

## SemNet: Discussion in appreciation of Bishop Mike Kenny

**From:** Jim Murphy  
**Sent:** Monday, February 27, 2012  
**Subject:** Re: Inquiry about Bishop Mike Kenny

**Mike Kenny was ordained March 30, 1963; consecrated a bishop on May 27, 1979 and died on February 19, 1995.**

**Jim**

(Added note: Mike was born on 7/26/1937)  
(Another note: In the year 2000 our Alumni Board began to select an "Alumnus of the Year" and to celebrate that person's life on our annual Alumni Day. **Bishop Mike Kenny** was our first selection, and was so honored during Alumni Day 2000. -- Chuck Smith)

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Also see: **BishopKenny-A Life Lived for Others, 7-22-2011**

From: Dennis Lucey  
A tribute by the current bishop of Juneau for Mike's 75th birthday

(A clarification note: The article by the current Bishop Edward Burns was published in The Southeast Alaska Catholic; first published in the Juneau Empire on 7/9/2011. I put this article at our website in the memoirs page, right next to this SemNet discussion..

**Mike's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday will be on 7/26/2012.**

Thanks to Dennis for sending this article to us and for reminding us about Mike's birthday! Chuck Smith)

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**From:** TOM O'ROURKE  
**Sent:** Monday, February 27, 2012  
**Subject:** A Semnet Inquiry

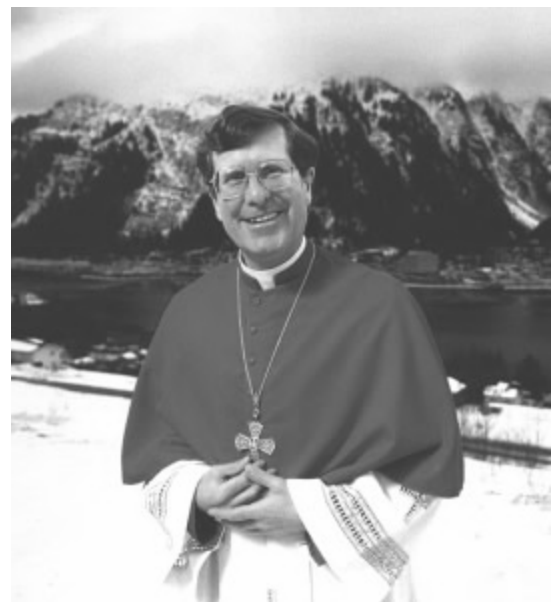
Tom,

I had a 'shirt-tail' cousin at St. Joe's while I was there ('53 to '58), I think three or more years my senior, from Vallejo, CA. Michael Kenney, ordained at St. Pat's in (?) and much later made bishop of Southeast Alaska (Juneau) by, I think, Leo Maher (or maybe the 'other' brother, Bishop Maher from Anchorage). Michael died suddenly while on a pilgrimage to Israel, I think maybe in '95 or later. We spent a wonderful day with him in Juneau in (I think) September '92.

Can any of my Semnet brothers tell me when Michael was ordained and when he died?

Tom O'Rourke R'59

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**From:** James Tonna

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 28, 2012

Dear Tom,

Mike Kenny was in the ordination class of '63, even though the plaque that lists seminary bishops that is on the right side wall of St. Pat's chapel entrance-way erroneously lists him with the ordination class of '62.

His widowed dad owned S&K Chevrolet, Vallejo. He has two sisters. Mike loved the time that he had make an appointment to see the rector (Beansey?) to get permission to go home to attend his dad's wedding. Impishness galore!

Sadly, Mike Died February 19, 1995 in Jordan. (I am sure Mike is watching us write and read this.)

Another item needing correction is the following:

It was Bishop Mark Hurley of Santa Rosa who had a brother Archbishop Frank Hurley of Anchorage, Alaska. Formerly, Frank Hurley was bishop of Juneau, Alaska. When Bishop Frank Hurley was named AB of Anchorage, about three years later (as per Juneau Diocese website) Mike was named to take Bishop Frank's place in Juneau.

Mike was a great skier. I understand that the AB too was so. The AB flew his own plane. I think that Mike did too. Villages are scattered in Alaska.

(Could you image a bishop Mike and a Sarah Palin in the same small town of Juneau?)

Mike was a "killer" priest in Santa Rosa under Bishop Leo T. Maher. Leo T's brother was Fr. Raymond Maher who was Treasurer at St. Joe's during the construction of the new wing and during the time that all the new furnishings were taking place in the priests' rooms. There was furniture galore in the 9 nine garages under the new wing.

