

The Many Missions of Father Richard F. Wersing, C.S.Sp.

James K. Hanna

In the years following his 1937 ordination as a Holy Ghost Father,¹ Wilkinsburg (Pennsylvania) native Richard F. Wersing, C.S.Sp., would be known not only as a Roman Catholic priest but also a missionary, street preacher, parish founder, combat chaplain, graduate student, university professor, and archivist. A man of varied interests, he was a collector of stamps and coins, a voracious reader, poet, theater *aficionado*, humorist, public speaker, photographer, gardener, and a world traveler who maintained an active social life until his death at age 96 in 2006.

In his nearly seven decades of priesthood, Fr. Wersing served the Church in many of the United States, as well as France, Germany, Korea, Tanzania and elsewhere. For recreation he visited many countries including Ireland, Japan, Algeria, Israel, Morocco, Netherlands, Italy, and Mexico.

Richard Francis Wersing was born on February 12, 1910 to Margaret (Reott) and John Killian Wersing. He was one of six children, including brothers Martin and Paul, and sisters Margaret, Marian and Helen. His mother was the homemaker and his father a foreman at Westinghouse Electric.

It was his father's position at Westinghouse that ignited his philatelic interests at age 13. John Wersing's department was in receipt of much foreign correspondence with envelopes covered front and back with stamps.² At his death in 2006, Wersing still maintained the original collection he had begun in 1923.

He attended St. James grade school where he was taught by the Sisters of Charity, "at a time when they burned the crosses atop Wilkinsburg Hill and the Ku Klux Klan marched through the streets of Wilkinsburg; at a time when a Catholic boy had to battle his way to and from school and was called a Mickey!"³

It was at St. James that he had his first attraction to the priesthood. It was this writer's privilege to know Father Wersing the final four years of his life and to listen to his many remembrances. I asked him about his first interest in becoming a priest. "It was the subtle influence of pastors. Great men; respected and dignified, especially Father Lambing," he said.⁴

Andrew A. Lambing (1842-1918) was a diocesan priest and historian who established the Ohio Valley Historical Society in 1879, a forerunner to the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.⁵ "Father Lambing," Wersing shared, "came to check our catechetical knowledge weekly and our classroom deportment. As a schoolboy I attended my first funeral Mass upon his death."⁶

Following grade school he attended Duquesne Preparatory School (operated by Duquesne University until 1941) for ninth grade before entering St. Fidelis Preparatory School (operated by the Capuchins) in Herman, Pennsylvania, from which he graduated in 1929. It was at St. Fidelis that he became acquainted with the library and was fascinated by leisurely reading.⁷

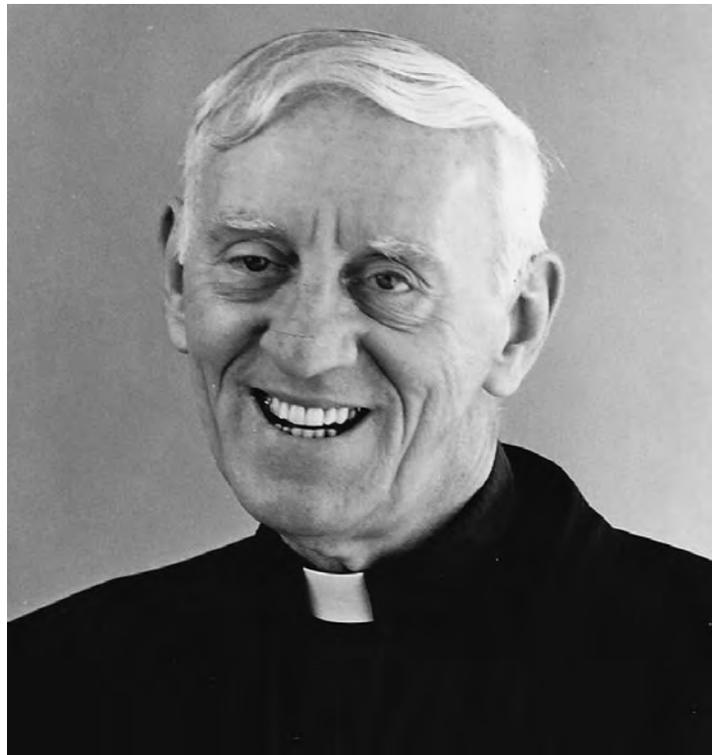
He once shared with this author a complete list of the books he read while at St. Fidelis. They numbered sixty-seven. Among the titles demonstrating his varied interests were *Stoddard's Lectures*, *Mirror of*

Shallot, *The Mill Town Pastor*, *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *Courtship of Miles Standish*, *Gold-Bug*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Percy Wynn: That Football Game*, *Lucky Bob: On the Run*, *That Office Boy*, and *Gascoyne*.

