

Rev. Germain Legere, C.P.

Born: April 24, 1915
Professed: July 25, 1935
Ordained: May 30, 1942
Died: November 15, 2006



"Archibald" with his Father and brother, Daniel.



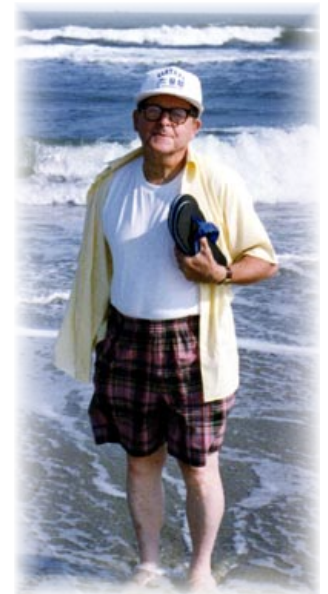
Germain with his parents in Normandy - 1944.



Germain was local superior in St. Paul, Kansas, in the early 1970s



Germain was teacher and principal at the Passionist Prep Seminary from 1942-1968.



A relaxing day at the beach.



A few weeks before Germain's death.



Possibly Germain's two sisters with corsages for Germain's 50th ordination anniversary in 1992.



With cane in hand, Germain prepares for his usual walk.



Sisters of Mercy of Nazareth with Germain in 1998.



A special Wake Service was conducted at Nazareth Home.



Jim Byrne (a Prep seminarian) and wife Peggy with Michael J. Stengel and Vince Giegerich at the visitation.



Sebastian MacDonald preached the homily.



About 150 people attended the funeral at St. Agnes.



Archbishop Kelly spoke at the end of Mass.



The Archbishop joined the Passionists for the prayers at the grave site.



Passionists and friends gathered at the grave for the final prayers.

Rev. Germain Legere, C.P.

1915–2006

Rev. Germain Legere, C.P., 91 years of age, passed away Wednesday, November 15, 2006, at 4:20 A.M. He lived at the Passionist Community, Sacred Heart Retreat, 1924 Newburg Road, Louisville, Kentucky.

Father Germain (Archibald Legere) was a native of North Sydney, Nova Scotia. He was a member of the Passionist Community for 71 years and a Catholic priest for 64 years. He was born April 24, 1915, the son of Archibald Legere and Sarah McDougall. There were two sisters, Josephine and Thora, and a brother, Daniel. The family attended St. Joseph's Church in North Sydney, but moved to Chicago in 1927 during Germain's grade school years. He later became a naturalized American citizen. The origin of his vocation to the Passionist community surfaced during a parish mission, conducted by Fathers Stanislaus Geekie, Charles Cassidy and Isidore Dwyer, in 1928.

In 1929 Father Germain began studies with the Passionists at the seminary in Normandy, Missouri. His novitiate was in Louisville, Kentucky, where he professed vows on July 22, 1934. From Louisville, Father Germain moved to Cincinnati where he began his philosophical studies, which were completed in Detroit. In 1938 Father Germain went to Immaculate Conception Monastery in Chicago for his theological studies; in 1940 his class moved to Louisville to complete this level of their studies. He was ordained on May 30, 1942, at the Cathedral of the Assumption in Louisville by Archbishop Fleursch. There were two ordination classes in 1942. Father Germain was ordained with Fathers Faustinus Moran and Cyprian Towey. On August 10 the second class was ordained: Father James Busch, Francis Horack, Walter Kaelin, and Thomas Newbold.

From 1942 to 1968 Father Germain was a teacher at the Passionist Prep Seminary in Normandy and then at the new seminary in Warrenton, Missouri. He served as teacher and librarian. In 1959 he was appointed principal of the seminary high school in Warrenton and served until 1968. From 1968 to 1971 Father Germain was stationed at Holy Name in Houston, Texas, where he served as a missionary. In 1968 and 1971 Fr. Germain served as a secretary to the General Chapters in Rome. He was selected to be local superior in St. Paul, Kansas in 1971.

For a brief period in 1975, he was appointed as assistant superior in Detroit, Michigan, and later appointed local superior in Cincinnati. In 1977 Father Germain moved back to Louisville and became the chaplain for the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth at Nazareth Home. Even when his health began to fail, Father Germain worked part time at Nazareth Home until active ministry was no longer possible.

Father Germain had an M.A. from Notre Dame University and also studied at St. Louis University and Washington University in St. Louis, Loyola University and De Paul University in Chicago, and Catholic University in Washington, D.C. His degrees were in English literature and philosophy.

