



## Fr. Eugene William Sousa O.P.

December 25, 1931 - May 18, 2025

Fr. Eugene Sousa, OP, a friar of the Western Dominican Province, died peacefully in his sleep on May 18, 2025. He was born in Berkeley, CA, the third of four children of John Renauld and Hester Ann (Marratta) Sousa and named William. He attended St. Mary Magdalen elementary school and St. Mary's High School in Berkeley, before graduating from St. Mary's College, Moraga, in 1952. Having been impressed by the Dominican friars at St. Mary Magdalen parish and desiring to give his life completely to God, he entered the Dominican novitiate the same year and was ordained in 1958.

Fr. Eugene impressed his brothers with his kindness, prudence and administrative skills. After serving as associate pastor at St. Dominic's, San Francisco and St. Dominic's, Benicia, he was appointed superior and pastor at the Catholic campus ministry at the University of Oregon. During the tumultuous post-Vatican Council years, he was elected to two terms as prior of the Priory of St. Albert the Great, Oakland.

After completing his second term, he asked to be sent to Ocosingo, in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, to work among the Maya in the Dominican mission originally founded in the 1500s by Bartolomé de las Casas, OP. In addition to pastoral work, he helped oversee the hospital built by the province and was appointed vicar provincial of the mission in 1977. In 1982, after a coup d'etat in Guatemala, Fr. Eugene and three other friars and two religious sisters helped organize assistance for 13,000 refugees who, fleeing the genocide of indigenous people in their country, sought refuge in Chiapas. In an attempt to

undermine the missionaries, Fr. Eugene was anonymously and falsely accused of smuggling arms.

Returning from Mexico in 1984, St. Dominic's, Benicia, a rapidly growing parish filled with young families, was entrusted to his care. He requested a sabbatical in 1990 in the continuing education for clergy program at Notre Dame and in his letter of recommendation, the prior provincial at the time wrote, "He has been one of the outstanding leaders of the province for the past 20 years."

After his sabbatical, Fr. Eugene served as parochial vicar at the UC Riverside Catholic campus ministry. When the Dominican pastor of Most Holy Rosary parish in Phoenix, AZ, was elected prior provincial, one of his first acts was to request the bishop appoint Fr. Eugene as his replacement. He wrote, "Fr. Sousa has a wealth of administrative experience gained from previous assignments as pastor and superior and the years he directed the Dominican mission in Chiapas. He is a charming, capable, and talented man and a dedicated priest. We Dominicans seldom have the opportunity to choose those who will follow us when we undertake new responsibilities, so I take special pleasure in nominating Fr. Sousa to succeed me."

After three years in his next assignment as parochial vicar in Los Angeles, Fr. Eugene became the chaplain to the Dominican nuns at Corpus Christi Monastery, Menlo Park, whom he served until his retirement.

Fr. Eugene's brother, John R. Sousa, Jr., and sister, Muriel C. Sousa, who became Sr. Mary Rose Therese, PVBM, preceded him in death. He is survived by his younger sister, Patricia (Sousa) Wood, with whom he was always close and who remembers him fondly as her "gentle man," and eight nieces and nephews and their children.

A vigil will be held at St. Dominic Catholic Church, 475 E. I St., Benicia, CA, on Monday, June 2 at 7:30 PM. A funeral Mass will be held at the same location Tuesday, June 3, at 10:30 AM. Burial will follow at St. Dominic's cemetery in Benicia. A memorial fund has been established to honor Fr. Eugene. Gifts will support the education of Fr. Eugene's Dominican brothers

still in formation. Please donate online at <https://opwest.org/freugenesousa>.

# Previous Events

## Vigil Service

JUN 2. 7:00 AM (PT)

St Dominic's Catholic Church  
475 E I St  
Benicia, CA 94510  
(707) 747-7220

## Mass of Christian Burial

JUN 3 (PT)

St Dominic's Catholic Church  
475 E I St  
Benicia, CA 94510  
(707) 747-7220