

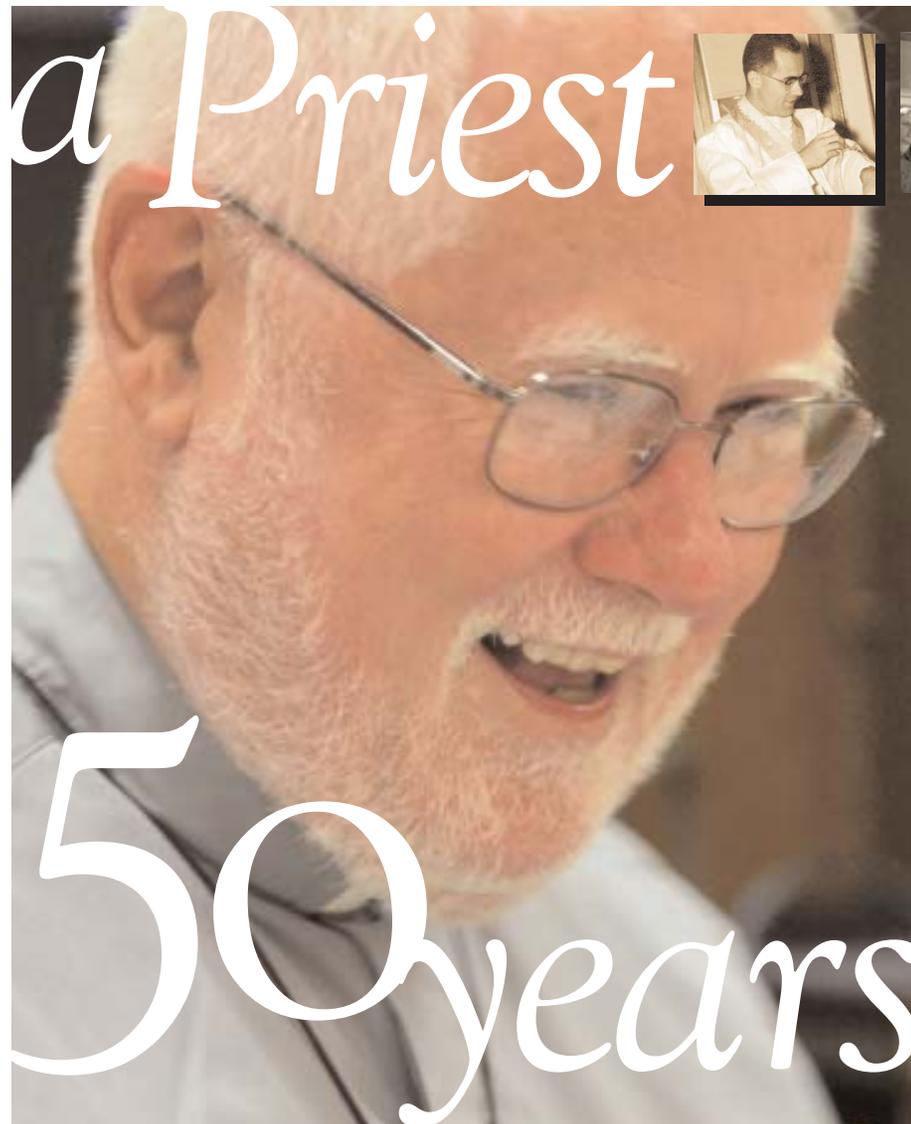


BROTHERHOOD of HOPE®

PRIMUM DEUS · DEUS SOLUM

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2014



Fifty Years a Father, Founder and Friend.

