

FUNERAL HOMILY
for
THE MOST REV. KILIAN HEALY, O.CARM.

by The Most Rev. John Mallley, O.Carm.

Father Kilian Healy, O.Carm, at Carmelite Monastery of Discalced Carmelite Nuns,
Danvers MA USA - May 23, 2003

As I speak of Father Kilian Healy this morning, I would begin by asking each one of you a question: what word or phrase would you use to sum up his life? Reflect for a moment:

as a member of his personal family, as a Carmelite brother or sister, as one who knew him as a friend through his daily Mass at the shopping center chapel — how would you describe his life in a word or a phrase?

The phrase that I would use to describe Kilian is his own, the title given to his first book:

WALKING WITH GOD. To me those words describe Kilian. a person who was constantly "walking in the presence of a living and loving God" throughout his life. He was so mindful of the words of the Prophet Elijah in the second book of Kings: "God lives, in whose presence I stand," and of the words of St. John in his first letter: "God is love, and he who lives in love lives in God, and God in him."

To that phrase, "Walking with God," I would only add these words to describe Kilian further: "Walking with God in simplicity and sincerity." Kilian was a very humble person, honest and good. Whether in his habit or in his clerics, the old adage was true about him: "What you see is what you get."

Of course, though, Kilian was from Worcester, so close to Boston, and he had two major faults or passions, he loved his Red Sox, and he loved his ice cream!

Regretfully I cannot speak of his parents, family or early life in Worcester. We are grateful that his brother-in-law Raymond Foley, and his nephews Raymond and Richard with his wife Susan are here with us today. Suffice it to say that because of the quality of Kilian's life, a life that all of us so greatly respected and admired, we know that his parents, Lawrence and Abby, and his sisters Marion and Margaret, and his brothers, Lawrence and James, must all have been individuals of the highest integrity and value.

This morning, then, I would speak of Kilian's life as a Carmelite. Very simply, he was professed on August 15, 1931 at eighteen years of age. He studied Philosophy and Theology at the international Carmelite College of St. Albert in Rome, and he was ordained on July 11, 1937 at the age of twenty four. He continued his studies for a doctorate in Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University until 1939 when he was

forced to return home because of the beginning of World War II.

There were three specific areas to his priestly life: (1) as a teacher from 1939-1959; (2) as Prior General from 1959-1971; (3) as a simple priest from 1971 until his death last Sunday.

1) Teacher (1939-1959) - Kilian taught Theology at Whitefriars Hall in Washington to a generation of Carmelites. His field was primarily dogmatic Theology, and he was highly admired and always respected as a teacher. During these years at Whitefriars, he began his strongest friendships with some of his Carmelite brothers: Roland Murphy, Joachim Smet, Eamon Carroll and many others.

In 1950 he returned to Rome to finish his doctorate at the Gregorian University. He wrote about contemplative prayer in the Carmelite tradition according to the Reform of Tournaine. He later published this work as a book with the title "Walking with God." At the General Chapter of 1953, he was elected an Assistant General of the Order for the English-speaking world, and this meant that he now would be teaching in Latin for the following six years at St. Albert College in Rome. His mentor and inspiration during those years was Father Bartholomew Xiberta from Catalonia in Spain, a legendary theologian and teacher.

On a personal note, I first met Kilian a month after that General Chapter. On October 15, 1953, he came to Naples to meet four of us seminarians from the United States as we arrived by boat from New York to begin our theological studies at St. Albert. He was so concerned about our well-being and brought us to Carmine Maggiore for a meal before our train ride to Rome.

I spent the following four years at the College where Kilian was teaching, and the courses that he taught were primarily the Sacraments in General and the Eucharist. I was privileged during my ordination year to take his course on the Eucharist. This subject matter was such a strong and vibrant part of his life. He truly lived what he taught as he shared his personal belief in Christ present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the love of God exemplified in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I remember so well his concern in November 1956 soon after my own ordination, I got sick with tuberculosis. Kilian was a key figure in arranging for me to go to Switzerland for four months to help my recovery.

2) Prior General (1959 - 1971) At the General Chapter of the Order in September 1971, Kilian succeeded Father Kilian Lynch of Ireland and the New York Province as the 86th Prior General. He brought his own personal style to being General, more simple and more personally concerned.

