

Br. Conrad Thelen, SCJ

1903-1998

One of the founding members of the U.S. Province, Fr. Conrad Thelen was born in Tondorf, Germany, in 1903. He came to the community as a student in 1919 and professed his first vows in 1922. While it was still a mission of the German Province, Br. Conrad volunteered to come to the United States in 1929. A farmer by trade, Br. Conrad felt at home in his new country, clearing land and farming food for the SCJ seminary communities.

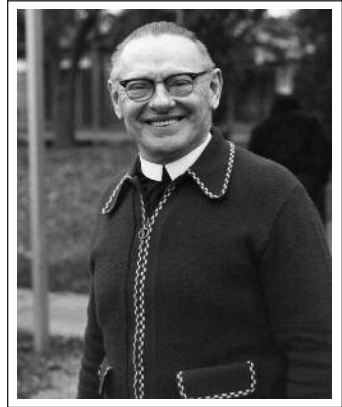
For 44 years he worked at Divine Heart Seminary in Donaldson, IN. Opening the high school in 1935, he was responsible for clearing the grounds, placing water pipes, planting the fields and laying the driveway.

"You could not go to Donaldson without Conrad coming to mind right away," said Fr. Michael, remembering all the labor the German brother had put into the property. "Yet regardless of the amount of work that was to be done, Conrad was always there for Mass and Adoration."

When Divine Heart closed, Br. Conrad stayed in the Donaldson area for a few years, working for the Poor Handmaids. However, in 1979, he decided to retire and moved to Dehon Seminary in Lanesboro, Mass. Used to hard work, he quickly turned an unkempt piece of land on the property into a fertile vegetable garden, providing much produce for his local community.

When a retirement community was established in Franklin, WI, Br. Conrad became one of its first members.

"Br. Conrad always reminded me somehow of St. Joseph, quietly doing what had to be done without a lot of fuss," said a neighbor of Divine Heart Seminary. "Throughout the years when he was responsible for the farm at the seminary, putting in really long hours, he was still always the same humble brother doing his best for the Lord."



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