Wersing was enrolled at Duquesne University of the Holy Ghost (founded in Pittsburgh in 1878 by the Congregation of the Holy Ghost as the Pittsburgh Catholic College) from 1929 to 1933 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English.⁸

His extracurricular activities in college included writing a weekly drama article for *The Duke* and articles for *The Duquesne Monthly*. He was a founding member of the Spectator Club of the College of Arts and Letters, "a senior honorary study group that ran open-forum discussions and, oddly enough for a study group, hosted dances and social affairs."⁹ He was the manager for a number of three-act plays produced on campus and taken on the road. He was also a four-year member of the Pennsylvania National Guard.¹⁰

During his time at Duquesne he made the decision to pursue seminary studies with the Holy Ghost Fathers. His attraction to the Holy Ghost Fathers was rooted in the congregation's missionary zeal for the continent of Africa. This was the reason he chose the congregation over the Pittsburgh diocese. "The diocese wanted me," he told this author, "but I wanted to go to the missions in sub-Saharan Africa."¹¹ He did not get his wish until age 77, when he took a sabbatical year to establish archives for the diocese of Arusha, Tanzania.



Father Richard F. Wersing (ca. 1985)

Source: James K. Hanna

The Many Missions of Father Richard F. Wersing, C.S.Sp. (continued)

Following graduation in 1933 he went to the novitiate in Ridgefield, Connecticut where he professed his first vows on August 15, 1934.¹² A story he shared with me about his year in the novitiate demonstrates his love of poetry:

We were not allowed to read anything but our textbooks and I missed reading poetry. Every thirty days we were assigned a new evening job. I was once assigned a job to sweep and clean a small dining room. On the first day I found a copy of Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*. It is 182 lines, and I figured I could look at it once a day for the next thirty days, so I memorized about six lines a day, and by the time of my next monthly job assignment I had it learnt.¹³

After Ridgefield he spent the next three years at St. Mary's, the major seminary known as "Ferndale" in South Norwalk, Connecticut. While at Ferndale he became interested in gardening and also continued his interest in theater by producing plays that were running concurrently on Broadway using, out of necessity, fellow seminarians for female roles.¹⁴

He professed his permanent vows in 1936 and was ordained September 8, 1937 in the chapel at South Norwalk by Bishop Maurice F. McAuliffe of Hartford.¹⁵

While the congregation's overseas missionary emphasis was Africa, its charism also included ministry among African-Americans in rural areas of the southern and western states. Father Wersing's first assignments were under the tutelage of older priests: a one-year stint at a mission parish in Opelousas, Louisiana, aptly named Holy Ghost parish, followed by a year at St. Monica in Tulsa, Oklahoma.¹⁶

His solo missionary work began in 1939 when he was sent to Muskogee, Oklahoma where he started as a street preacher.¹⁷ There were few Catholics and no church building. He convinced a local funeral parlor owner to allow him to use a room for Sunday Masses.¹⁸ Wersing's vibrant personality, sense of humor and quick wit resonated with the Oklahomans, both Catholic and non-Catholic, and he attracted a number of converts to the faith. By 1943 he built a congregation and a church building, as founder and pastor of St. Augustine Mission Church for the Colored, since closed and served by St. Joseph parish.

As the St. Joseph parish website notes,

Complicated is the how and why of the parish of St. Augustine (1939), set aside to serve Muskogee's African-American Catholics in another time that accepted segregation as a given. This was closed in 1969 as integration brought all of Muskogee's Catholics together.¹⁹

During his time in Muskogee the United States entered World War II. After the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Wersing knew he wanted to ask his superiors for permission to become a military chaplain, but his dedication to building a parish in Muskogee was paramount.