His first six years in office were very happy ones for Kilian. Pope John XXIII had been elected in 1958 and had brought great respect to the Church and the priesthood. There were many vocations to the Order in Europe and the United States, and St. Albert's was filled to overflowing. The missions were flourishing, and monasteries of cloistered

Carmelite Nuns were springing up in Spain, Italy, the United States and in countries of the Third World. Various congregations, like the Carmelite Sisters of the Aged and Infirm, were growing throughout the world. There was excellent support for the General Council by the members of our American Province. It was a good time to be the General of the Order.

Early during his first term, the Second Vatican Council began at St. Peter's in Rome, and Kilian attended every session until its closing in 1965. As General of the Carmelites, he was a member of the Papal Family, and he automatically had the privilege of attending the Council, like the Generals of the other ancient Orders in the Church as the Benedictines, Dominicans and Franciscans. He was an excellent representative for the Carmelites because he was a theologian and he spoke Latin (the official language of the Council and there were no simultaneous translations) and Italian perfectly. He used to laugh when he remembered those days and his good friend, Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston, who did not understand a word that was being said. He mentioned that he was soon going home, and he did not return!

After the 1965 General Chapter, with the help of the new Assistant General, Father Richard Nagle of New York, Kilian was responsible for transferring the residence of the General Council from St. Albert's College to its present site (the former Collegio Pio Decimo) - an action for which the present General, Joseph Chalmers, and myself are sincerely grateful.

The last six years of Kilian's term were different and more difficult, and they brought him much pain and suffering. During the final years of the 1960's, there were many drastic changes in society, in the Church and in religious life. There were misunderstandings and disagreements over the meaning of the Council. Many Carmelites left the priesthood in the United States, Holland, Spain, Italy and Ireland. Kilian sincerely felt the anguish of each one who left. During these years, he was "walking with God" under the shadow of the Cross.

3) Simple Priest (1971 - 2003) The final thirty years of his life were back home in the Province. First he was at Carmel Hall with the students at Marquette University during the 1970's, and those years were agonizing for anyone involved in formation. Still Kilian was a bastion of traditional values and a beacon of steadiness and stability for the young students. Later he had a brief stay at Whitefriars Hall

In 1978 I was Provincial, and when I visited Kilian in Washington, I asked him if he would consider coming to Peabody to do ministry at the Shopping Center Chapel. There were many reasons for this possible transfer: 1) for his own health and well-being, because living in a formation house during such a period of transition had to be trying, 2) the need for a steady, stable influence in the Peabody community, and I felt that it would be an excellent place to use his gifts: daily Mass and homily, hearing confessions, giving spiritual direction, and 3) the opportunity to be close to his family in Worcester. Kilian's response to my request was typical - - even though he could have chose any house in the Order: "John, wherever you want me to go!" Truly a man

"walking with God in simplicity and sincerity."

He has been here for 25 years, and he has done excellent work in the Chapel, with the Carmelite Sisters in Peabody, here with you Nuns in this monastery, saying Mass with such devotion, giving homilies that were so meaningful and insightful about our Carmelite traditions, sermons that were always practical and down to earth. His ministry at the Chapel fortunately also gave him sufficient time to write, and we are so grateful for his books on *Elijah, Prophet of Fire* and *The Assumption of Mary*.

Over the past 25 years, my brother Vernon and I would visit the Peabody community each Summer while we were home in Boston on vacation, and we always enjoyed our time with Kilian. He had such an interest in everything Carmelite, and what an incredible memory, as he would ask me about various classmates from his Roman years: Father Methodius in the Czech Republic under the Communists, Bishop Donal Lamont and his support of the native people of Zimbabwe, and various members of Provinces, monasteries of Nuns, and teaching Sisters around the world. And his stay in Peabody during these years was also such a blessing for his personal family - as every Sunday afternoon he would be with his sister Margaret and Raymond and their family.

Finally, the goal in life for each Carmelite is expressed so beautifully in our Rule: "to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ and to serve Him faithfully," or as we sometimes express it:

"to walk in the footsteps of Jesus." Kilian has done this so faithfully for 70 years, "walking with God" in simplicity and sincerity as a teacher, as General and as a simple priest.

There are words in the Gospel that we used to quote often in Latin that would express the Lord's welcome and reward to one who lived in love and faithfulness, and I am sure that Kilian understood those words well on his death last Sunday afternoon when he heard Jesus say: *Euge. serve bone et fidelis* - - "Well done, good and faithful servant," and our prayer for him is: *Requiescat in pace* - "May he rest in peace."