

# We Remember Father Frank Diffley, a Marriage Encounter Priest

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Fr. Frank Diffley died on Easter Sunday, March 27, 2005. He was 81 years young and a Maryknoll priest for 54 years. Fr. Frank was ordained on June 10, 1950, after which he taught at Maryknoll College in New Jersey for 2 years before being assigned to Japan. He then moved on to Hawaii, where he became involved with Marriage Encounter. Between Japan and Hawaii, he was a missionary for 37 years. He served Marriage Encounter with all his heart for 26 years.

Whether working in mission overseas or here at home, Fr. Frank looked for ways to serve God's people. When the terrorist attacks on New York's Twin Towers occurred on September 11, 2001, his natural response was to sign on as a volunteer counselor. Traveling each day to the 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory in Manhattan and then to Pier 94 on the Hudson River, he offered consolation to the many people of all faiths who were mourning their loved ones. He told us some amazing stories of his experience at the Ground Zero site. He was truly Jesus for so many of the affected families.

We got to know Frank through Marriage Encounter. He loved presenting Weekends, and traveled all over the country, wherever he was needed. His passion for married couples and for the priesthood was very evident whenever we were with him, and it was especially obvious on Weekends as he shared deeply from his heart. Frank led by example. He had so much energy and love of life that it was contagious. He certainly had a positive affect on us and we always looked forward to spending time with him. He had the most wonderful sense of humor, loved to sing and dance, and really enjoyed having fun. He cared very much for the quality and vibrancy of our relationship.

Marriage Encounter celebrates World Priest Day each September. A couple of years ago we were at a leadership weekend meeting with Frank. The couples wrote love letters to the attending priests about their specialness to us. We read them out loud to the priests. In one of our letters we referred to our priests as unique, as each snow flake is believed to be unique. With Frank's sense of humor he kiddingly said we called him a "flake" (meant in an uncomplimentary way). From that moment on, Frank was our Fr. Flake, or as it evolved into – Padre Flako. He often signed his e-mails to us that way. And we signed ours as the Flake Adorers. On several weekends we gave him snowflake gifts. This seemingly silly exchange meant so much to us. We will always think of Frank whenever we see a snow flake, as we carry him in our hearts.

Last summer we decided to pay him a visit at his Maryknoll residence, which is down near Poughkeepsie. We spent a marvelous afternoon with him, touring the buildings and grounds and hearing a lot about the history of the facility. We learned a lot more about him too. He was a brilliant man.

Last November, Frank came to Albany to present our November Weekend. He became ill shortly after that. His presence on weekends in Brooklyn and Queens, his home territory for Marriage Encounter, in Albany, and around the USA is truly missed.