In 1943, having accomplished his parish goal, he asked his superiors for permission to become a military chaplain. Permission was granted and he enlisted with the Army at Tulsa, Oklahoma on November 1, 1943 and four days later was assigned to chaplaincy duties in Arkansas at Camp Joseph T. Robinson.²⁰

Camp Robinson housed a large German prisoner of war facility, with a capacity of 4,000 prisoners²¹ and he remained there until departing for Europe except for six weeks of January and February 1944 when he was sent to Harvard University for chaplain school.²² Though his time at Harvard was brief he managed to become an honorary member of the Hasty Pudding drama club.²³

He departed for Europe as an active duty combat chaplain on June 18, 1944 and did not return to the United States until December 15, 1946. His battle and campaign ribbons during that time include Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes and Central Europe. His decorations and citations included the Army Commendation Ribbon, European African Middle East Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, and American Campaign Medal.²⁴

It was in Europe during World War II that his numismatic interest was kindled. He began collecting coins for himself and paper currency for his brother, Martin,²⁵ who was in the Pacific and did the reciprocal. Through this exchange they both managed to assemble large collections.²⁶

After his 1946 discharge from active duty the Spiritan Congregation sent Father Wersing on another domestic mission; this time to Kentucky as the first pastor of Rosary Chapel Catholic Church, in rural Paducah. The parish exists yet today.

According to its website:

Rosary Chapel Parish was established in 1947 by Rev. Albert Thompson, pastor of St. Francis de Sales Church. Because segregation prevailed at that time, Fr. Thompson felt that Black Catholics had no sense of identity at St. Francis, and needed a parish of their own. The parishioners of Rosary participated in building Rosary by contribution time and labor to help renovate the first buildings.

The property consisted of three houses, one of which was



Father Wersing as chaplain

Source: James K. Hanna

The Many Missions of Father Richard F. Wersing, C.S.Sp. (continued)

converted to a small chapel. The other two houses were connected and used as classrooms for Rosary Chapel School. The first Mass was offered in the spring of 1947 and school opened in September. Fr. Richard Wersing, C.S.S.P. was the first pastor. Ursuline sisters from Maple Mount, KY taught and maintained the school.²⁷

Following his nearly two years in Kentucky, Wersing was assigned as chaplain to the Veterans Administration Hospital in Tucson, Arizona. While there he also studied Shakespeare at the University of Arizona's graduate school, and visited Mexico.

In 1950, when the Korean War started he returned to duty as a combat chaplain, and remained on active duty until May 1, 1967. The Korean conflict lasted until the middle of 1953 during which time he served with the 15th Infantry Regiment (Third Infantry Division).

In 1952 he once celebrated Mass under hostile fire. An eyewitness, soldier Jim Tiezzi, shared the story:

We met several times on the front lines of Hill 355. Wherever he went he always gathered as many GI's as he could to say Mass; sometime there were only a few and other times over 100. On one occasion he said Mass on the reverse side of Hill 355. All of a sudden the enemy started shelling our position and all of us GI's had been trained to duck and put our helmets back on. They had been off because we were in 'church', so we put them back on and kept them on for the remainder of the Mass. As I looked up at Father Wersing, there he was still standing up continuing to say Mass like nothing else mattered except the completion of the Mass. Some enemy shells had landed nearby and fortunately no one was hit, however dirt and mud had splattered his vestments.²⁸

Later, he was nominated for and awarded the Bronze Star for valor.²⁹

When this writer asked Wersing about this episode he said that he

heard a shell fly past his head during the consecration, but thought since it didn't hit him that "God wanted me to finish."

His dedication to liturgy and boundless creativity is also evidenced in a 1951 dispatch he sent from Korea to the congregation's provincial office for publication in its magazine.

It was glorious weather for a glorious day, so, after a rough day of training, we had Mass yesterday for Corpus Christi at 6:00 p.m. in the outdoor hillside chapel at 3rd Bn.

At 6:30 we had Benediction for our first time here. Our charcoal was burnt wood from a Korean home; the incense was real and it was placed in a Japanese brass ashtray and ladled out with a large brass Korean *kinchi* spoon. The center was a Korean rice bowl of brass. I punched three holes in it and strung it with three dog tag chains - my own and my two assistants'. The censer held a glowing fire producing billows of incense quite in keeping with the prayers of the men. I know their prayers were rising as surely as the fragrant incense cloud-odors.

The monstrance was my tiny G.I. ciborium. I placed a large Host inside the opened lid, covered it with cellophane and tacked that back with scotch tape. There was no humeral veil. The Protestant chaplain's organist played the hymns on the little field organ and all the men sang beautifully!

