



Fr. Bernard J. Schaefer, O.S.B.

January 13, 1931 - July 19, 2021

Father Bernard Schaefer, O.S.B.

1931 – 2021

Father Bernard Schaefer, OSB, age 90, a Benedictine monk of Marmion Abbey, Aurora, Illinois, died peacefully in the Lord on the nineteenth of July, 2021. Raised in a loving family with eight siblings, he is survived by members of his monastic family, his brother Raymond and his sisters Regina Esser and Anne Deutsch and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, Jacob and Anna (Weigel) and by his siblings Albert, Katharine, Frederick, Barbara, Dolores and Mary Ann.

Father Bernard was born in Aurora, Illinois on January 13, 1931. He was baptized with the name of John at St. Joseph Church in Aurora. He attended Marmion Military Academy for one year and then attended St. Meinrad Seminary, graduating in 1950, having completed the seminary's high school and 2 year philosophy programs. In 1950 he entered the newly established Marmion Abbey in Aurora and professed his first vows on August 6, 1951 and took the name of Bernard. After studies at St. Procopius Seminary, he was ordained to the priesthood on May 26, 1956. In the following years he earned a Master of Education degree and a Master of Arts degree in counseling.

In his early years after ordination, Father Bernard taught Latin and Religion at Marmion Military Academy. During these years he was also heavily with the Academy's Annual Fall Festival fundraiser. In 1969, Father Bernard began to serve our nation as an Army chaplain. During his first overseas tour of duty in 1971, he served in Vietnam. Between 1972 and 1976 there was a break in his active military service. He studied for a brief time at Bellarmine School of Theology in Chicago. Beginning in August of 1972, he served in parochial ministry as an associate pastor at three parishes in Southern California: St. Nicholas Church, Our Lady Queen of Angels Church and Our Lady of Grace Church. During this period, Father Bernard survived a serious car accident. It was after this incident that he achieved sobriety, having suffered from alcoholism for many years. He became deeply involved with Alcoholics Anonymous as well as with the Catholic

charismatic renewal movement. In 1976 he re-entered the Armed Forces to serve as an Army chaplain. In addition to serving in Vietnam, he served in Korea, in Kuwait in operation Desert Storm (1990-91), as well as serving tours of duty in Germany, Alaska and Turkey and at various Army bases in the continental United States. During his Army years, he was always faithful to keep in frequent contact with his monastic community and family by sending post cards from the many religious sites he visited. He served our nation as an Army chaplain for a total of twenty-three years.

Father Bernard retired from military service in 1995 and returned to take up residence at Marmion Abbey. He devoted himself to sharing in the work of Marmion Abbey and Marmion Academy as well as serving the Catholic Church of the Fox River Valley area in parochial assistance work. From 1996 – 2003 he served Marmion Academy as the faculty and staff chaplain. One of his special ministries was ministering to people battling alcoholism to maintain sobriety, since he himself had achieved sobriety for many years. He was a popular retreat master for groups of recovering alcoholics, served many as spiritual director and was active in Alcoholics Anonymous. Father Bernard was also very active in bereavement ministry, often celebrating funerals and officiating at wake services in local parishes and funeral homes.

Father Bernard loved bicycling and fishing. He would often be seen riding his bicycle, dressed in his colorful “bicyclist attire.” After his annual fishing trips with his brother to Alaska and Wisconsin, he would return with a couple of large coolers full of fish, which he presumably caught himself, to share with his monastic brothers.

In his final few years of declining health, Father Bernard was less active due to his physical limitations. Yet, he remained faithful as much as possible to daily prayer and to the abbey’s community life. He loved his community and even with his failing health maintained a good spirit and sense of humor.

Father Bernard’s body will be received by his monastic brothers and family on Thursday, July 22, at Marmion Abbey’s Church of St. Augustine of Canterbury at 4:00 p.m. Visitation will be from 4:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. in the Abbey Church at 850 Butterfield Road, Aurora, Illinois. The Office of the Dead will be prayed at 6:30 p.m. Visitation will continue on Friday, July 23, from 9:00 a.m. until the Mass of Christian Burial at 10:30 a.m. Burial will follow in the Marmion Abbey Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made to Marmion Abbey, 850 Butterfield Rd. Aurora, IL. 60502.

Please remember to sign the virtual guest book and leave condolences for his family.