Father Germain is survived by his sister, Mrs. Edward Davis, nephews, nieces, and several cousins. "Germain entered a troubled world [in 1915] and in the end, November 15, 2006, he passed from a world still troubled. A world, however, richer for his short visit upon it" (e-mail from Steve George).

The funeral Mass was at 10:00 A.M. on Monday, November 20, at St. Agnes Catholic Church, 1920 Newburg Road, with burial in the Passionist Cemetery. Visitation was at the Church from 3–8 P.M. on Sunday, November 19, with a prayer service at 7:00 P.M.

Funeral Homily for
Rev. Germain Legere, C.P.
St. Agnes Church
Louisville, Kentucky, November 20, 2006
Rev. Sebastian MacDonald, C.P.

On behalf of the Passionist Community, I extend our sympathy to you, family, friends and beneficiaries of Fr. Germain's years of dedicated and devoted ministry on your behalf.

In our Christian tradition, we hesitate to speak of the death of a person such as Fr. Germain as a loss. For we know, by faith, that it represents a gain for us who now have an additional friend in heaven. And we also believe that it is but for a time, until we are all united again.

Granted that, it is still a loss—not for him, but for us. Jesus Himself regarded the deaths of His friends as losses, which He grieved. Losses, of course, vary in magnitude. The death of a person such as Fr. Germain represents a major loss for us, the stakeholders who profited so much by his life and ministry.

Small in stature, he was an intense and vigorous person, whose strong handshake invariably missed most of my hand, anxious as he was to get on with the business at hand. Single-minded in what he was about, his chewing of the tongue habit signaled his readiness to engage the moment at hand.

The man, Zacchaeus, of whom we just heard in the gospel of Luke (Lk 19:1-10), achieved some notoriety for the chance meeting he had with Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem, on foot, and happened to go by way of the town of Jericho. It was there that the opportunity presented itself to Zacchaeus to see Jesus, and likely become one of His disciples.

It was a similar chance meeting that occurred to the young Archibald Legere, as a member of the cathedral parish in Chicago, on the occasion of a mission preached there by three Passionist priests – Stanislaus Geekie, Charles Cassidy and Isidore Dwyer – likely around 1930. This became the Zacchaeus moment for Germain, the opportunity to meet these emissaries of Jesus, who would make an indelible impression on him, comparable to Zacchaeus' *aha* moment.

Zacchaeus was a wealthy man, thanks to his position as a tax-collector of dues from the Jews, on behalf of the Romans occupying the nation. His was an administrative task – one of those bureaucrats that, among us, are so often the object of our complaints and criticisms: a company man, as we say. Germain too, once he became a full-fledged Passionist, entered the world of administration. First and foremost a seminary teacher in his early days, he was thereby, as teachers well know, an administrator, moving full-stride into that role upon appointment as principal of the seminary high school division. Other administrative positions would devolve upon him in the years following his departure from the seminary situation, but it would be a stretch to extend the notion of bureaucrat to the likes of him. Administrator, yes, bureaucrat, no. His investment in his charges was too personal and intense to justify such a label. He counted his wealth, not in shekels, as would have Zacchaeus, but in friendships with his students and the Sisters nearby, to whom he remained loyal over the years.

Zacchaeus was short of stature, so much so that he could not see over the heads of those surrounding him as Jesus passed down one of the streets of Jericho. Germain, too, was short of stature, physically speaking. He would certainly not be seen in a crowd of people surrounding him, such as his classmates, each of whom was taller than he: Ronan Dowd, Edmund Drake, Harold Leach, Faustinus Moran, Gregory Staniszewski, Bill Steil, Cyprian Towey. But, in the end, he alone was left standing, clearly visible among the depleted ranks of these men who went before him. By this point in his life, his height was no longer an obstacle to his being noticed by others, whether they be Jesus, or the likes of us.

Because of his diminutive stature, Zacchaeus ran ahead of the approaching Jesus, to where he spotted a sycamore tree whose branches hung over the street Jesus was traveling. So he climbed the tree to see better. This was the story of Zacchaeus' life, always trying to compensate for his smallness. But he became adept at it – he knew what to do, thanks to a large portion of hutzpah. And he obviously really wanted to see Jesus. Otherwise, he could have given up and gone back to the office. It is not common to see wealthy men like Bill Gates climbing trees to see a celebrity. But Zacchaeus knew what he wanted, and how to get it – obviously the secret to his wealth.