The last I saw Fr. Ray was up at the church near Lake Almanor one Sunday morning at Mass. (I forget its name.)

While in Santa Rosa and under the tutu-ledge of Bishop Leo T. Maher Mike just flowered. (I know of what Greg speaks in one of his missives concerning his stay in Santa Rosa. Yes, I can understand.)

Leo T. seemed to give his priests all the latitude that they needed to "do their thing."

Mike was so loved by all. He brought out the "youthfulness of spirit" in the people he touched. He demonstrated what the "incarnation" was all about. For that matter, so did all those other magnificent fellows, Gerry Cox, Mal Costa, Jack Butler, Louie Persano, Jack Brinkle, Jim Gaffey. I suspect the camaraderie sustained them all plus the parishioners who took to them with exuberance.

Under Bishop Hurley, Mike became chancellor. He was the "go to" guy. Mike was versatile on all quarters of the "diocesan playing field."

As it was to Greg McAllister, to my shock also, Mike became a monsignor. The DNA of my Rhet 57 class was not that way as so rightly did Greg understand the way we thought things were to be as priests. But I guessed Mike knew what he was doing. Mike was

willing to tread where angels feared to go. Mike certainly became one who exemplified what Jesus would do, in season and out, not only as priest but as Bishop of Juneau.

(Myself having been in administration, there now are times that I recognize that I should pray for those who take on this mantle of bishop. I am amazed that the AB of NY is saying that he is so excited about his taking on the "cardinal's hat". But I am not an all-knowing one and thus, to each their own. Somebody has to do it. Peter did it when Jesus was around, no?

From Santa Rosa, Mike went to Rome to be ordained bishop by the new Pope John Paul II and after that Mike went off to Juneau. Word has it that actually Mike was an appointee of Paul VI.

Mike has a sister here in Santa Rosa. I do not know where the other one is.

Mike did a fine job of "balancing" things after Bishop Maher went to San Diego c1969. The diocese started to get many Irish priests and some other "transplants" from here there and elsewhere. Many Santa Rosa natives appreciated the likes of a Mike for diocesan philosophy started to shift.) We had lost a lot of great guys but if the role of the Laity were more significantly allowed to flower forth prior to Vatican II, such losses might not have taken place for such ones were only able to participate in Church in a clerical way in their day I suspect. So there!

If Mike did not die in Jordan, he would have died in Juneau. He knew it. He had his crypt all set to receive him at some future date, but certainly not so suddenly. Mike was teased by friends. "Mike, another phone call from the Cardinal in LA? Five more years in Juneau?")

Mike was not your ordinary sort of bishop. He was in Iraq getting folks out of prison, in Washington DC, with Hunthausen (I had only gotten this via classmates.) testifying against nuclear weapons etc. etc. etc. I kept up with his doings partially via the Juneau diocesan *Inland Register*. In that group of Bishops was Bishop Tople.

Tople was bishop of Spokane. I got a great inside look into this saintly bishop's way of being bishop. When I went on retreats to Immaculate Heart Retreat House in the '70's, he and I one time connected at 6:00am in the retreat house kitchen over doughnuts and coffee.

The bishop used the corner telephone booths to make his call to various rectories to announce his visit. He had his dimes all lined up on the floor of his car. At first I thought that he had a hole in his sweater.

He had a damaged never repaired Chevy. The trunk was buckled. One could reach into the trunk if one so desired. He had sold the bishop's house. he had a small house with a "lean-to" garage that served as a refrigerator. He stored "beef heart" there. He cooked dinner. He would write me and say to me that he has not heard from me. I'd hop a plane to Spokane and there he would be waiting. His coat blowing in the wind. What a crew of bishops. Talk about Vatican II clergy, the incarnational ones.

Mike was ordained, as I said in '63. I came to Santa Rosa a few months later in August of '63 for the public school district had sent a letter to the Teacher Preparation Program at USF. They were looking for a Latin/Spanish teacher. The district took me. 32,000 people in Santa Rosa. Now, about 180,00.

Voila. This was a fortuitous happening for me in '63 since Mike Kenny, Manny Costa, Gerry Cox, Louie Persano, Jack Brinkle, Jim Gaffey and Jack Butler were all here. I was not among strangers. All named were in the sem in my time, 1951-1957 except for Butler and Cox, but Johnny Cox, Gerry's brother was at the sem in my time frame. Somewhere "out there" also in my time at St. Joe's was Jerry Brady. I may be missing some here.

There were other "go-get-hers" from Mt. Angel, St. John's Camarillo and also from Texas.

