

Fr. Miro Wiese, O.F.M.
July 29, 1929 – May 28, 2016

Twenty days after the death of our beloved Jim Perluzzi, O.F.M., the friars at Blessed Giles in Manitowoc, Wisconsin lost another beloved brother in death. On the Vigil of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Jesus, Miro Wiese, O.F.M., drew his last breath and went home to God.

Donald Richard Wiese was born to Joseph and Augusta (Rusch) Wiese on July 29, 1929, in St. Paul, Minnesota. Fr. Gaudence Worm, O.F.M., baptized him on August 18, 1929, at Sacred Heart Church. Donald grew up with his sisters and brother in their grandparent's home near East 7th Street until his parents bought a home on Bush Avenue in 1940. His father Joe had a barbershop near Sacred Heart and was the barber for all the priests and brothers. While attending Sacred Heart School, Donald felt God calling him to be a Franciscan priest.

In October of 2013, Miro was interviewed for our Province newsletter. He was asked: "How did you feel God's call to be a friar and a priest? Who or what inspired your vocation?" He responded:

It started in grade school. My mother told me that whatever I wished for at my first communion it will become true...And I wished to be a priest. I was only seven years old. After graduating from Sacred Heart, my dad told me we needed to go see the priest in Church to tell him about my intentions. That was the last weekend before Labor Day in 1943. The rest is history.

After graduating from St. Joseph Minor Seminary and completing the time of initial formation before novitiate, Donald was received into the Franciscan community as a novice on July 4, 1950, and he was given the religious name, Miro. On July 5, 1954, he made his Solemn Profession and was ordained to the priesthood on June 24, 1957.

Miro served the Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart and the Church well during his 56 years of active ministry. Miro served in the following parishes: St. Augustine and St. Mary in Memphis, TN; St. Anthony in St. Louis, MO; St. George in Hermann, MO; St. Thomas in Muskegon, MI; Our Lady of the Prairie in Belle Plaine, MN; Guardian Angels in Chaska, MN; Holy Family in Clacking Creek, MI; and Cross in the Woods in Indian River, MI.

Miro loved pastoral ministry. Once he was assigned to a parish, he immediately went to work and would sink his roots into the life of the parish community. As our province began to decrease in number, we could no longer staff all of our parishes. Most of the places where Miro was pastor were given back to the diocese. As difficult as this was for him, he would joke and say: "Don't put me in a place unless you want the friars to leave." His move from St. Thomas Parish in Muskegon was exceptionally hard for him. He told me that St. Thomas was his favorite assignment – especially working alongside his good friend, Fr. Conan Mitchell, O.F.M..

Miro experienced personal health issues over the years. He had difficulty with his eyes most of his life. From the time he was in the seminary in the 1950's, to the present time he spent with us at Blessed Giles in Manitowoc, he had several surgical procedures performed in order for his sight to improve. These

procedures were always successful. A strict regimen of eye drops, four times a day, was the key to keeping his eyes healthy. As the years progressed, Miro was faced with several other difficult health decisions. These ranged from open-heart surgery to a pace-maker implant to knee replacement surgery. Miro willingly agreed to all three.

A form of dementia came into play while at Cross in the Woods which necessitated a move to our retirement community in Manitowoc. In a letter to Miro, dated December 14, 2013, Provincial Minister Bill Spencer writes:

Mike Haney has written to let me know that you and he have been having some conversations about a move to Manitowoc. My sense is that both of you have some concerns about whether the friars at Cross in the Woods will be able to offer you the care that you need and deserve and that the two of you believe that it is in your best interests to be somewhere better able to offer you whatever assistance you might need.

Miro moved to Blessed Giles in Manitowoc on January 3, 2014.

Several months before Miro died, a stroke took away his speech. Although he could no longer communicate with his voice, he enjoyed hearing from family members when they would call on the phone. He suffered a second stroke a week before he died.

