

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

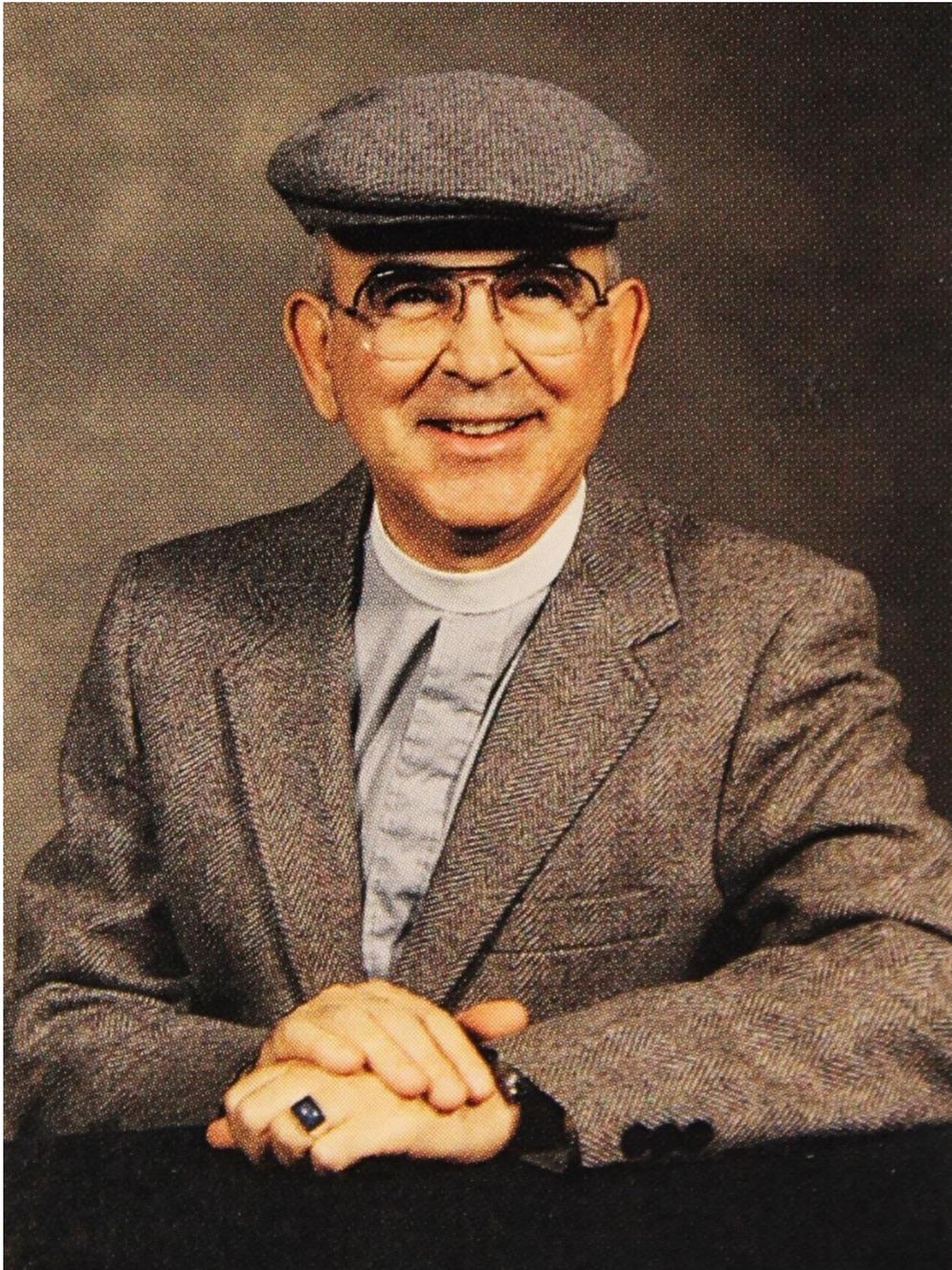
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THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF FATHER MICHAEL TAMBURI

Material for this Article was taken in part from the Archives of Sacred Heart Parish, Anderson



Father A. Michael Tamburi

Born on April 27, 1932, Michael Tamburi was the only son of Anthony and Teresa Tamburi, Italian immigrants who lived in Hartford, Connecticut. His father had been a supervisor at a local paper factory but died when Michael was only three months old. His mother, benefitting from her husband's frugal lifestyle, continued to raise Michael until she too died when he was eight years old.

