



SSS Grapevine

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Funeral Homily of Fr. Michael James Arkins SSS (1945–2024)

by Father John Thomas Lane SSS, Provincial Superior and Pastor



Father Michael J. Arkins SSS

I met Father Michael Arkins at our Provincial Chapter in April 1988 in Burlingame, California. I was the first novice to ever get to go to a provincial chapter. My novice director, Father Bob Lussier, told me that when I got to the Chapter, I better help with things. When we arrived, I saw a few Blessed Sacrament religious I knew, but many I had never met. My novice master said, “Help this guy; he’s going to the store to get our chapter snacks and drinks. He’s a very key person for us to survive this meeting!”

That’s when I met Mike, and we jumped into a van. During the drive and subsequent time at the store, Mike shared a bit of his history with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, and I learned about his gentle, soft-spoken style of humble, unassuming service.

When we returned to the retreat center, folks immediately said to me, upon seeing me with Mike, “**Did he talk to you?**” I was surprised by the comments. I did not know that Mike was

a shy, quiet man. He had been held back from being ordained because he was considered too quiet. During that chapter, and subsequently, through my years living and working with Mike, I realized he was like “EF Hutton” – he was always listening, but when he talked – you listened. That was his gift and presence.

Talking and listening. Yes, Mike did not talk in a group unless he had something to say. And when he spoke, he ***had something to say!*** He made very thoughtful and brilliant salient points. He always knew how to be a strong follower of his call and vocation as a disciple of Christ.



Father John Thomas Lane SSS leads the funeral liturgy

As we hear in the book of Maccabees (*2 Maccabees 12:43-46*), we are called to be exemplary stewards. This passage reminds us of the collection for the faith and for our experience of God. We are to be those generous stewards of God’s many gifts. Mike faithfully lived his vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and gave generously when called upon to serve the order and the parishes where the provincial sent him. He loved being a parish priest

and especially thrived when he was given the opportunity to be a pastor. Several parishioners said to me, across the country, from his first pastorate in Taylorsville, Utah, and here, Florida, and Chicagoland, “I will miss his quiet sense of leadership and especially miss those occasional one-liners.”

Another wrote in an email, “He had the driest sense of humor, especially during tense meetings. As EF Hutton, when he spoke, you listened—but he only spoke after EVERYONE had had their say.” He implemented, wherever he served, maintenance and repayment of loan collections and collections for the poor, like this parish’s Helping Hands ministry second



Placing of the urn by a family member

collection. He felt we were called to give to others.

Mike was my mentor and friend. When he was first ordained, I was blessed to move in with him to Taylorsville, Utah, where I saw his generous spirit, from cutting the grass of the parish to cooking for the community or the parish to his love for helping those most in need. He was an accurate and faithful spiritual director to so many. “Did he talk to you?” Only after listening intently and sharing something brilliant to assist someone in their spiritual direction did I ask.

In our preaching and living the Gospel (*John 6: 53-58*), we live as Eucharistic people, the dying and rising of the Lord in the Eucharist. Jesus Christ continues giving us his Body and Blood at each table. In Mike’s preaching, especially at every Mass, he would weave in a Eucharistic theme because it was central to his faith. He loved to preside and preach at Mass – he was deliberate about it – because it was that important to him. **This is when he would “talk.”** He would listen faithfully to God’s word and preach it with a gentle challenge and usual tone to the community. He would often ask, “How can we listen to what God is saying at this Table of the Word, to live the Table of the Eucharist and be Eucharist in the world?” He would take the Gospel challenge of justice seriously and encourage his community to be faithful stewards and build up the Body of Christ.

