

Biography of Ernest Larkin, O.Carm.

Ernest E. Larkin was born in Chicago on August 19, 1922. He entered Mt. Carmel College, Niagara Falls, Ontario as a high school seminarian, and graduated in June, 1939. He went to the Carmelite novitiate in New Baltimore, PA, made first profession of vows in 1940, and graduated from Mt. Carmel College with a B. A. in philosophy in June, 1943. He was ordained a priest on June 8, 1946. Larkin's theological studies at Whitefriars in Washington, D.C. were completed in June, 1947. He did post-graduate work in English literature at Catholic University during the summers. Larkin completed his graduate studies in theology at the *Angelicum* (St. Thomas University), Rome, and was awarded the STD in 1954.

Father Larkin was assigned to Whitefriars, the major seminary of the Order, where he served as teacher, spiritual director and, eventually, master of students from 1951 to 1959. During this period, Father Larkin also gave retreats, taught scripture and theology during the summers at Corpus Christi, TX and St. Mary's College in Winona, MN, and served as director of the Lay Carmelites associated with Whitefriars Hall. In 1959, Larkin was appointed lecturer in ascetical and mystical theology at The Catholic University of America where he continued as assistant and then associate professor until his resignation in 1971. During this period, he also taught in the M.A. program for novice mistresses at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, and presented his first paper to the Catholic Theological Society of America, "The Role of Creatures in the Spiritual Life" (1962). At this same time he was consulting editor in the ascetical-mystical area for the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* in which several of his articles were published.

During his tenure at Catholic University Larkin gave addresses at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, Mt. Carmel College in Niagara Falls, Vanderbilt University and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men in Mundelein, IL. He spoke at several meetings of the Canon Law Society of America as well as at the Sister Formation Conference(s). Numerous articles he had written were published in a wide range of periodicals during this period. He was active within his own Carmelite Community, serving on the provincial council from 1966 to 1972, with special responsibilities in the area of spiritual life. He was elected a delegate to the General Chapter of the Order in Rome in 1965, 1968, 1971, and 1983.

In February of 1970, physical health problems forced a medical leave for the semester. In June of that year, Larkin was invited by the first bishop of Phoenix, AZ, Edward A. McCarthy, to be theologian-in-residence in the newly-created diocese. He took a leave of absence for the academic year, 1970-1971, and in the fall of 1971, he resigned his position at Catholic University to reside permanently in Phoenix. In 1972, Fr. Larkin co-founded Kino Institute which was established as the Phoenix diocesan school of adult religious education for clergy, religious and laity. He was the first president, and helped frame the Institute's goals and purposes. The enrollment grew to 1780 students within two years throughout 68 different locations in Phoenix.

During the 1970's, Larkin gave many retreats and workshops throughout the country and abroad, including the Far East. He did a two-month teaching and preaching tour that began in Rome and covered the principal cities of Australia. (1974) He taught summer school at St. Louis University (1978) and Creighton University, Omaha (1979). Larkin was also Bishop McCarthy's liaison with the Catholic Charismatic Movement in Phoenix. Several of Larkin's papers were published during this period, and the ground-breaking book, **Spiritual Renewal of the**

American Priesthood, commissioned by the Bishops' Conference, was published in 1973. Larkin was co-editor and wrote the final draft. (This book was "required reading" for every priest in the United States as directed by the Bishops' Conference.)

In the 1980's Larkin's ministry included renewal programs at Notre Dame for Retreats International and the Continuing Education Program for Clergy as well as ongoing formation programs for Carmelites in Rome. He relocated to Chicago in 1981, and from there he spent the next six years teaching, preaching and writing. He was consultant for the spirituality section of the international review *Concilium*, and for the Center for Human Development, Washington, D.C. These years also saw the publication of two books by Father Larkin, **Silent Presence** (1981), a discussion of the process and problem of discernment, and **Christ Within Us** (1984), a book of essays exploring the "contemporary experience of Christ, Church and self."

In 1982, Larkin was a founding member of the Carmelite Forum, a group of scholars from both observances engaged in studying and promoting Carmelite Spirituality. Their annual seminars, held at St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, have drawn clergy and laity from all parts of the country. Larkin's presentations have been published in periodicals and collections of the seminars, as well as in audio cassettes. (ICS Publications)

Father Larkin returned to Phoenix in September, 1987, as a "retired Carmelite", and was able to choose his own ministries. His activities centered on retreats, teaching, conducting workshops and lectures at home and abroad. His professional travels took him to Rome, Ireland and Zimbabwe. Father Larkin continued to write and publish, maintaining his permanent office at Kino Institute where he taught classes in spirituality as well as the integrative seminars required for advanced certification. The School of Spirituality, originally founded by Fr. Larkin and continued by J.J. McCarthy, O.Carm., was reinstated in 1994 and School of Spiritual Direction was begun at Kino by Larkin in 1996. He was advisor and head of the Board of Directors for this ecumenical program which also served other Christian denominations in the Valley.

On the 25th anniversary of the Phoenix diocese (1994), Larkin was one of twenty-five to be honored with the Diocesan Ministry Award. He received first prize from the Catholic Press Association in the category of articles on spirituality for his paper, "Jubilee Spirituality", published in *Spiritual Life*, 45 1 (Spring, 1999). "Larkin Hall" on the Kino Institute campus in Phoenix was dedicated to him by Bishop O'Brien in the fall of 2001. The name for the building which housed classrooms and faculty offices was selected by unanimous vote of the faculty and staff.

Father Larkin was honored at a banquet celebrating his inspiration and leadership of The Forum at St. Mary's in Notre Dame in June, 2000. Members of his family, friends and colleagues joined to honor Fr. Ernie on the happy occasion. Eight members of The Forum traveled to Spain in September of 2002 to visit places made "sacred" for them by John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. The "pilgrims" shared their experiences there with the participants of the June, 2003 Forum. Members of the Forum contributed to the book **Carmelite Prayer** (Paulist Press, 2003), which was dedicated to Fr. Ernie with the words: "His life, ministry and scholarship have greatly enriched our lives and those of countless others."

Father Larkin was the spiritual director and animator for the Cornerstone Center for Christian Meditation in Phoenix from its inauguration in 1998. He conducted classes and workshops on contemplative prayer and led groups of laity and clergy in this contemporary method of prayer popularized by John Main. Several groups throughout the city and in various

locations in Arizona were formed as a result of Larkin's "parent" venture. His last book entitled **Contemplative Prayer for Today - Christian Meditation** (Medio Media, 2007) was published posthumously and presented at the first United States national conference of WCCM in February, 2007.

Larkin made a last "pilgrimage" the summer before his death. With his brother Jack, O.Carm., they visited Avila and Granada where his beloved Teresa and John had lived and labored. He returned "home" to Phoenix where he began treatments for cancer which proved to be too widespread to be contained. His Father, *Abba*, as Ernie prayed, called this beloved son to Himself on the morning of 26 October 2006.

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