What a time. CFM (Christian Family Movement) was going "great guns". The Cursillo was "getting its legs". Gerry Cox was starting up a "Vatican II type parish", Resurrection. Altar encircled by congregants. Other Catholics called the parish "Insurrection". The Lay folks eventually learned to participate in the selection of their pastors later on. (Short-lived.) There was a large student exchange program between us and Mexico City. Our kids went there under several programs. Kids from there came here.

Gerry was loved not only by the so-called "Anglos" but also by the Hispanic community. He was involved in the founding of a Hispanic radio station, Catholic Charities. He helped with the development of California Corporation for Human Development. Big, big training program for Hispanics.

And then of course Mike, here, there, and everywhere, like a dervish. Mike set up a diocesan wide conference in Eureka. Lay folks were all "a-didder" with the excitement that their new found place in the Church as "lay people" was being acknowledged. Vatican II was "getting into gear." And of course Mike brought freshness, exuberance. (I had failed to mention Msgr. Jim Pulkskam, Larry Carolyn, Greg McAllister for they were not in my radar screen in those days.

All was well with God. Hooray!!! The priests showed up here and there for dinners and family invites and gatherings other-wise known as parties. Leo T. seemed simply to "give the oats and stepped aside." Yes, Leo T thought big!

Back to Juneau: A story was told us sem classmates at a reunion that one day Mike's altar server forgot his "inside" shoes at home. He had only his "outside shoes" (I need help here with naming such things). The "outside shoes" were something like "tennis rackets" to enable one to walk on soft snow. Apparently the kid was embarrassed. I am told that his parents were in the front pew.

Before Mass started and before Mike walked up the aisle accompanied by the little fellow, Mike took off his shoes and also walked up the aisle in stocking feet to celebrate Mass.

A flash-back to Santa Rosa: I believe it was on Christmas Eve, 1963, "Santa Claus" was directing traffic in the center of the street at the intersection of Farmer's Lane and Montgomery Drive. (St. Eugene's was re-designated the "Cathedral of St. Eugene".) Parishioners going to mid-night Mass just could not figure out who this person was doing such a thing. I think that the word had gotten out and the parishioners entering church that night, Mike's first year, just knew that they were being given a new gift. Mike evidenced the beginning of what was hoped to be the flowering forth of Vatican II. (Mike, pray for us.)

St. Irenaeus's words: "The glory of God is humanity fully alive." Go Mike!!!

It was the "Catholic Spring". Perhaps climate change is just re-orienting the seasons for us for indeed there has been a lengthy chill in the air.

Peace,

Jim

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**From:** Dennis Lucey [mailto:djl7@msn.com]

**Sent:** Monday, February 27, 2012

**Subject:** RE: INQUIRY ABOUT BISHOP MIKE KENNEY

**FROM DENNIS LUCY**

I had this obit from Feb. 27, 1995 Seattle newspaper.

I didn't know him in seminary days, tho knew of his legendary singing of Emitte Spiritum tuum et creaBUNtur. I met him at one of the first Alumni Days, and then visited him for a few days in Juneau, and accompanied him (Memorial Day Pentecost weekend) in kind of "a couple of days in the life of..." -- First Communion, Confirmation, visit to State Prison, three-parish picnic at the Shrine of St. Therese where he is buried.

(Note: The obituary has been posted at this website on the *In Memoriam* page.)

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**From: Thomas Brady** (written to Tom O'Rourke)

Tom....the Colonel that Tom O'Donnell refers to is our uncle Colonel Michael Buckley who has two Jesuit sons - Father Mike Buckley and Father Tom Buckley - and was the first American prisoner of war in Africa in WW II.

Tom Brady

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**From:** TOM O'ROURKE (written to Jim Murphy)

**Sent:** On Feb 28, 2012

**Subject:** RE: INQUIRY ABOUT BISHOP MIKE KENNEY

Jim,

Thank you much for your rapid response and for your info---for a guy who now can hardly remember his name on awakening, your data sheets are impressive. I can tell you that when I left St. Joe's in January, 1958 and wanted to attend Santa Clara University in engineering, I was ineligible because I was missing several prerequisites to enter the school in spring semester---no calculus etc. But Mike Kenny's dad, Art Kenny, was on the Board of Regents at Santa Clara University then---and guess what? Mike Kenny called his dad Art, and three days later I was able to enroll (in spite of the registrar's misgivings). A lot of hard make-up work in addition to the regular engineering load, but I graduated three and half years later. Mike Kenny, with

his dad Art, were my guardian angels! **And Col. Buckley, a military retiree who was then chair of the Santa Clara University math department (who had a son at the Jesuit novitiate in Los Gatos)**, tutored me one-on-one for the whole semester to help me play 'catch up' mathematically---another guardian angel!

