. Anne's Salvatorian Campus, Milwaukee

Extraordinary Achievements

- Received Purple Heart Medal, June 1945 for wounds received on Okinawa Shima, Ryukyu Islands, Japan
- Participated in the ceremony at the surrender of Japanese military forces in the area of Tsingtao, China on October 25, 1945