Michael is raised by his Older Sister

It became the responsibility of Delia Lecko, Michael older sister, to provide for him and raise him to adulthood. He attended Saint Joseph Cathedral School through his grammar school and junior high years.



Photo from the seminary website

Saint Thomas Seminary, Bloomfield, CT

Michael then enrolled as a day student at Saint Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Connecticut, which was at that time both a seminary and a boys' high school. After finishing his junior year, Michael responded to the call to be a priest and continued his senior year and first two years of college at Saint Thomas as a boarding seminarian. He then transferred to Saint Bernard Seminary in Rochester, NY where he continued his studies for the priesthood.

Ordained a Priest in 1959

On May 7, 1959, Michael was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Hartford with 29 other deacons at Saint Lawrence O'Toole Church, Hartford. Saint Joseph Cathedral had burned down the previous year so Saint Lawrence Church was temporarily used as the diocesan cathedral. Some of his contemporaries at that time included Father Charles Curran of the Diocese of Rochester, a well-known theologian and Chair of Moral Theology at Catholic University of America, and Father Richard McBrien, professor at Notre Dame University and author of the two volume work *Catholicism*.

First Assignments as a Priest

Father Tamburi's first assignment was Saint Jerome Parish in New Britain, CT where he served for nine months. He was transferred to Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Harwinton, CT and then to Saint Francis Parish in Naugatuck, CT.

Beginning Ministry at the Birth of Vatican II

Father Michael's early experiences as a priest took place just as Vatican II was beginning. In his first parish, Mass was celebrated in temporary facilities and by necessity, the priest faced the people. Later, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, he worked under a pastor who was quick to implement the liturgical changes brought about by Vatican II.

A Leave of Absence

In 1969, after first ten years of ordained ministry, Father Michael asked for a leave of absence from active ministry and enrolled at Southern Connecticut State College in courses of art and architecture. He had the unique position of being both a student and a part-time instructor. He taught several classes in philosophy and logic to some of his fellow classmates in his art and architecture classes.

Graphic Arts Designer

After completing his studies, he began work for a design studio as a graphic designer, continuing his part-time teaching as well. While working in the design area, one of his students who was employed by Sikorsky Aircraft requested his assistance on a marketing proposal for his company. Through this contact Michael eventually went to work for Sikorsky Aircraft in the marketing department and became the supervisor for the marketing graphics group.

Second Thoughts about Priesthood

During the five years at Sikorsky Aircraft, Michael Tamburi began feeling a call to return to active ministry and made inquiries about the possibilities to return in different dioceses. While on leave, he had always kept in close contact with his archbishop in Hartford. Friends encouraged him to go west to California and make efforts to become re-involved there.

Graphic Designer in Los Angeles

Michael moved to the Los Angeles area and while working part-time in graphic design for a printing company, he met a Jesuit priest with whom he became close friends. As it happened, this priest was a good friend of Bishop Francis Quinn in Sacramento. Taking his priest friend's advice, Michael applied to the Diocese of Sacramento by personal letter to Bishop Quinn.

Bishop Quinn Responds to Michael's Request



Bishop Quinn responded to Michael's letter within a few days inviting him to Sacramento for an interview. After a session with the Diocesan Priests' Personnel Board, Bishop Quinn decided to welcome Father Tamburi back into the active ministry. Michael temporarily took up residence at Saint James Parish in Davis. The diocese encouraged Michael to enroll in the Vatican II Institute at St Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park as a refresher and update.

Completing his studies at the Institute in April 1983, Father Tamburi received an invitation from Father Michael Kiernan to "come on up to Anderson, and stay with us awhile."

Father Tamburi Goes to Sacred Heart Parish, Anderson



Photo by John E Boll 2007

Sanctuary of Sacred Heart Church, Anderson

Father Tamburi came to Anderson and stayed. Bishop Quinn allowed him to remain in Anderson for a while. After a short time in Anderson, Father Tamburi remarked that he had found “a wonderful sense of a loving community which affirmed his ministry as a priest.”

