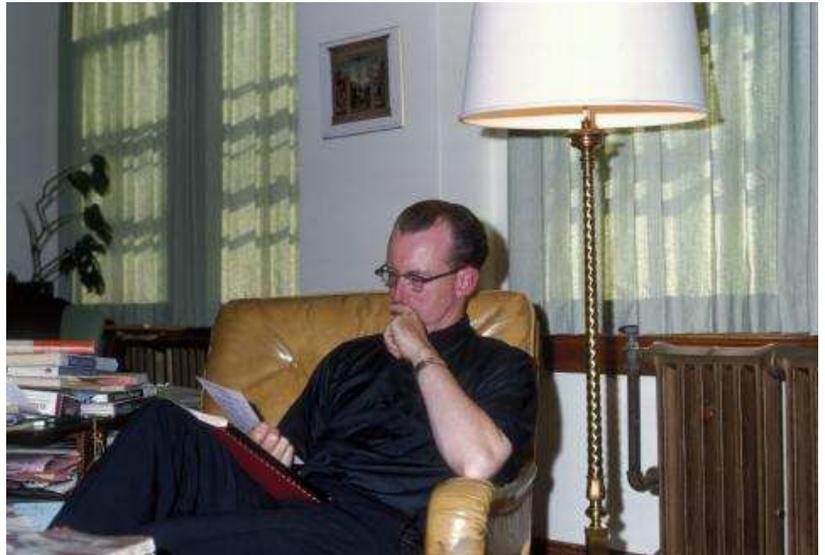


Rev. Maurice O'Neil, S.S.

Born: April 4, 1931
Ordained: May 18, 1957
Deceased: November 27, 1999



Funeral held Friday for Sulpician Fr. Maurice O'Neil, a native of Madrid North Country Catholic, December 8, 1999

Madrid - A Mass of Christian Burial for Father Maurice L. O'Neil, 68, was held Friday at St. John the Baptist Church with Msgr. Robert L. Lawler, diocesan administrator, officiating. Burial was in the family plot at St. Patrick's Cemetery Brasher Falls. Father O'Neil died Sunday, Nov. 27 at his home In Green Valley, Arizona.

A native of Madrid, Father O'Neil was born April 4, 1931, the son of James and Mary O'Brien O'Neil.

After graduation from Madrid High School in 1949, he attended Wadhams Seminary Hall in Ogdensburg and graduated from St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Md. He was ordained to the priesthood May 18, 1957, by Bishop Walter Kellenberg.

Father O'Neil served in many parishes in the north country as associate pastor: St. Joseph's in Massena; St. Patrick's, Watertown; Sacred Heart, Massena; St. Andrew's, Norwood; and St. Patrick's, Brasher Falls. He also served as temporary administrator at St. Bridget's in Trout River, and taught at Immaculate Heart Central School in Watertown and Holy Family High School in Massena.

In 1969, Father O'Neil joined the Sulpician Fathers and moved to California where he was involved with the education and training of diocesan priests.

In 1993, Father O'Neil moved to Arizona where he served as assistant pastor at Our Lady of the Valley in Green Valley, Arizona.

He later became pastor at the Sacred Heart Church in Wilcox, Ariz. before retiring in 1998. He returned to Green Valley and assisted in parish work.

Father O'Neil is survived by his sister, Rita O'Neil of Madrid; his brother and sister-in-law, Robert and Eleanor O'Neil of Madrid; four nieces and three nephews; and three great-nephews.

He was predeceased by two brothers: Gerald F. on Oct.5, 1987, and Donald J. April 28, 1997.

*Reflections on the
life and ministry of
Fr. Maurice O'Neil*

Editor's note: Father Leo Wiley, pastor in Croghan, delivered the homily at Father O'Neil's funeral. Excerpts follow:

Preparation for this homily has taken me down memory lane, a walk tinged with nostalgia. I was never able to teach Maurice to spell his name correctly though I tried because my maternal ancestors were O'Neill with two "l's". For this reason Maurice would introduce me to others as cousin and call me affectionately "cuz".

We were not only proud and regal in our Irish ancestry, we were formed by the same mentors. When Father Torn Owen, pastor of my home parish, died in October 1945, he was replaced by Father James Gainor, former pastor of the Madrid parish. Father Gainor had no small part in giving us encouragement to enter Wadhams Hall Seminary.

The priest who influenced Maurice most immediately and guided him to enter the seminary was Father Earl Taylor. Later as pastor of Morrisonville, Father Taylor helped me to weather the turmoil of the early "60's" and encouraged me to stay with my commitment to Priesthood.



We attended the same seminaries; Wadhams Hall and St. Mary's Baltimore. We were instructed and formed under the tutelage of Monsignors Devan, Joly, and Bailey. Then the Sulpician Fathers steadied us in theological formation, spiritual direction and recommended us to the respective Bishops of Ogdensburg who called us to Priesthood.

Thus we have been bonded in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ. Jesus was Maurice's portion in life, hope in the service he rendered to God's people and therefore we celebrate in thanksgiving his priestly ministry which began in this life and brings him to praise, thank and honor God forever.

I served briefly with Maurice in the parish of Sacred Heart in Massena. We had a happy household with the late Monsignor Berube, the late Father Billmeyer, Fathers Sestito, O'Neil and myself.

There I became convinced that Maurice had found the niche most satisfying, most ministerial to him. He was a teacher. He loved the classroom and his students. He was good at what he did. At the same time he ministered to parishioners with an ear to hear their troubles and compassion to respond to their needs.

For this reason when in 1969, Maurice decided to band with the Sulpicians, I was not surprised. We have had in the past and we have today several Priests of the Diocese who have been prepared and given themselves to the ministry of forming young men for service in the Priesthood.

However, when Maurice committed himself to serve with the company of Sulpician in the education, direction and formation of men for the Priesthood, I was pleased that he would sacrifice nearness to home, and proximity to fellow diocesan priests to repay the Society of St. Sulpice for the many gifts they had shared with us.

This academic service also afforded him time to travel. He was accompanied on these pilgrimages by mutual friends of ours. They enjoyed his company. They appreciated the work entailed in excursions. We who do travel and make pilgrimages know that they begin with a dream - to see a far-away place, to bask in places of which we have only read and to expand our appreciation of diverse settings and cultures. Then the details must be planned. The fullness of joy comes with the trip itself.

The worldly event has an effect on our spiritual life also. Raised in a family of Catholic Faith, Maurice formed in mind and heart a dream of entering eternity. With proper direction he disciplined himself through prayer, Word and Eucharist to serve with Jesus Christ, High Priest.

Now absent from our lives we celebrate the fulfillment of his dream of eternal peace and joy

With thanks to:

Mark Mosher, C'1983 for sending this obituary file and the ordination picture.

Phil Murphy, H'1973 for the color picture of Fr. O'Neil.

If anybody has some good pictures of Fr. O'Neil, please contact me. It would be great to post a few more.

Thanks, Chuck, R'1960 CPSmith@garlic.com