BY FR. PHILIP MERDINGER, BH

At the heart of Catholic life is the conviction that Jesus Christ, though on this earth but briefly, would never leave his disciples as it were orphaned, with only a distant and fading memory of him subject to the errors and distortions of history. Rather, through his Apostles whom he charged to “feed my lambs, feed my sheep” (cf. John 21: 15 & 16), and their successors the Bishops, Jesus continues as the Good Shepherd to guard, form and guide his people through the Sacramental and pastoral life of his Church until he comes again. As the Church grew in numbers and maturity of life, certain men were called to be co-workers with Bishops and ordained to a share in the fullness of the Priestly office for the care of the faithful and the evangelization of the nations. Of such am I. “One does not take

this honor to himself” (Hebrews 5:4) but is called to it by the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Bishop.

It is now 50 years since Ordination was conferred upon me in the chapel of the American College at the University of Louvain, Belgium. In those far-off days of the Second Vatican Council the Church in

the United States presented a somewhat different picture that it does today. Returning home after four years of study and formation abroad, the future of the Church was everywhere to be seen. Buildings could not be built fast enough to accommodate college students, seminarians and candidates for the Religious life. As I

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found myself newly inserted in what one

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SHARING OUR VISION



Words of Tribute for Our Founder

Fr. Philip Merdinger has served the Church in many ways during his fifty years of priesthood. Parochial vicar, catechist to disabled children, inner-city school teacher, university chaplain, hospital chaplain, coordinator in the People of Hope, conference speaker, retreat master, seminary professor and spiritual director. We, of course, are most proud of his founding of the Brotherhood of Hope. The harvest is rich! These few honorings are only a sample of the countless lives Fr. Philip has influenced.

Fr. Paul Helfrich

ONE OF THE FOUNDING BROTHERS

Father Philip is a loyal son of the Catholic Church. This is reflected firstly in his fidelity to the promises he made fifty years ago to the Lord Jesus and the Church. His love for Mother Church is also evident in his respect and obedience to the hierarchy. In the many and varied assignments they entrusted to him, including as parish priest, hospital chaplain, college campus minister and seminary spiritual director, he has invested himself with zeal, love and self-sacrifice. His founding of the Brotherhood is a particularly profound testament to the abundant fruit borne from his filial love for the Church.

Gregory and Maureen Floyd

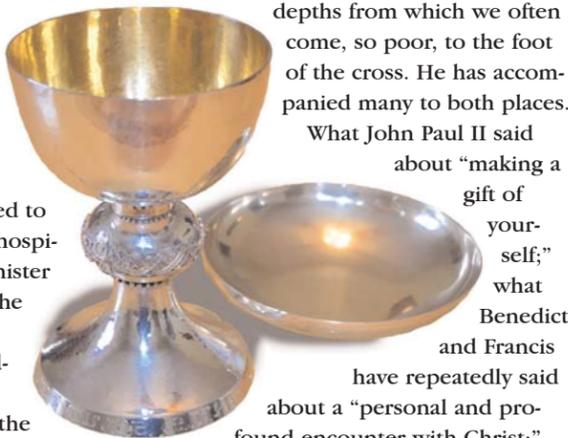
PEOPLE OF HOPE COMMUNITY, NJ

I was 18 when I met Father Philip. I am now 59. That's a long time. During that time Fr. Philip celebrated our marriage and the funeral of our 6 1/2 year old son. He has been with us in the darkest and brightest of moments. Philip knows us well.

And we know him well. Through his years as a college chaplain, a hospital chaplain, the founder of the Brotherhood of Hope, a spiritual director at the seminary, a teacher to many and a preacher without peer, we have been the beneficiaries of his love and his priestly wisdom and holiness.

"With Fr. Philip, the Word is always fresh." These were the words of a nun from our community. The Word of God caught fire in Philip and he became a light for the rest of us. When he speaks and when he preaches, the Word of God does its work and does not return void. Accuracy plus charity: that is Fr. Philip's definition of truth and that is what he speaks. For many, Fr. Philip

could see in them possibilities that they couldn't see in themselves. His kindness and wisdom helped the Lord release that potential. He knows the heights which God's people can scale and the depths from which we often come, so poor, to the foot of the cross. He has accompanied many to both places.