One of his special pastoral talents was his one-on-one ministry. Father Michael suffered from diabetes which had been diagnosed a couple years prior. As a result of his need to pay careful attention to his health, he developed a holistic approach to health and spirituality. Those who came to him for counseling received not only spiritual advice but also concern for their physical health. His own physical infirmity made him especially aware of the need to integrate spirituality in one’s life in order to become whole human person.

The Corporate World

Father Michael came from a background of structure and order. His experiences in the corporate business world gave him a keen perception of the world and he learned to hone his skills in taking care of details, especially the little things in life. He often cooked the main meal for Father Kiernan and himself and developed a practical sense of quality of life. He played “father” to Ms. Calico and her three kittens, Tom, Dick and Harry, whom he took special care of at the back door to his quarters in the rectory.

Father Michael said he was fond of the liturgy of Vatican II but still had a yearning for some of the elements of the older tradition which seemed to have disappeared from the church. He also contrasted the sometimes ruthlessness of corporate business life with a more loving sense of community which he found in Anderson. He remarked that “he had found the Anderson

community instrumental in his spiritual growth as a person and priest, and found in some of the challenges of parish life the catalyst to be and act as one of Christ's followers."

In 1984, while serving in the Anderson parish, Father Michael celebrated his 25th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood.

Administrator of Tulelake for Four Years

In 1989, Bishop Quinn appointed Father Tamburi to Holy Cross Parish, Tulelake, as administrator of the parish. After his arrival, he used his talents in graphic art to create parish stationary as well as a weekly parish bulletin.

Watching his diet carefully and self-medicating himself according to his blood sugar level, he kept in check his diabetic condition. However, on Thursday, October 21, 1993, while working at his desk in the Tulelake parish office, Father Michael's heart suddenly stopped and he quietly slipped away. When he failed to show up for Mass that day, a parishioner went to the parish house looking for him. Father Michael was found dead in the parish office, sitting in his chair and slumped over his desk.

Two Funeral Masses Celebrated

Bishop Quinn drove to Tulelake to celebrate a Funeral Mass for Father Michael with the Holy Cross community. The following day, he celebrated a second Funeral Mass in Sacred Heart Church, Anderson. Father Tamburi was laid to rest in a crypt at Saint Joseph Cemetery in Redding.



Photo by John E Boll 2013

Holy Cross Church and Rectory, Tulelake, where Father Michael Died in 1993

At the age of 62, Father Tamburi's life ended suddenly and without warning as he sat at his office desk in Tulelake preparing a homily for Mass. During his years of active ministry he touched the lives of many people in very practical ways. His life in the business world helped him understand what people go through in the everyday world of work. He was compassionate toward others and wise in his counsel. For those who did not know Father Michael, they missed a good priest who had many gifts to share.

**ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO MICHAEL, O LORD, AND
LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON HIM.**

**MAY HIS SOUL AND THE SOULS OF ALL THE
FAITHFUL DEPARTED THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD
REST IN PEACE.**

AMEN

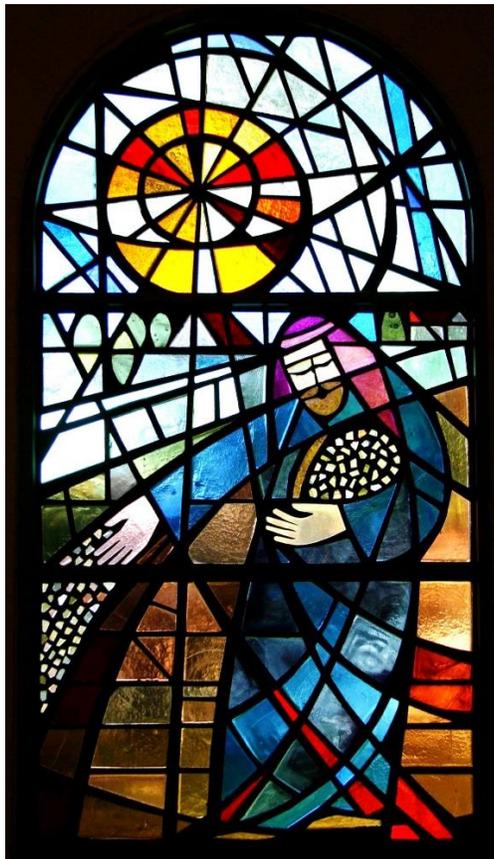


Photo by John E Boll

Window of the Sower, Sacred Heart Church, Anderson