Germain was not the tree-climbing type of person that Zacchaeus was. This doesn't mean that he lacked the vigor or determination to see Jesus. He had his own way of doing this. He knew the streets in his life down which Jesus was to pass, and he displayed the initiative to place himself along these ways, to catch sight of Him

as He walked by. The byways Jesus traveled, for Germain, were the lives of his students, early on, and those of the Sisters of Charity, at Our Lady of Peace and Nazareth Home nearby, where Germain spent as many years as he did in the Passionist seminary system. These were the roads where Jesus passed by, and Germain was adept at meeting Him along the way. Like Zacchaeus, he was not one to hold back, nor was he afraid to take the initiative. A certain self-effacement characterized both Zacchaeus and Germain: the esteem of others was not uppermost in their minds when opportunity presented itself to catch a glimpse of Jesus moving by.

Their efforts paid off. As Jesus passed under the sycamore tree, there he saw the diminutive Zacchaeus hanging overhead. He appreciated the adulation in one who went to these efforts to catch sight of Him. So He invited Himself to a meal with Zacchaeus – the latter picking up the tab, wealthy as he was. Zacchaeus' efforts paid off. Can we doubt that Jesus noticed Germain, not in a tree, but in a classroom, or an office, or in the chapel or at the bedside, all of which lined the roadway down which Jesus was passing, and into which He looked and spotted Germain there, and proceeded to invite Himself into Germain's life? For He knew that Germain was a wealthy man, and could easily afford to entertain Jesus, giving Him the time and attention, in the persons of his students and beloved retirees, with which he was so richly endowed.

Zacchaeus was overjoyed at the prospect of hosting Jesus. It made his day. But it was risky business. He knew he was not popular among the Jericho townsfolk, tax collector that he was, but, nothing ventured, nothing gained. No one else made Jesus an offer. And the criticism came: what was Jesus doing consorting with the likes of a Zacchaeus? Germain certainly shared in Zacchaeus' joy of hosting Jesus in his life, in many unlikely places. Always admired for his dedication and commitment, Germain never attained a certain kind of esteem – that associated with the shakers and movers of the Congregation, or the diocese or the academic world. He was a self-effacing man. Perhaps some wondered how and where he met Jesus along the paths of his life. But he was eminently successful at this, hosting Jesus in classroom and hospital and nursing home and retirement center. Those were the venues that corresponded to the lavish home of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus weathered his share of criticism; Germain dealt well with the unpromising places where he came to encounter Jesus in the course of his life.

Zacchaeus not only "toughed it out" amid his critics. Smart businessman that he was, this opportunity became an investment occasion for the long term: he charted the course ahead, promising to help the poor and recompense those he may have defrauded. The very people who earlier meant so little to him now became his path to happiness. He learned later in life what Germain happened upon earlier: there aren't people we can afford to disregard and injure in our attempt to get ahead. In fact, it's this kind of people who afford us the best opportunity to get ahead, that is, to win favor in Jesus' sight. So Germain was content throughout his life at mining the riches of his students and the Sisters next door, knowing full well that they constituted the best investment of his life, for it was among them that he would encounter Jesus along the pathways of life.

So what could Jesus say to Zacchaeus but: "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham." Once again, Jesus makes His point in the setting of table-fellowship, where so often He gathered around Himself, even at His very last supper, a most unlikely consortium of hangers-on, to reconstitute them in a new status: as descendants of Abraham, our father in faith. Jesus once again establishes community, the foundations of church, out of those who gather around the hospitality of Zacchaeus – a community tracing back to Abraham himself.

This morning, as we look out at those of you gathered here in tribute to Germain, we see another table fellowship, with this altar as the centerpiece. Like Zacchaeus, Germain serves as host for this gathering of possibly unlikely people for hearing that salvation has come to us because we acquire the status of descendants of Abraham, our father in faith. Germain's claim to fame has been his gathering power, over the years: friendship, but friendship around the person of Jesus, which always results in salvation.

It is along the pathways of life that we meet Jesus, on His way to Jerusalem. So it was with Zacchaeus of Jericho, so it was with Germain of Sydney, Nova Scotia, by way of Chicago, and finally on to Louisville. The Zacchaeus story ends with Jesus having the last word: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost." Zacchaeus experienced this; Germain too felt Jesus' saving outreach in his life. Surely many of us here this morning are similarly blessed, as we gather in table-fellowship around the altar as a community of the descendants of Abraham. Germain has been instrumental in arranging fellowship among all of us whom he served as host, in the manner Zacchaeus did in his own house. Let us allow both their memories to bond us among ourselves.