

April 23, 1999

Father Joseph Knoeber, OMI



Father Knoeber was born Oct. 12, 1918 at Spearville. He received his elementary education at St. John the Baptist Grade School. He attended Maur Hill High School and St. Benedict's College, both in Atchison, before being drafted during World War II.

He served in the Navy in the Pacific. After being discharged, he returned to Spearville where he worked at the Spearville Mercantile, a business owned by his family.

In 1952 at the age of 33, he began his studies for the priesthood. He attended St. Henry's Preparatory Seminary in Belleville, Ill., and was received into the novitiate of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He pronounced his first vows Aug. 15, 1954, in Godfrey, Ill. He attended Our Lady of the Snows Scholasticate in Pass Christian, Miss., for philosophy and theology. He was ordained to the priesthood May 24, 1959.

Father Knoeber served in pastoral assignments in Richfield, Duluth, and International Falls, all in Minnesota; Green Bay, Wisc., and McGehee, Ark. His final years were in semi-retirement at St. Henry's Oblate Community in Belleville. He championed the cause of the farmer and was involved in many organizations promoting farmers' rights.

He died April 23, 1999, at the Dammert Geriatric Center, National Shrine of Our Lady of Snows in Belleville, Ill. A memorial Mass was celebrated at the St. Henry Oblate Community April 29 in Belleville. Father Knoeber donated his body to science. A plaque celebrating his life was placed at the Oblate Cemetery on the grounds of the community.