Rev. Robert J. Fortin, A.A., 82

WORCESTER - Rev. Robert J. Fortin, AA, 82, died Thursday, August 13, 2015 in Saint Vincent Hospital after a long illness.

Besides his fellow Assumptionist priests and brothers, he leaves 2 brothers: Rev. Richard Fortin, retired pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Millbury, of Leicester and Roger Fortin of Worcester; several nephews and nieces. His brother Ronald Fortin died in 2011.

He was born and raised in Worcester, the oldest son of Jules F. and R. Blanche (Reed) Fortin. He graduated from Assumption Preparatory School in 1950 and earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Assumption College in 1955. He also received a Master of Arts in English Literature from the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC in 1965.

He completed his novitiate in Quebec, Canada and professed his first vows to Rev. Andre Godbout, AA, Master of Novices, on September 8, 1953. He then studied at the Assumptionist Seminary in Layrac, France and was ordained to the priesthood on October 19, 1958 by Bishop Roger Johan, Bishop of Agen. He also studied pastoral theology in Worcester and completed further study at the Center of Biblical Formation in Jerusalem from 1982 to 1983.

In his long and varied priestly ministry, Fr. Fortin taught English and liturgy at Our Lady of Lourdes Seminary in Cassadaga, NY from 1960 to 1963, and then taught English at Assumption Preparatory School here. He was superior of the community in New York and provincial treasurer for 10 years. He was again superior of the community at Assumption College as well as trustee at the college from 1977 to 1982. He was then assigned to be the Catholic chaplain at the US Embassy in Moscow, a post he held for 3 years followed by a stint as a project director for the Assumptionist publications of Bayard Press in Paris, France.

For 10 years, he served as the superior, rector and director of the Assumptionist shrine of St. Peter in Gallicantu in Jerusalem which he renovated extensively and built 3 new buildings, thoroughly modernizing the plant's infrastructure. Later he was invited by the Vatican to hold the position of vice-rector of the Ratisbonne Pontifical Institute of Jerusalem. From there he moved to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem where he assisted Archbishop Pietro Sabbah. He was made a Knight of the Holy Sepulcher on August 28, 2002.

Over the years, at the same time of his religious ministry, Father Fortin translated a vast number of documents for the Assumptionists from French into English, including the Assumptionist Rule of Life. In 2005, ill health obliged him to return to the United States and take up residence at the Assumptionist Retirement House on 50 Old English Road, to which he remained attached even when deteriorating health brought him to Saint Francis Home on Plantation Street.

The funeral will be held Tuesday, August 18, at 10:00 AM with a concelebrated Mass in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, 500 Salisbury Street.
The Very Reverend Miguel Diaz Ayllon, AA, Provincial Superior, will be the principal concelebrant.
The homilist will be his brother, Rev. Richard Fortin. Burial will be in St. Anne's Cemetery, Sturbridge.

Visiting hours will be from 6:30 to 8:30 PM Monday, August 17, in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, and again from 9:00 to 10:00 AM Tuesday, August 18. Rev. Peter Precourt, AA, territorial delegate and Rev. Eugene V. LaPlante, AA, local superior will co-preside at a vigil service at 8:00 PM Monday. Memorial donations may be made to the Assumptionist Vocation Fund, 330 Market St., Brighton, MA 02135. Arrangements are under the direction of Sitkowski & Malboeuf Funeral Home, 340 School St., Webster.

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