Immediately afterwards, we hurried along the road for a brisk half-hour and arrived at 2nd Bn. for another Benediction at 7:30. Here wind blew out most of the candles, we had no organist and one chain pulled though our make-shift censer. We put the censer together with our telephone wire and proceeded to have a beautiful *a capello* Benediction.³⁰



Father Wersing says Mass in Korea in 1952

Source: James K. Hanna

The Many Missions of Father Richard F. Wersing, C.S.Sp. (continued)

Returning to the states from Korea in 1953, he was given both domestic and foreign chaplaincy assignments by the Army over the next fourteen years. The first of these was in New Mexico at Sandia Base, home of the atomic energy project near Albuquerque. There he started a theater group for the military families, and also studied modern British poetry at the graduate school at nearby University of New Mexico.³¹

After Sandia, and during the Vietnam era, he was assigned to the 2nd Armored Division and from 1957 to July of 1964 alternated duties between Fort Hood, Texas and Bad Kreuznach, Germany.³² At Fort Hood, he won awards for photography³³ and was elected the president of the Killeen-Fort Hood Toastmasters Club.³⁴ One speech he gave at Toastmasters was on the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and titled *A Good AA*:

The stature of a good AA is measured, not by the height of his body, but by the depth of his soul; not by the height to which he reaches for learning, but by the depth to which he stoops for serving. A good AA is not concerned with wrong judgement of himself by others, but takes every precaution not to pass judgement on others at all. A good AA is thankful for what he may get; he is grateful for what he can give. Your good AA is the one who always makes the best of it when he gets the worst of it. A good AA spends the moment of silent meditation before meetings reflecting on the smallness of self; he says the Our Father after meetings proclaiming the greatness of God. Your good AA strives not for cleverness, but for wisdom; he would rather be right than popular. And a good AA would rather make ten costly mistakes in judgement than one cheap mistake in charity. He would rather be called foolish by a man than selfish by God.

The good AA is neither a saint nor a soldier, neither a doctor of medicine nor a pundit of philosophy; nevertheless, he is spiritually inspired and intuitively trained in the gentlest and the most beautiful of arts – the art of healing. His battlefields are the homes of the hopeless, the dreary and shabby rooms of the desolate, the jails, hospitals, and prisons where those abandoned by others turn to him in hope. And well do we know that it is not the strength of his will but the gentleness of his touch which soothes the most desperately sick of men: The Alcoholic.³⁵

Wherever he was stationed, his preaching resonated with military personnel and families. A note written in 1964 to his provincial read:

I am a convert with an extremely sketchy early religious education; as a matter of fact, the first Catholic to reappear in the family since the reformation. At Pentecost, Father Wersing opened new doors for me. His sermon on the Holy Ghost, and the subsequent days of worship and instruction illuminated new corridors of grace, and has ever since been a source of daily prayer and a bulwark of strength. There is another thing about Father Wersing: a unique quality of saintliness. It shone about the man. The essence of the Holy Spirit was palpable. I shall forever be indebted to him, and hence his Order, for the inspiration of his guidance.³⁶

He once paid a visit to the Bavarian town of Konnersreuth where he met Therese Neumann (1898-1962).³⁷ He shared the event with me:

I remember she was fascinated with the (Army) jeep. In fact we gave her a ride around the block. Later, I walked her home from

the church. It was really quite an experience, a very fortunate one for me, to just be walking along with a stigmatic and mystic; just walking her home. She was quite unremarkable; very plain and down to earth; not the least bit pretentious.³⁸

There were many other stories of his wartime experiences, as noted in his news obituary appearing in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*: “So many of the stories he would later weave stemmed from his adventures there. Some such as the tale that he was the first to cross the Rhine River to greet the Russians are almost mythical.”³⁹ Wersing also told the present author that he sat for two entire days in the back row of the courtroom during the Nuremberg trials in 1946, fascinated by the proceedings.

From July 1964 to March 1966, Fr. Wersing was assigned as Catholic Chaplain to the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania,⁴⁰ before returning to Korea where he spent the final fourteen months of active duty. Prior to discharge, he travelled to Hong Kong and Saigon. He was honorably discharged from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel on May 1, 1967 and in August, at age 57, was assigned to Duquesne University where he enrolled as a graduate student. He spent the next two years completing two master’s degrees — the first in Education and the second in English.⁴¹ He then taught literature and poetry to freshman and sophomores at Duquesne from 1970 to 1975 when he reached the University’s then-mandatory retirement age for professors.