What John Paul II said about "making a gift of yourself;" what Benedict and Francis have repeatedly said about a "personal and profound encounter with Christ:"

this is what all of us who know him have encountered in the priesthood of Philip Merdinger: a man, a priest, who has discovered in Christ the incomparable treasure, the Pearl of Great Price. The luminosity of that precious pearl, held so carefully and lovingly in his hands, shines on us all. Congratulations dear friend, dear brother, dear Father. We, and all who know you, are grateful beyond words.

Marian Keiselbach

CATHOLIC CENTER AT NU

Fr. Philip was the priest chaplain at Northeastern University when I first got involved with the campus ministry and I was immediately grateful for his willingness to dispense the sacraments for myself and the other students. However, it was when I started going to him for regular

spiritual direction that I realized how deeply he channeled the love of the God the Father and the counsel of the Holy Spirit. For four years Fr. Philip's intelligence, wit, affection, and holiness gently guided me toward a closer, fuller, and more joyful relationship with Jesus Christ and I am forever grateful.

Fr. John Farrin, OP

RECTOR EMERITUS, ST. JOHN'S SEM.

Himself finely attuned to the movements of the Holy Spirit, helping young men to see the truth of their being, especially in light of the infinite mercy of God, guiding them into the pull of God's calling them to serve His people in the person of Christ, Head of the Church, and doing it all with a twinkle in the eye and with the mellowness deriving from life-giving years of ministering God's mercy, Fr. Philip contributed richly to the formation of our seminarians at St. John's while I was his companion. Even more, he made possible other great contributions from others of the Brotherhood of Hope, for all of this, may Fr. Philip be blessed abundantly and may God be praised! Happy 50th and may your love be fruitful and generative for years to come!

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NEW RELIGIOUS FAMILY. Brothers and associates with our Founder at a recent gathering.



A Father to the Fatherless

BY BR. KEN APUZZO, BH

In John 14: 8 the Apostle Philip asks Jesus to "show us the Father." If I were to narrow down the spiritual crisis of our young people today it would be that they are fatherless! I believe even more tragically that they are fatherless two times over. Not only do they not have invested and committed biological fathers, they also do not know their heavenly Father. Thus, the number of spiritual and emotional orphans in our times is immense.

Into this crisis of fatherhood the Holy Spirit has called and anointed Fr. Philip Merdinger. For decades he has been doing what the Apostle Philip asked of Jesus. He has been showing young people the way to the Father. His message of the Father's love is so life changing because he lives the message even better than he preaches it. For me, it is analogous to how Jesus moved amongst large crowds of people where forgiveness and healing simply flowed out to those around him. So it is with Fr. Philip. As he teaches, preaches and prays over young people a grace of "spiritual fatherhood" flows out from him. Not infrequently, whenever Fr. Philip finishes speaking at an event, there is a long line of young people eager to seek out his fatherly wisdom and love.

"Into the crisis of fatherhood the Holy Spirit has called and anointed Fr. Philip Merdinger."

Where does he get this wisdom and spiritual power from? For those of us brothers, who have had the privilege to live with Fr. Philip, the answer is obvious. He rises early every morning and immerses himself in prayer. Because he spends so much time in the presence of his heavenly Father he has become an icon of the Father's heart to those around him.

