

Fr. Leonard Will, SCJ

1909-1995

Originally from Baltimore, Md., Fr. Leonard Will, SCJ, learned about the Priests of the Sacred Heart through a classmate who also wanted to be a priest.

"I never thought about diocesan priesthood; I always wanted religious life," said Fr. Will. "And I've always had a strong devotion to the Sacred Heart. I'm a 'First Friday Man' from way back. When I learned that this was a community devoted to the Sacred Heart, I wanted to join."

Fr. Will arrived as a student to Sacred Heart Monastery in 1928.

He professed his first vows in 1934 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1940. His first assignment was in East Chicago, where he ministered at Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Jude parishes.

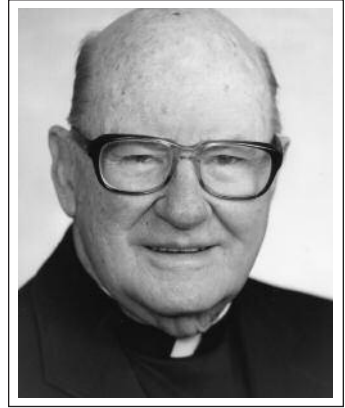
In 1948, he went to Divine Heart Seminary in Donaldson, Ind., where he taught religion and history. It was during this time that he requested work in the missions.

On February 15, 1950, Fr. Will left the United States on a boat headed to South Africa. He arrived in Cape Town on March 8.

"I loved it there," he said of South Africa. It was six years before he would return for a visit home.

He learned Afrikaans and Xhosa, two of the primary languages of the country, and began ministry in De Aar. Later, he would move to Petrusville. From these bases he would often travel hundreds of miles to celebrate Mass at parish out-stations. These weekend trips became one of his favorite ministries. "People would travel 16 miles or more by donkey, or just walking, to be at Mass. I never missed getting to them and they rarely missed coming to see me," he said.

In 1974, he returned to the United States. For six years he ministered at a small parish in Cleveland, Texas, before beginning his retirement at age 71. In 1994, he joined the Pinellas Park retirement community.



Fr. Leonard Will, SCJ