Father Wersing’s professorial effectiveness is illustrated by an inscription in the frontispiece of a poetry book given him by a student:

Dear Father Wersing, when I first came to Duquesne I came from a world of newsprint where people were concerned about saying things in the most literal fashion possible. It was your English course that brought me back to the beauty and real possibilities of the language. Without your course I could not have appreciated this book. I hope you can appreciate it as well.⁴²

Following his five-year collegiate teaching experience he was assigned to the University of Maryland and American University for one year of archival studies. In 1976 he received accreditation as an archivist from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.⁴³

He returned to Duquesne and served as the archivist until 1996, during which time he prepared several notable exhibits of the University’s history.⁴⁴ One of these was a display for the University’s centenary entitled “100 Years, 100 Photos, and 1,000 Faces”.⁴⁵

In 1987 he took a sabbatical and finally fulfilled his dream of seeing sub-Saharan Africa. He spent most of the year in Arusha, Tanzania, where “he helped the diocese develop an archive so historians could better research the activities of Catholic missionaries. When he wasn’t doing that, he was giving parishioners rides to Mass and buying them food.”⁴⁶

During the stateside civilian period of 1967-1998 he was active in many organizations including the Willa Cather Society, the Flannery O’Connor Society, the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, and the Men’s Garden Club of Western Pennsylvania. During this time, he also served as chaplain to the Fraternal Knights

The Many Missions of Father Richard F. Wersing, C.S.Sp. (continued)

of St. George—Branch 8222, the 99th Army Reserve Group, the American Legion Post 106, and the ROTC programs at Duquesne University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Carnegie Mellon University.⁴⁷

He retired as Duquesne's archivist in 1998 at age 88 but continued to live on campus at Trinity Hall until 2001 when he moved to Libermann Hall, the Spiritan congregation's retirement facility in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania. Though he suffered from both macular degeneration and hearing loss, he stayed active at Libermann Hall.

A fellow Spiritan, Father Joseph Kelly, recorded an indication of Fr. Wersing's mindfulness that occurred in December of 2003:

An unexpected event happened one night here in Bethel Park, the fire alarm rang out. The police arrived, the fire truck was being prepared for action and the confreres had come out of their rooms to see what was happening; but there was no sign of Father Dick Wersing, who is now 93, frail and with very poor eyesight.

It was soon discovered that the source of the emergency was not an enveloping fire but a small piece of toast someone was making which got burnt and gave off the smoke that tripped the alarm. The cause of the alarm had been discovered but there was still no sign of Father Dick, until one of us went to the chapel and there he was. When he heard the alarm, he had hobbled to the chapel to be ready to remove the Blessed Sacrament if there was a need.⁴⁸

It was this writer's privilege to visit Father Wersing in Bethel Park frequently in his last years. We went for drives to visit Father's sister Marian, attend a St. James reunion, and call on old friends at Duquesne University. Mostly we talked and often we prayed. One of his favorite prayers was the Litany of Loreto.

He was briefly hospitalized in Mercy Hospital the weekend Pope John Paul II died (April 2, 2005). My wife and I stopped to visit him on Sunday afternoon. I remember looking at my watch, seeing it was 2:35 p.m. and saying, "Father, Alice and I have to leave soon, would you like to pray the Litany before we go?" And we did. Later, I discovered the Pope had died at 2:37 p.m. Eastern time. I couldn't wait to tell Father. When he heard we had been praying the Litany when the Pope died, his face lit up and with a big grin he exclaimed, "Man! That is wonderful! What a beautiful thought!"⁴⁹

We also walked and prayed the outdoor Stations of the Cross at Bethel Park. Toward the end of his life, Fr. Wersing was using a wheelchair and was nearly blind. He had a wonderful modification of saying the Stations that reflected his love of mankind. For instance, at the Fifth Station where Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross, Father would in his own words prayerfully thank God for all the men God had put in his life to help him along the way. And at the Sixth Station where Veronica wipes the face of Jesus he would say

a prayer of gratitude for the women God had put into his life; and so it went with each Station.

Father Wersing died peacefully on August 23, 2006 at Libermann Hall and a Mass of Resurrection was celebrated there in the chapel on August 26. Family members, Spiritan priests Christopher Promis and Leonard Tuzzolo, and the present author attended the interment on September 19 at Arlington National Cemetery where he was buried with full military honors.