Even though Fr. Philip recently retired, he is still quite busy. To all the brothers he always will be our founder and our first spiritual father. Let us pray that as Fr. Philip celebrates 50 years as a faithful priest, that he would know deeply in his own heart this same love of the Father that he has brought to so many others. May he be strengthened and encouraged by these words of his divine Father, "this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased!" (Mt 3: 17) †



HONORINGS

CONTINUED FROM INSIDE

Gordy DeMarais

FOUNDER, ST. PAUL'S OUTREACH

On behalf of the staff, missionaries, and students of Saint Paul's Outreach, I extend warm and heartfelt congratulations to Fr. Philip on the occasion of the celebration of fifty years of priestly life and ministry. In recent years the doors have opened for significant collaboration between SPO and the Brothers of Hope in our campus work. One of the gifts to SPO in new relationship is the presence of Fr. Phillip in our training programs and campus work as teacher, preacher, counselor, confessor, and priest. Fr. Philip is a man of deep faith, humility, and wisdom. The witness of his life so obviously given totally to Christ for the sake of the Gospel still today powerfully impacts the missionaries and students who encounter him. I personally consider Fr. Philip a mentor, dear brother in the Lord, and a friend and SPO is blessed to have him serve as our chaplain.

Br. Parker Jordan

OUR YOUNGEST BROTHER

During my year of candidacy, as I entered a time of soul-searching discernment for whether or not God was calling me to novitiate, Fr. Philip set aside time to pray over me in our chapel in Somerville. After this time of prayer, he shared with me these fatherly words, "By now I am old enough to be

considered your grandfather, but if God had called me to have children, I would be so proud to have had you as a son." And that is how Fr. Philip has loved each of us brothers, as if we were his very own. He has fathered us in our uncertainties, comforted us in our sorrows, rejoiced exultantly in our triumphs and continually called us on to greater heights of holiness. I, who am so privileged to have been fathered by a truly great earthly father, consider it a total gift to have Fr. Philip as a spiritual father. This coming July, as by God's grace I enter the ranks of perpetually professed Brothers, I thank God for the invaluable life and legacy of Fr. Philip. It is a patrimony of the heavenly Father's love, one I can only hope to pass on to future generations of brothers.

Jo Tango

FOUNDER, KEPHA PARTNERS

Fr. Philip, thank you so much for 15 years of spiritual direction! Your insights, perspectives, and

prayers have meant so much to me. Also, thank you for being the Spiritual Father of the Boston Catholic Conferences. 10,000 people connected to learn more about the faith and to build friendships that today continue among many Bible study groups and throughout the Archdiocese of Boston.

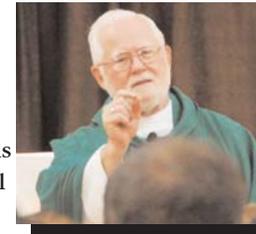


50 YEARS

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

might call the 'primary care physicians' of the Catholic people I had more than enough to do.

Yet, there was something missing in my life, gravely so. Though there was a certain knowledge of the Lord Jesus and a certain commitment to his ways, the transforming personal encounter was absent. But the Lord pursued me and through the Catholic charismatic renewal he brought me to himself in a new and life-changing way. It was through his personal



intervention that I encountered the Father and the Holy Spirit in a manner heretofore unknown. It was in him, in Jesus, that I opened up to his lordship, to other holy women and men, to new movements of the Holy Spirit and to the first intimations of what would become a new community of celibate Brothers, the Brotherhood of Hope.

We priests do many things in the Sacramental and pastoral care of the People of God. Most sublime among these are the celebrations of Eucharist and Penance. But there are other initiatives as well, one of which is the founding and formation of new communities of celibate men and women, new families of Religious. If these initiatives grow and mature they can be recognized and established by

Bishops as new expressions of Religious life, families bound together by vows and a life and mission in common. Such, God willing, is the Brotherhood of Hope. We are a new family in the order of grace composed primarily of Brothers, celibate men bound together by vows, a common way of life and a mission of evangelization and discipleship formation particularly on the campuses of secular universities. Excepting the Sacramental ministry, this Brotherhood is the most profound and daring expression of the priesthood of Jesus Christ in my life. To him I owe everything; to him I want to give everything.

Laus tibi Christe! †

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US...
in our mission of bringing the transforming love of Jesus to others, especially the young. Know that we pray for you and your intentions in our daily community prayer. Please continue to remember us in your prayers and support.

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