First Things First….. a very special word of appreciation to Fr. Dinh for the attentiveness, personal presence and fraternal care he has shown for Leo over these last couple of years…. It's been tremendous…. In the name of all the brothers in the province, thank you very much. Thanks also to the community and the staff at Old English Road and the staff at St. Francis Home who took good care of Leo during these recent years of declining health.

I'd like to zero in on two moments in Leo's life as an Assumptionist….. I'm going to call them his Macedonian moment and his Emmaus moment. The Macedonian moment is an allusion to the vision that St. Paul received on his second missionary journey of a man in Macedonia standing and begging him.
"Come over to Macedonia and help us." In response to that vision, Paul redirected the course of his journey, and the evangelization of the continent of Europe had begun.

In the late 1980's, a call went out from Claude Marechal, our superior general at the time, to solicit help for the first foundation in Asia. From throughout the whole congregation, Leo was the first to respond. "I haven't even spoken to my provincial about this, Leo wrote." Imagine going over the head of your provincial that way. When you think of the growth of the Assumption that has taken place in Asia since that Macedonian moment, it's no small thing to say that Leo was the first to throw his hat into the ring.

Within hours of the announcement of his passing this week, folks gathered around a large photo of Leo in the local seminary and in the chapel of the local community in Kwangu to read from the Scriptures and to offer the prayers for the dead, Korean-style, for one of their founders. Although he never got the hang of the language, Leo was in Korea for 17 years supporting his brothers in the arduous work of setting down roots in a land far removed by distance and culture from what was familiar to any of them. His superior during those years, Frans Desmet, provides a couple of snapshots of Leo, one of them in the countryside parish in Hactari, where Leo acquired a green thumb and began breeding rabbits, not for the kitchen, but for the fun of

the children in the parish; the second celebrating Mass every day at an institution for disabled children run by the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres. Frans noted how devoted Leo was to those sisters and how much the children adored him.

I don't imagine there were any big, blown-up photos of Leo this week in Weirton, West Virginia or up at Montmartre, or in the Philippines where Leo was called upon to support another new Asian foundation, or here at St. Anne's for that matter, where he was shrine director for three years. But just to speak those names tells the story of Leo's disponibilite, his willingness to put himself at the service of the mission.

I can speak with much less authority about Leo's Emmaus moment. But this is how it appears to me. During the course of his Assumptionist life, Leo found his place as a spiritual companion; sometimes that took the form of spiritual direction, sometimes it was a ministry of presence to shrine pilgrims and to young religious making their way in our new foundations. The moment in today's Gospel is a moment of recognition on the part of the confused and disheartened disciples. They were brought to understand in the course of their walking with Jesus along the Emmaus road that the suffering and apparently defeated Master was one and the same with the Risen Lord who comes clear to them in the breaking of the bread. It was a moment of identification and integration, made possible by the enlightening of their minds and the warming of their hearts. That's the road that every spiritual companion is obliged to take, to see the pain and the weakness in one's life as something not simply to be overcome, but to be incorporated into the mystery of God's abiding presence to us. I think Leo came to understand this more and more in his life, and this was a grace which redounded to the benefit of those touched by his pastoral care. In this, he was greatly inspired by the life and writings of St. Augustine, whose intense desire for God was a loadstone for Leo's own journey.

That desire burned pretty brightly in Leo right to the very end, and I think accounts for the fundamental kindness that seemed the hallmark especially of his later years. His interest in you and in the community was evident, his desire to keep learning was remarkable in someone whose physical resources had taken such a hit. As you know, we were scheduled next Saturday almost at this very moment to celebrate with. Dinh is the first to say that Leo was bound and determined to be there to thank God with us for granting him the great privilege of serving at the altar for fifty years. Needless to say, God had other plans. We can pray, as many have said in recent days, that he will now celebrate