Presiding at the Memorial Mass was Archbishop Bernard Hebda, recently installed as the new Archbishop of St. Paul/Minneapolis. Archbishop Hedba met Miro when he was Bishop of the Gaylord Diocese. Concelebrating the Mass was John Dombrowski, O.F.M., representing the Provincial Administration, and Fr. Tim Norris, the newly appointed Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish. Friars Eugene Michel, O.F.M., Ricardo Duffy, O.F.M., and Bob Gross, O.F.M. were also in attendance. John Dombrowski, O.F.M. preached and offered the Prayers of Final Commendation.

The readings chosen for the liturgy were Micah 6:6-8; 2Cor. 5:1,2-10 and the Gospel of Luke 9:11b-17.

The prophet Micah challenged the people of his time “to do what is right; to love goodness; and to walk humbly with your God.” My experience of Miro was that he was a very humble man who was willing to accept any assignment asked of him by the Provincial Administration. For 56 years Miro worked tirelessly in pastoral ministry. Miro’s family told me that he “was so proud of wherever he was stationed and couldn’t wait to share his experiences with them and all his friends who came to visit him.”

As Miro approached semi-retirement, he moved to the community at Cross in the Woods in Indian River. There he shared his love for God and nature with all the pilgrims who visited the Shrine. He was still able to celebrate the Eucharist with them, spend time conversing with everyone he met and bless the items they purchased at the gift shop. Miro was a blessing for all who met him. He lived the words of the Prophet Micah: “to do what is right; to love goodness; and to walk humbly with your God.”

The Gospel was chosen because it was the reading for the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Jesus, the day Miro died. Jesus is speaking to the crowds about the Kingdom of God. Throughout his 56 years as a

pastoral minister, Miro spoke to the thousands of people he served about the Kingdom of God. Through his life and ministry he was able to bring God's healing touch to everyone he met proclaiming the message of the Gospel – a message of God's love, peace, and forgiveness. Unlike the disciples who wanted to dismiss the crowds and send them away, Miro would gather people around him so he could feed them with the Word of God and the Eucharist. He did this all the days of his life as a friar and a priest. Not only did Miro feed the people of God, but he also shared his life as a priest with his family.

His family appreciated all that Miro did for them. He was able to be with them at key moments of their lives as he offered the sacraments to them – Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage and Anointing of the Sick as well as presiding at family funerals. This was his gift to his family as he shared his faith in God with them.

The Liturgy concluded with some final words by Archbishop Hebda and a eulogy offered by Miro's nephew, George Stout.

George reminisced about his uncle and said: "there were very few things my uncle could not do. For example, he built a pontoon boat and sailed it on the Mississippi River; he made trailers for people; he renovated houses; he wired buildings; he could talk to anybody about anything. He taught us to water ski and swim during the summer and ice skate, roller skate and ski when he would come to visit during the winter. He could split an apple with his hands – he was very strong and was not a person I would ever want to mess with. He was kind and gentle. He taught us the value of hard work. He loved his sister Joan and his nieces and nephews so much and cherished his visits back home."

Miro is survived by his sister Joan Wilmes of Mankato, Minnesota; 15 nieces and nephews; as well as 27 grandnieces and nephews and 23 great-grandnieces and nephews. Miro was laid to rest at Calvary Cemetery in St. Paul, Minnesota, alongside his parents on Friday, June 17, 2016.

The day after Miro's death, the friars at Blessed Giles gathered at the funeral home to bless his body and to pray for him before he was cremated. I would like to conclude with the words of our prayer for him.

In his goodness, the Lord gave MIRO to our Franciscan community. While he lived among us, he gave encouragement and support by his faith in Christ. Although he appears to be without life, we believe that he is among the living, and that one day we shall join with him in singing God's praises.

We are always in the presence of the God of love in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Into his love we give our brother MIRO back to God. We know that Christ, once raised from the dead, will never die again; death has no more power over him.

Lord, keep our brother MIRO in your love as we keep in in our love, for ever and ever. AMEN!

May our brother, Fr. Miro, a good and faithful friar-priest, rest in peace.

John Dombrowski, O.F.M.

In your kindness, please consider making a donation in memory of Fr. MIro Wiese, O.F.M., to our Development Office of the Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart.

Please send your charitable contribution to:

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