



Br. Daniel Michael Thomas O.P.

June 9, 1942 - December 18, 2020

Daniel was born on June 6, 1941 in Oakland, California. He attended Bishop O'Dowd High School, then staffed by the Adrian Dominican Sisters. In his senior year a priest came to the school to meet with students interested in the priesthood. Daniel rose from his seat to attend the meeting, but the Dominican Sister said, "Michael, you are not smart enough to be a priest, sit down!" Upon reflection, and after graduation, he decided to enter the Dominican Brothers Novitiate in Kentfield, Marin County, California. Daniel went on to serve many decades as a brother, but he transformed that vocation in ways never dreamed of when he first entered.

Following Kentfield, where he also served as cook, a vocation that stayed with him in all his assignments including many summers cooking for the student brothers at McKenzie Bridge, he went to St. Albert's in Oakland, where he expected to serve as porter for the rest of his life. But under the influence of Br. Antoninus Everson, he developed an interest in printing, and founded Albertus Magnus Press, publishing innumerable pamphlets and cards for several years.

In 1969 he joined the first Dominicans to staff the ASU Newman Center in Tempe, Arizona. He fast became notorious for riding his flat-tubed bicycle around campus with habit flowing and a dog in the front basket. Pictures and articles often appeared in the local press.

While in Tempe, he developed his unique artistic sense, putting together huge banners some 20 by 30 feet wide behind the altar. One nativity scene was

composed of thousands of hand painted rice Chex, glued to cloth and finished only hours before midnight mass.

During his Tempe days he also developed dramatic skills and directed a student production of Jesus Christ Superstar. He brought down the house when he came onstage as Herod, wearing purple flowing robes and shining sequined high heels.

In 1977 several members of the Province wanted to form an “intentional community” fostering a more intense community life and simplicity. Along with Cassian Lewinsky and Denis Reilly, they became the first Dominicans in Ashland, Oregon. The biggest civic event in Ashland was always the Fourth of July Parade and Daniel’s float often won first prize.

In 1982 he joined the community at UC Riverside. While there, he began a ministry called, “Beyond Banners”, traveling across the country and throughout Europe, giving lectures on creative liturgical practice, especially quality preaching. During these years he was also involved in the Western Province Drama group, “The Priory Players”, which put on plays across the Western states. His most recognized role was as the elderly declining pastor in Mass Appeal, his portrayal often judged superior to Jack Lemmon’s portrayal in the movie.

In 1990 He was made Director of St. Benedict Lodge in McKenzie Bridge, Oregon, the first brother to have that role. The Lodge had fallen on hard times and Br. Daniel transformed it into a recognized retreat center, eliminating groups such as fraternities that only wanted to use it as a party venue. He soon was able to book the lodge year-round. He set up a systematic reservation system, he single-handedly raised funds to build a much-needed new house for the friars, and installed new roofs, windows and doors throughout the facility. But most important was his design for a remodeled chapel, providing fellowship space for the Sunday congregation.

Often during these years a priest was lacking for Sunday liturgies and Daniel had to conduct a communion service. But these were no simple communion services. They included a full range of music, readings, reflection and the

reception of the Sacrament. People often commented that Br. Daniel's "services" were better than most priests!

After fifteen years as director Daniel felt called to one last career change. He went to serve in the Eastern Provinces' mission in Kenya, Africa where he spent seven years. He was put in charge of several construction projects, as well as serving as a liturgical minister at several missions, often having to fill in for a priest delayed on the journey.

After Africa, he returned to St Dominic's, San Francisco as sacristan, but soon his health declined, and he died on December 18, 2020.

Tribute Wall



“ *Br. Daniel Michael Thomas O.P.*

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