

Francis Kelly Nemeck, O.M.I. April 19, 1936 – September 11, 2014

Father Kelly was a great influence in the spiritual lives of countless men and women - married, single, vowed religious, priests, and bishops. From his young adulthood onward, he responded to a special calling to fostering attentive listening God and others – a life of prayerful contemplation.

Born in 1936 in Prescott, Arizona, he came to San Antonio as a child with his parents, May Yeary (of Kingsville, Texas) and Lt. Francis Leonard “Kelly” Nemeck (of Douglas, Arizona) and his sister, Ann. After attending St. Anthony High School Seminary, he made his novitiate year in Mission, Texas, in preparation for joining the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and professed his first vows as an Oblate in 1955. In preparation for the priesthood, he studied philosophy at DeMazenod Scholasticate (today’s Oblate School of Theology) in San Antonio and theology at St. Joseph Scholasticate in Ottawa, Canada. During the course of these studies he was drawn by the thought of the Jesuit cosmologist and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who envisioned all of creation evolving to ultimate reunion with Jesus Christ. Teilhard’s thought was a lifelong influence in Fr. Nemeck’s spirituality. His other model was St. John of the Cross, whom he studied very deeply and followed in his spirituality very closely.

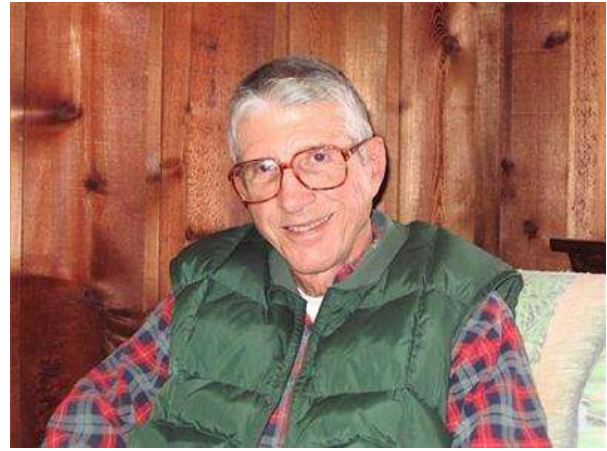
Ordained a priest at St. Mary’s Church in downtown San Antonio in 1961, his first assignment was to DeMazenod Scholasticate as a professor for five years. Then, after briefly serving among the Chontals in Tehuantepec, Mexico, and at parishes in Midland and Houston, he began studies for a doctorate in spiritual theology at the Catholic Institute in Lyons, France, during which time he also taught and directed retreats in Ontario, Canada. His dissertation in 1973, under the direction of Henri de Lubac, S.J., developed the thought of Teilhard de Chardin and St. John of the Cross on the constructive value of human suffering.



In late 1973, Fr. Nemeck joined the house of prayer founded earlier that year by Fr. Tom Marcoux, O.M.I., in the former main house of the vast La Parra Ranch surrounding Sarita, Texas, on the parcel of the ranch bequeathed to the Oblates by Sarita Kenedy East in gratitude for the long ministry of Oblate missionaries in South Texas. The fact that Fr. Marcoux had named the house of prayer Lebh Shomea, Hebrew for “listening heart,” after King Solomon’s request for a listening heart when God offered to grant the king anything that he wanted, certainly corresponded with Fr. Nemeck’s own contemplative spirit. Together with hermits Marie Theresa Coombs and Maria Meister, Father Nemeck developed Lebh Shomea during the next forty years into a nationally recognized place of silent contemplation and discernment for thousands of people from all walks of life. Fr. Nemeck and Marie Theresa Coombs coauthored several books on spiritual discernment, which have also been translated into Spanish.

He also traveled to San Antonio to teach courses in spirituality and discernment at Oblate School of Theology for several years. In 1988-1991 and 1994-1999 he served on the Provincial Council (leadership group) of the Southern Province of the Missionary Oblates. When his health began to significantly deteriorate in late 2013, Fr. Nemeck moved to the Oblate Madonna Residence in San Antonio. Supporting increasing suffering with spiritual fortitude, he died there on September 11, 2014.

He is survived by his sister, Ann Nemeck Henry, his nieces Elizabeth and Kathryn, and his Missionary Oblate brothers. May Father Kelly rejoice in God’s abiding love.



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