Coincidence? I think not!!

Tom O'Rourke, R'59

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**From:** Fr. Al Larkin

**Sent:** Thursday, March 01, 2012

**Subject:** Re: HOW MIKE KENNEY BECAME BISHOP OF JUNEAU

Mike Kenny followed Frank Hurley in Juneau. Frank purchased a condo to live in with extra rooms so that priests would have a place to stay when they came to Juneau. He once said that his concern was that the world would close in on them; most all of them (some eleven or twelve) served in isolated spots. He would cover for them so they could get time off. This was before Internet; when weather was bad, the news, flown in on videotape, didn't make it and the TV station simply went off the air. Frank learned to fly so he could get around the diocese; there are no roads out of Juneau.

Frank also wrote the pope explaining why he thought communal absolution was important in a diocese like his. Not numbers but privacy. He also, together with Avery Dulles, voted against the Dallas Charter.

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**From:** TOM O'ROURKE

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 29, 2012

**To:** Thomas Sheehan; 'Tom McMahan'

**Subject:** Re: INQUIRY ABOUT BISHOP MIKE KENNEY

Tom McMahan and Tom Sheehan---

Thank you for your clarification in your having my addlement re the Maher brothers and the Hurley brothers corrected. And thanks for the mention of Jim Leininger (Bill's 'older brother'), who took my dad to AA every week for the better part of ten years after my mom had died, and we had moved to Oregon, and Dad could not drive. You are right on: friendships gained at St. Joe's in the '50s to the '60s were a gift for all of us, even to including the parents of the St. Joe's gang!

When we spent the day in Juneau with Michael Kenny in September '92, he told me that he felt he was doing what God wanted him to do in Santa Rosa in the decade of the '70s; so when Frank Hurley asked Michael if he would take on the bishopric of Juneau, Michael gently refused the offer. But 'within a month', Frank's brother Mark started twisting Michael's arm to take the Juneau offer. I vividly recall Michael saying that he could refuse the offer from Frank---but when Mark directly ordered Michael to consider the offer positively, Michael interpreted the offer as a command of sorts. Michael said that Mark was his direct superior "so I prayed earnestly for over a month before reluctantly agreeing to the Juneau job". Once there and safely 'bishop-ed', however, Michael quickly took on new and exciting new tasks---



acquiring a modest home in Juneau (not a bishop's mansion by any stretch); getting his private pilot's license so that he could avoid professional pilot's fees to reach the areas far away from Juneau that he wanted to serve; saying as many as five masses in five different mission stations all over southeast Alaska, in one day!---; working to denounce the 'clear-cut logging' then taking place in the area; and on and on!

We had arrived Juneau via cruise ship in the morning, and we decided to give Michael a 'cold call' to 'say hello'. Within ten minutes he arrived the docks to get us, took us to see his modest home (with his special, beautifully appointed 'prayer room' --prie dieu and all); stopped at the parish office to introduce us to his staff of 'one and a half volunteers'; to the church for the 12:15 weekday mass (where I was the stand-in altar boy); then to lunch at a surprisingly good Mexican place. Mike then drove us to Mendenhall Glacier to witness the 'wondrous beauty of God's creation'; then to see the University of Southeast Alaska about twenty miles outside of Juneau, where school was not in session (but the magnificent bald eagles were!). We made it back to the dock just as the last ship ramp was ready to be lifted at 3:00 p.m., with me urging Mike to 'fly' to the harbor instead of driving and with him telling me to 'have faith'. Of course we talked a blue streak the whole time. That stop was the last time I was able to witness and appreciate the goodness of the person known to us as cousin Mike!

Tom O'Rourke R'59

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**From:** Tom McMahon

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 28, 2012

**Subject:** Re: INQUIRY ABOUT BISHOP MIKE KENNEY

Tom O'R.... I just had a phone conversation with Jim Leininger with your name and others on my computer screen. Jim remembered and we spoke of the friendships of St. Joe's days as a gift.

As to your saying : Leo Maher (or maybe the 'other' brother, Bishop Maher from Anchorage)....Leo had a brother Ray who left priesthood for a while and married we think and then came back into priesthood quietly .The bishop of Anchorage , now retired there, is Frank Hurley and his brother was Mark, former bishop of Santa Rosa. Mark was a very successful pastor at St. John's in S.F. after Vatican Two but did not do well as a bishop. (this according to Jack Homer O'Hare who friended me when I wrote good things about Mark. Tom in San Jose