After his death, the Society of the Third Infantry Division reprinted, in its official publication *The Watch on the Rhine*, a Memorial Day address Father Wersing had written and delivered in Korea:

Gentlemen: it is altogether right and profitable that we should gather on this Memorial Day to honor our departed comrades. We of the 15th Infantry Regiment leave three hundred and thirty-two graves amid the hills of Korea; we ponder the fate of 47 MIA; we revere the memory in death of 31 soldiers of the Republic of Korea who lost their lives while alongside of us; we pay humble tribute to the valiant dead of the Greek Expeditionary Forces who died here; and now many a mound of Korean soil contains Can Do personnel sleeping in this "Land of the Morning Calm."

Death and its memories are a common inheritance to mankind. Common, because they deal with human hearts and death with its memories breaks hearts and disrupts homes. And no matter where and no matter how roughly we live, there - for the moment - is our home. On the line, in headquarters, in the rear echelon, home will always have this in common with the city dweller and the farmer, that homes are the same the world over: the same at least in that they are the theaters wherein and the stages whereon are played the dramas of hearts understanding and loving other hearts. The mother of a family realizes this for it is her privilege to forget herself so that no one else will be forgotten. The soldier in battle fundamentally realizes this also for it is his preference to endure the roughness in the field - to slog up mountains in mud - to know privations amid blood and pain and death simply to keep the knowledge of these hardships away from the folks on the home front. The soldier fights so that loved ones will never know the meaning of real warfare.

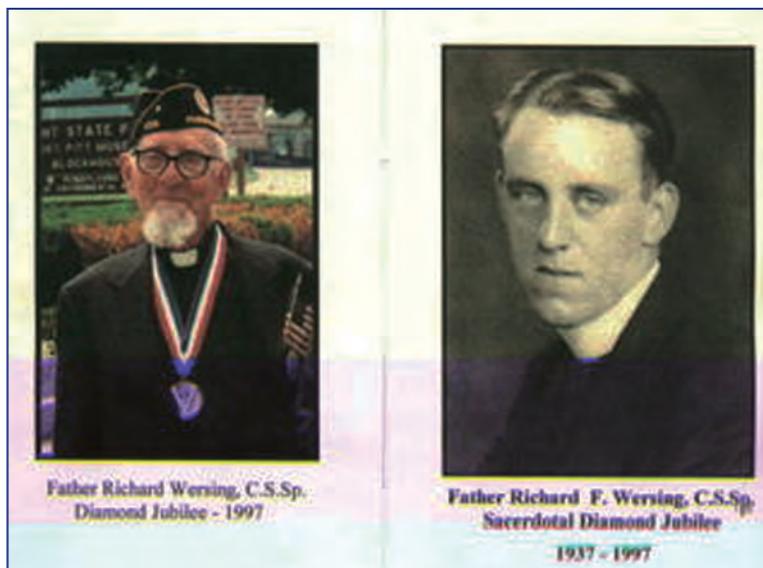
All this is true, because we inherit and hold onto our liberties as free citizens. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women. When it dies there, no law, no constitution can then do much to help it.⁵⁰

Suggested reading on the life of Fr. Richard Wersing, C.S.Sp.: (1) Arlington National Website obituary: <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/richard-wersing.htm>, and (2) The Hound of Heaven blog at: <http://thehoundofheaven.blogspot.com/>.

The Many Missions of Father Richard F. Wersing, C.S.Sp. (continued)

