

FATHER BASIL DIES AT BOYHOOD HOME*
Returned to Meadville, Penna. To Regain His Health
(from *The Sword*, November 1948)

The Very Reverend Basil R. Kahler, O.Carm., pastor of St. Cecilia Church, Englewood, N. J., died Friday, September 3, at 10 P.M. His death took place at the Spencer Memorial Hospital in Meadville, Pennsylvania; a sister's hospital, named after the man who endowed it. Father Basil was ill since January and in March was removed to his boyhood home in the Allegheny Mountains in hope of regaining his health.

Father Basil was born on March 11, 1879, in Meadville, Pennsylvania, one of four children. He entered the Carmelite Order at St. John's Priory, New Baltimore, Pennsylvania, at the age of fifteen. Because of his exceptional abilities in the preparatory studies Father Basil was sent to Rome for courses in philosophy and theology. On May 24, 1902, at the age of twenty-three he was ordained in the Holy City.

During his early years in the priesthood, Father Basil conducted missions in the East, Midwest, and Canada and became nationally known for rare oratorical gifts. In the spring of 1913 Father Basil was assigned to help form a new parish in Bogota, N. J. He celebrated the first Mass in the Parish on June 1, 1913. In 1915 he began work on the present combination church and school at the corner of Fort Lee Road and Palisade Ave.

During Father Basil's early years as a priest he was chosen by the Priors and Definitors of the Order to complete the unexpired term of the Very Reverend Dionysius Best as provincial of the Carmelite Order, and he was thrice re-elected to the office in the chapters of 1915, 1918, and 1921. These ten years were marked by strenuous endeavor and very satisfactory results. Besides caring for the affairs of the province Father Basil was very active in Missionary work. He is well known from the Atlantic seaboard to the Mississippi for his apostolic zeal and convincing oratory. On September 4, 1919, as provincial, Father Basil sailed for Rome on the French Liner La Lorraine where he represented the American Province of the Carmelite Order in the General chapter of the Order held in that City during the week of October 12, 1919.

Later he was appointed pastor of St. Cyril's Church, Chicago, Ill. He remained in this pastorage until 1936 when he was called to St. Cecilia's in Englewood where he stayed until his death. Here he was loved and respected by all who came in contact with him. He will long be remembered by all as a figure of kindness and quiet authority.

Father Basil was a man of giant stature and corresponding strength. In his youth he excelled in athletics and ever retained an active interest in outdoor life. His parish administration was marked by unsparing devotion to the school youth and the sick and aged. His parishioners will miss his cheery smile and words of friendliness as he stood at the front door of the Church each Sunday morning. He will long be remembered for leaving the Parish in first class condition and free of debt. His circle of friends included persons of all ranks and denominations, for his ready sympathy and warming smile dissolved all barriers of rank and class. He always had a special

place in his heart for St. Cecilia's parish. In 1920 while he was the Provincial he was present at the unveiling and crowning of our Lady of Lourdes statue on the school grounds. He was always an enthusiastic participant in the Holy Name rallies in Englewood.

During his illness in Meadville, Father Basil had his family about him and received the most tender care from them. Up until his death he persisted in his devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The last words spoken on his deathbed were to his Heavenly Mother. "I've always been good to you, now I hope you'll be good to me." Survivors of Father Basil are two sisters, Mrs. Ruth Smith, and Mrs. Catherine Kukis both with families living in Meadville. A younger brother, Charles, an official of American Locomotive Co., of Schenectady, died a few years ago.

A Mass was celebrated in Meadville for Father Basil and attended by all his friends in his home town. The body was returned on Tuesday, September 7th, to St. Cecilia Church. Hundreds viewed the body lying in state in the church on Wednesday. The Office of the Dead was chanted on Wednesday night, September 8th, by the priests of the surrounding parishes, and this ceremony was attended by many of the faithful.

Due to the crowds who wished to pay their final respects to their renowned pastor a Mass was celebrated at 8:30 for the children and a solemn high Requiem Mass was offered at 10 :00. Father Hilary Doswald, the former Superior General of the Order and class-mate of Father Basil, was the celebrant, assisted by Father Peter Kramer, Pastor of St. John's in Leonia, and Father Dominic Lickteig, our future pastor here at St. Cecilia's. Father Hugh Austin was master of ceremonies. While the Solemn Mass was being offered at the main altar three low Masses were being celebrated at the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and Little Flower altars by Father James McGill, Father Walter Poynton and Father Alan Crowley respectively. An Honor Guard of Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus of which Father Basil was a member stood at attention at the casket throughout the Mass. The Mass was attended by two Monsignors, a large number of priests from all over this country and Canada, officials of the City and a capacity crowd of friends. The Very Reverend Leo Walter, newly elected Provincial of the Order was the speaker at the conclusion of the Mass. He paid tribute to the character and qualities of our late Pastor and stressed his accomplishments in his administration of the parish. The Casket was then carried out of the church by the clergy of the parish. Interment followed at Mount Carmel Cemetery, Tenafly where the prayers were led by the Very Reverend Matthew O'Neill.

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