

## **Fr. Thomas (Eugene) Kamenski, OFM 1937-2018**



Eugene Kamenski, throughout his life, was not prone to planning for the future. He was more inclined to let things happen and then determine his options. Sometimes he was quick on the trigger, trusting his instincts. At other times, he accepted life as it dawned with each new day. There was no hurry. Whatever had to be done would be done by his own volition or by the acorns of grace that Divine Providence provided as little reminders that God's will shall be done.

The journey began on September 3, 1930 when Catherine and Peter Kamenski gave birth to their new born son, Eugene. And it all happened in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. With two older brothers, the family was complete. After completing grade school at St. Peter School, Eugene found his way to St. Bonaventure High School, Sturtevant Wisconsin where he graduated in 1949. It was Fr. Isidore Cwiklinski who invited Eugene to consider joining the Franciscan Order as a cleric, receiving the name Blasé. However, studies provided to be a challenge that cause him to reconsider his vocational journey. At the encouragement of Fr. Theophane Kalinowski, Blasé was persuaded to try the brotherhood. In December 1949, he was invested with the tertiary habit and took the name, "Thomas," eventually making his Solemn Profession of vows on August 15, 1957.

Throughout his initial formation, Tom found himself busy with the responsibilities of boilers and friary maintenance. But in 1958 the call to the Philippine missions found a willing spirit in Tom. In 1964 Tom returned to the States taking up the same trades he exercised prior to his work in the Philippines. From Lake Geneva to Greenwood, MS Tom shared his handy man skills.

In 1972, Tom went on a retreat to a Benedictine monastery in New Mexico. It was a turning point for him. There he encountered the charismatic movement and the beginning of a long-term relationship. Tom spent much time, over the next four years, attending charismatic gatherings whenever and wherever he could. He joined the charismatic group in Burlington that was led by Brian Przybyrowski, OFM. Tom assisted him with the Religious Education program at St. Charles Parish, Burlington. Tom went to Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners for certification as a Religious Educator. The interview would change his life.

Tom contacted Fr. Theodore Zaremba, Provincial Minister at the time, requesting permission to study for the priesthood. The Provincial Council addressed his request and gave him permission. Over the next year, he took courses at Cardinal Stritch College and at the University of Wisconsin, Parkside. By 1978, Hales Corners determined that Tom had enough course work to begin his theology program. Four years later, he finished and was ordained to the priesthood on September 17, 1982 by Bishop Leo Brust.

His priestly ministry saw him focusing his gifts among the sick. His first assignment as priest was to St. Mary's Hospital, Livonia, Michigan. From there he found ministry at the Methodist Hospital, Brooklyn, NY, Marymount Hospital, Garfield Heights, Michigan, St. Francis Hospital, Milwaukee, WI, and finally Our

Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Lafayette, LA. This would be his last priestly assignment before retiring to Queen of Peace Friary, Burlington, WI.

Tom was at home wherever the call suggested a need. He earned the respect and love of those among whom he ministered and was recognized and honored for his ministry.

Tom, sometime in his varied past, may have sat under a big oak tree and felt the acorns bounce off his head. But, as he looked back, he could not help but feel that God didn't make any mistakes. God knew what He was doing! He was born into eternal life on Saturday January 13, 2018. He is preceded in death by his parents, Peter and Catherine, and is survived by family, friends, and his friar brothers of the Assumption BVM Province. The Visitation will be on Wednesday, January 17, 2018 at Queen of Peace Friary Chapel, 2281 Browns Lake Drive, Burlington, Wisconsin at 10:00 AM, followed by the Mass of Christian Burial at 11:00 AM. Interment will be at the Provincial Cemetery, Pulaski, Wisconsin in the spring.

May the soul of Fr. Thomas and those of all the faithfully departed brothers, family members, friends, and benefactors rest in the peace of Christ. Amen

*Segments of this obituary came from the Sandalprints publication by Br. Jerry Tokarz.*



Tom Kamenski & his Mother  
Prior to leaving for the Philippine Islands