Endnotes

- 1 The Holy Ghost Fathers — officially The Congregation of the Holy Spirit (full title: Congregation of the Holy Spirit under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and in Latin: *Congregatio Sancti Spiritus sub tutela Immaculati Cordis Beatissimae Virginis Mariae*, hence abbreviated C.S.Sp.) — is a Roman Catholic congregation of priests, lay brothers and, since Vatican II, lay associates. Congregation members are known as Spiritans in continental Europe, and as Holy Ghost Fathers in English-speaking countries, but today have become known as Spiritans in most all locales.
The Spiritans were founded in Paris in 1703. In 1848, Fr. Francis Liberman and his Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary merged with the Spiritans. Exiled from Prussia during Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, members of the congregation's German province emigrated to the United States. Pittsburgh Bishop Michael Domenec invited the American superior, Rev. Joseph Strub, to settle in the diocese of Pittsburgh in 1874. The congregation opened the Pittsburgh Catholic College of the Holy Ghost (today, Duquesne University) in Pittsburgh in 1878. See Henry J. Koren, *The Serpent and the Dove: A History of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost in the United States 1745-1984* (Pittsburgh: Spiritus Press, 1985), and Joseph F. Rishel, "*The Spirit that Gives Life*": *The History of Duquesne University, 1878-1996* (Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1997).
- 2 Duquesne University Archives, Biography Files – Box 27: Wersing to Wright, Gumberg Library, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (hereinafter "DUA"), Bob Highberger, "Interview with Father Richard Wersing" (1981) [typed, with a note in Wersing's handwriting "Bob Highberger, 1981, spring semester"] (hereinafter cited as "Highberger Interview").
- 3 Archives of James K. Hanna (hereinafter cited as AJKH), Frankie Sapienza, *Diamond Jubilee Dinner Talk* (September 14, 1997) [printed program]. Sapienza was a lifelong friend of Fr. Wersing and delivered the talk at Duranti's Restaurant, Oakland, Pittsburgh, PA, on the occasion of Wersing's sacerdotal diamond jubilee.
- 4 AJKH, Contemporaneous notes taken by this author at the time of discussions with Fr. Richard Wersing 2002-2006 (hereinafter cited as CN).
- 5 See the Catholic Historical Society's website at <http://catholichistorywpa.org>.
- 6 AJKH, CN.
- 7 DUA, Highberger Interview.
- 8 DUA, Fr. Richard F. Wersing's self-prepared typed resume on Duquesne letterhead (undated).
- 9 Rishel, "*The Spirit that Gives Life*": *The History of Duquesne University, 1878-1996*, op. cit., 55.
- 10 DUA, Highberger Interview.
- 11 AJKH, CN.
- 12 AJKH, Sapienza, *Diamond Jubilee Dinner Talk*, loc. cit.
- 13 AJKH, CN.
- 14 DUA, Highberger Interview.
- 15 DUA, Fr. Richard F. Wersing's self-prepared typed resume on Duquesne letterhead (undated). See also "Four Priests Will Sing First Masses," *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (September 2, 1937), 12.
- 16 AJKH, Sapienza, *Diamond Jubilee Dinner Talk*, loc. cit.
- 17 "Catholic Priest Assigned War Prisoners," *The Guardian* [now *Arkansas Catholic*] (December 10, 1943), 3, appearing at the newspaper website: <http://arc.stparchive.com/Archive/ARC/ARC12101943p03.php>.
- 18 Joseph Kelly, C.S.Sp., "Prepared for Everything," *One Heart, One Spirit* [Spiritans newsletter] (December 2003), 4-5.
- 19 As of 1992, St. Joseph became the title of a single combined parish for all Catholics in Muskogee. See the St. Joseph parish website at <http://stjosephok.com/parish-history> (accessed May 22, 2015).
- 20 DUA, Military Record and Report of Separation Certificate of Service (28 February 1947). Wersing gave the original to the present author, who later donated the document to DUA.
- 21 "Camp Joseph T. Robinson," appearing at the website: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2262>.
- 22 DUA, Military Record and Report of Separation Certificate of Service.
- 23 DUA, Highberger Interview.
- 24 DUA, Military Record and Report of Separation Certificate of Service.
- 25 Martin Wersing became a labor organizer in New York City and a friend to Dorothy Day, co-founder of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper and movement. Day mentions Martin in her 1952 autobiography, *The Long Loneliness* (San Francisco: Harper, 1952), 220.
- 26 DUA, Highberger Interview.
- 27 "Rosary Chapel History" appearing at the parish website: http://www.rosarychapel.org/html/about_us.html (accessed May 22, 2015).
- 28 AJKH, CN.
- 29 DUA, Fr. Richard F. Wersing's self-prepared typed resume on Duquesne letterhead (undated).
- 30 DUA, Fr. Richard F. Wersing, "Corpus Christi in Korea," [unidentified Holy Ghost Fathers missionary publication] (1951), 6-7. Wersing gave a copy of this article to the present author, who donated it to DUA.
- 31 DUA, Fr. Richard F. Wersing's self-prepared typed resume on Duquesne letterhead (undated).
- 32 AJKH, Frankie Sapienza, *Diamond Jubilee Dinner Talk*, loc. cit. During the Cold War, the 2nd Armored Division of the U.S. Army was primarily based at Fort Hood, Texas, and had a reinforced brigade forward stationed in West Germany. For 50 years (1951-2001), Bad Kreuznach was home to a United States Army base, Rose