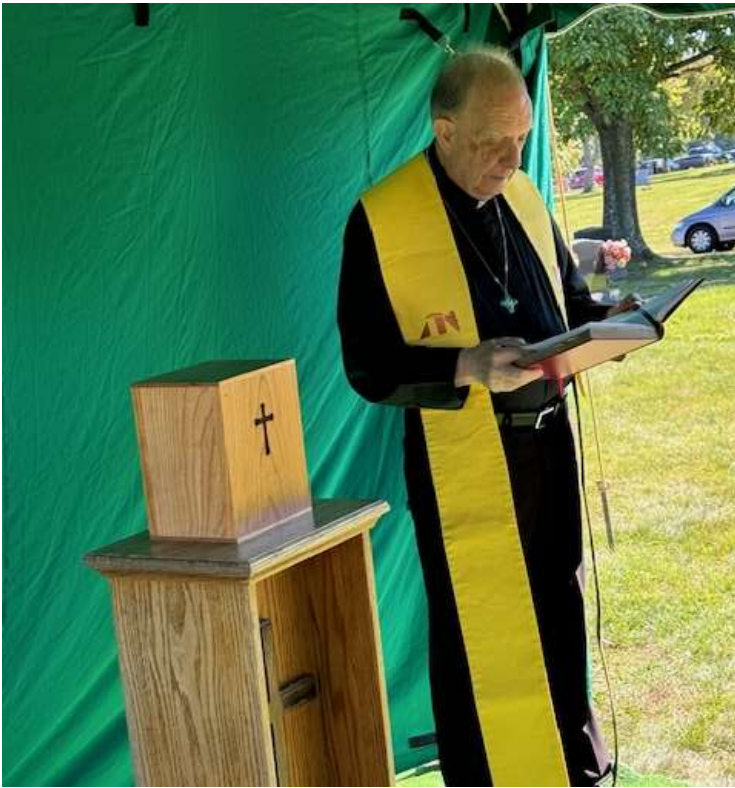


Family Members of Father Michael Arkins SSS at the cemetery

His gift of hospitality encouraged parishes to go from the Eucharistic table to the potluck table. He loved having parish potlucks and was often seen at the end quietly cleaning up. Wherever he was, he was quietly in the background of every event. When he and Father Jette returned to SPB at the same time. Many thought Father Jette was the pastor! He let him shine, just as he let others always shine and be the gift that they were to the Eucharistic community.

And isn’t that our role now? As friends and coworkers in the vineyard of the Lord, we live the legacy of Mike that he built in this community, both our religious order and this parish.

He strove at community and parish meetings to ensure we stayed on target in following the mission of the *Rule of Life* or the parish mission statement. If a parish did not have a mission statement, he would ensure each parish would take the time to develop one.



Final Commendation at All Souls Cemetery led by Father William Fickel SSS

Paul's letter to Timothy states (*2 Timothy 2:8-13*) that we are to live the Gospel, even in our suffering. Sadly, Mike suffered a lot of bad health – a lot of bad luck with his health in these last few years. It really bothered him because he wanted to contribute so much more to the religious and parish communities he loved. Yet, he was a presence – a presence that was always there in any setting to quietly support, love, and say something funny in the background to bring joy to the moment.

We thank him for his undying service, care, and love of us. We thank God for the blessing he was and will always be. And we know he is no longer suffering the pain he endured these last few years, but especially the last few days. He never denied his faith but had a gift for helping others and

himself see that in his suffering, you remain faithful to Christ, who helps us live forever in glory. (*Psalm 116*).

“Did he talk to you?” Mike's actions always spoke more than words, and we are grateful for his example. And we know that God is saying to him now, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Come share your Master's joy” at the eternal Eucharistic banquet prepared for you in heaven.

FDLC Annual Liturgy Convention Report from Pittsburgh

By John Thomas Lane SSS, *Provincial*

It was nice to take a day off, two hours away in Pittsburgh, PA, and attend the annual national liturgy meeting there. While it is usually a 3-day event, I attended a day and a half to hear the latest on publishing timelines for our liturgical books, attend two Masses, and a few talks on the theme: “Bridges of Hope: Merging Parishes.” The crux of the keynote talks featured ways we can evangelize, market, and live our parish community by anticipating changes and preparing others to join our community. The main focus from OCP Presenter Matthew Reichert – be creative! Keep trying new things and opportunities to invite people to be part of a parish, a ministry or become, in our case, members (especially for us, Associates of the Blessed Sacrament).