Events

JUL **Visitation** 04:00PM - 08:00PM

22

Marmion Abbey Church
850 Butterfield Rd, Aurora, IL, US, 60502

JUL **Office of the Dead** 06:30PM

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Marmion Abbey Church
850 Butterfield Rd, Aurora, IL, US, 60502

JUL **Visitation** 09:00AM - 10:30AM

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Marmion Abbey Church
850 Butterfield Rd, Aurora, IL, US, 60502

JUL **Funeral Mass** 10:30AM

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Marmion Abbey Church
850 Butterfield Rd, Aurora, IL, US, 60502

JUL **Burial** 11:30AM

23

Marmion Abbey Cemetery
850 Butterfield Rd., Aurora, IL, US, 60502

Comments



“ My Latin instructor at Marmion.
Veni, Vidi, Vici.
Omnia Gallia in tres partes divida est.
Remembering him brings a smile to my face.
- Pete Petit, Marmion '69

Peter Petit - July 24 at 12:18 PM



“ While I lived on Elburn I would go to daily Mass at St. Peters and some times Father Bernard would say 7am Mass and then we would go out to breakfast with the Notre Dame Breakfast club. I looked forward to those times when he was saying Mass. As all who knew him I will miss his smile and sense of humor!

Jim McKinney - July 23 at 09:49 PM



“ I attended many AA meetings with Fr. Bernard in years past, especially when I was pastor at St. Catherine of Genoa in Genoa. I always loved our visits. A few times I picked him up for meetings, or dropped him off and always enjoyed his humor as well as his insights into recovery. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Fr. Tim Seigel - July 23 at 11:13 AM



“ We have been blessed over and over to have had Bernie The Monk as our very good friend and special spiritual confidant since the mid-90s. We will miss him greatly. Jim & Dorothy Barkley

Jim Barkley - July 23 at 10:04 AM



“ We grew up as kids on Fulton Street. Our dads, Jake and Frank were best of friends, fishing buddies, and worked together at Thor Power Tool. Father Bernard and I were reunited after many long years and we spoke regularly on the phone. We sang happy birthday to him on his 90th. I will miss my dear friend more than I can say, and will hold dear many memories of this fine gentleman. Joan (Harrell) Propernick, and Michael



Joan Propernick - July 22 at 06:15 PM



“ My mother, Philomena Reiland, was the organist at Fr. Berny's First Mass at Sacred Heart Church/Aurora, and I was a freshman in high school and sang in the choir for that glorious occasion! I still have the memorial card of his ordination in one of my prayer books. His parents and I were daily Mass participants throughout my high school years until I joined the Sisters of St. Joseph Convent in Kansas. We at Sacred Heart were all very proud of our two parishioners who joined Marmion Abbey, Father Berny and Father David Palmatier. I saw Father Berny some years ago at my cousin's home, Tim/Sue Wulff, when he was present for their son's graduation from Marmion. We had a lot to talk about and at that time his memory was as clear as crystal! We did a lot of laughing while sharing, too.

The last time I saw him was at my mother's funeral in 2014, where he was the main celebrant at her funeral. Mom was 96 when she died. He delivered a wonderful tribute to her, and we as a family are very proud to have known him. He brought us closer to Jesus and love for our Church. Now he is interceding at the throne of God for all of us. May he rest in peace and enjoy the heavenly rewards he earned while on earth!

Sister Philomene Reiland CSJ

Sister Philomene Reiland CSJ - July 21 at 05:06 PM



“ I first met Bernie at "The Heartbreak Hotel" in St. Charles. I was in my early recovery there and he'd ride up to visit Ron K. and visit. I attended many retreats he led, and always enjoyed his honesty and good humor! Godspeed Father Bernie! Peace

Paul Christensen

Paul Christensen - July 21 at 10:47 AM



“ I think the only challenge that was beyond this man's resolve was teaching me Latin. May God Bless you, my old friend, and bring comfort to your loved ones. You will be missed, by the tens of thousands of those of us whose lives you have touched.

Bill Wallers - July 21 at 09:53 AM



“ Father Bernard was also from our parish of Sacred Heart - dear friend of my parents and my brother Jack. (Jack served as a page for his first Mass). He was a humble man and servant to many. May God's eternal light shine upon him!

Tom & Joleen Petit - July 20 at 06:40 PM