The Many Missions of Father Richard F. Wersing, C.S.Sp. (continued)

- Barracks, including headquarters of the U.S. 8th Infantry Division and later the U.S. 1st Armored Division.
- 33 "Hood Men Win 4th Army Phase of Photo Contest," *Armored Sentinel* [Fort Hood, TX], Vol. 18, No. 25 (September 23, 1960), 1, appearing at the website: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph254653/m1/1/>.
- 34 "Chaplain Wersing Elected President Of Toastmaster," *Armored Sentinel* [Fort Hood, TX], Vol. 17, No. 42 (March 18, 1960), 4, appearing at the website: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph254626/m1/4/>.
- 35 AJKH, Richard F. Wersing, "A Good AA" (undated), given by Wersing to the present author.
- 36 AJKH, Letter of Marjorie B. Stacy (Mrs. Walter S. Stacy) to Rev. Vernon F. Gallagher [Provincial], [location undetermined] (ca. May 17, 1964). Wersing, who acknowledged the letter on October 30, 1964, gave the original letter to the present author.
- 37 Therese Neumann was born in 1898 in the village of Konnersreuth in Bavaria, Germany, the first of eleven children. When she was twenty years old, an accident left her partially paralyzed. In 1919, she was blinded completely and various other accidents left her bedridden. Therese had a great devotion to St Therese of Lisieux and credited her with healing of her paralysis and bedsores. In 1926, Therese developed the stigmata. She was also reported to have had visions of Christ. Controversy surrounded Neumann's wounds but several sources say these wounds never healed, never became infected and were present at her death. In addition to the stigmata, she was reported to have consumed no food other than the Eucharist for a period of forty years. A medical doctor and four Franciscan nurses kept watch over her for a period of two weeks and confirmed that she consumed nothing except the Eucharist. She suffered no ill effects, loss of weight or dehydration. During the time of the Third Reich in Germany, Neumann was the target of ridicule. The Nazis knew of her opposition to them and while she was never physically harmed, her family's home, her parish church and the priest's house all received direct attacks. Forty thousand people signed a petition asking for her beatification. In 2005, Bishop Gerhard Muller of Regensburg formally opened the Vatican proceedings for her beatification.
- See <http://www.papalartifacts.com/collection/venerable-therese-neumann/>. Further information on Therese Neumann is available at the website: www.mysticsofthechurch.com.
- 38 AJKH, CN.
- 39 Kate McCaffrey, "Missionary Priest and Duquesne Professor," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (August 25, 2006), E5.
- 40 The Army War College is a senior service college of the U.S. Department of Defense and provides graduate level instruction to senior military officers and civilians to prepare them for senior leadership assignments and responsibilities. Graduates receive a Master's Degree in Strategic Studies. An overview of the college appears at the website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_War_College.
- 41 DUA, Fr. Richard F. Wersing's self-prepared typed resume on Duquesne letterhead (undated).
- 42 Inscription by student "A.S." (initials), as viewed and copied by the present author in 2005.
- 43 AJKH, Sapienza, *Diamond Jubilee Dinner Talk*, loc. cit.
- 44 McCaffrey, "Missionary Priest and Duquesne Professor," loc. cit.
- 45 Kelly, "Prepared for Everything," loc. cit.
- 46 McCaffrey, "Missionary Priest and Duquesne Professor," loc. cit. The diocese of Arusha had been established in 1963 and entrusted to the Spiritans. The first bishop was Dennis V. Durning, C.S.Sp., who was still ordinary of the diocese at the time of Fr. Wersing's assignment there.
- 47 AJKH, Sapienza, *Diamond Jubilee Dinner Talk*, loc. cit.
- 48 Kelly, "Prepared for Everything," loc. cit.
- 49 AJKH, CN.
- 50 Chaplain LTC Richard F. Wersing, "Memorial Day Address," *The Watch on the Rhine* [official Publication of the Society of the Third Infantry Division, U.S.Army], Vol. 88, No. 6 (June 2007), 22, appearing at the website: http://www.warfoto.com/watch_May-Jun%202007.pdf.