The main highlight of the meeting was the report from the Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship, which shared news about our liturgical texts. This year, Most Reverend Steven Lopes and Rev Dustin Dought gave reports and answered questions.

We have a report on the updated *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* (OCIA). Yes, the first word of the ritual text has been changed from “Rite” to “Order,” the actual translation from Latin of the word *ordo*. As the other rituals have been updated in the last two decades, such as the *Order of Celebrating Infant Baptism*, the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, and the *Order of Celebrating Funerals*, so now has this liturgical text been revised and is now the new ritual for this liturgical year. My seminary classmate Todd Williamson, the director of the Office of

Worship in Chicago, worked with us FDLC members to create webinars and new resources, with edited transcripts of presentations to assist in the education and implementation of the OCIA. You may contact FDLC after November to order the kits to assist liturgical/catechetical leaders. *Order for Christian Initiation of Adults* is on sale is November 1. The use date is December 1, with the mandatory use on Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025. A further resource for formation will be a *Compendium* beginning next Spring. New statutes for Christian Initiation of Adults take effect on December 1, 2024 (*the First Sunday of Advent*). These replace the last ones.

Here is a brief report on the update on liturgical texts and the progress of the different projects. As mentioned above, ritual books take time and a process between the International Commission on English (ICEL) in the Liturgy and the bishops of our country and confirmation from the Dicastery for Divine Worship at the Vatican. As members of the Eymardian Family, some of these books, such as *Holy Communion and Eucharistic Mystery outside of Mass, affect us*. This is now available for purchase with this second edition. I will be giving a worship on this ritual text in December. {Stay tuned to the date!}

A *Final Religious Profession* ritual has been updated. A new *Order of the Anointing of the Sick and their Pastoral Care* is in the process of review, observation, and renewal.

In November 2022, USCBB approved Spanish and English and *Lay Ministry to the Sick* and took rites from Holy Communion, Pastoral Care, and the *Order of Christian Funerals* for lay folks to lead and preside over.

Future and Ongoing Projects:

- The task force for the Directory for Instituted Ministries recommends that lectors may be women (2023) and that the new ministry of catechists be established (2021).
- The bishops voted on the final texts of the *Liturgy of the Hours* (LH) in June 2024. All the pieces have been confirmed, so it will then be sent to the Dicastery for confirmation. Publication hope is late 2026-2027. Why so long? It's four volumes!
- Revised text of the New Testament of the New American Bible (The USCCB edition) and a "liturgical Bible" proposal is almost complete!
- The Hebrew scriptures (2010) were completed in 2008/2010 and submitted together with the LH. If the NAB is approved, a new *third edition* of the Lectionary and certain elements will be updated for the Mass.
- New National Shrine implemented in Stonybrook, New York – Mary Help of Christians.
- New statement for prison ministry and why wine is necessary for Mass.
- Will be developing a Spanish edition of the *Order of Penance*.
- A new English translation of the "Crowning of Mary" is also awaiting approval.

Yours truly asked some questions about *Holy Communion* and the rite of dismissing Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Outside of Mass. I'll share the answers in my Province Associates workshop in December.

Bishop David Bonnar of Youngstown gave an excellent homily on Wednesday night at Mass, and Bishop Michael Woost, Auxiliary of Cleveland, who spoke at our Eucharistic Congress, also gave a marvelous homily – coming to a parish near you when I repeat most of it!



I have always been fortunate to study, work, and live our *Rule of Life* 40 **Liturgy:**

*Liturgical research and apostolate
are of particular concern to us.
We devote ourselves
to liturgical animation and formation
using every available resource,
and, in line with the directives of the Church,
we look for expressions
better suited to the needs of the faithful
so that every celebration may become
an experience of faith*

and a source of commitment.

May that continue for all of us as we seek new ways to worship the paschal mystery and grow our parishes and Eymardian ministries!

The FDLC Congress in Pittsburgh was attended by about 200 participants from around the USA.



Point State Park, Pittsburgh