

Br. Joseph MacDonald

Alastair Duncan Timothy Joseph was born on June 1st, 1933 in Greenfield, Diocese of Alexandria, Ontario. After graduating from St. Francis Seminary in Blenheim, Ontario, he entered Novitiate in the Pittsburg province of St. Augustine on July 13th, 1959. He made perpetual profession in 1963, and while studying philosophy and theology in Washington D.C. he witness the election of a Catholic president and the civil rights marches with Martin Luther King in the U.S.A. Returning to his Canadian province, he was ordained by Toronto Bishop Francis Marrocco on October 23, 1965.

He was first assigned to teach at Mount Alverno Minor Seminary in Orangeville, Ontario. But his thirst for ministry to the poor soon had him as a Chaplain for sailors in the Toronto harbour and then running a Coffee House on Yonge Street in Toronto. His classmate former minister general of the Capuchin Order, Br. John Corriveau remembered him as a very passionate and caring man saying: “Joe always had a special passion for the underdog. He always fought for the one who were left out”.

In 1964, when the Ontario Province closed many of its institutions, Joseph noticed many who suffered illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other serious mental health issues who became homeless and sleeping on sidewalks in the city streets. So Poverello Charities was founded and with the charity of his friends Joe was able to buy a group of houses where he lived with people with mental health issues . He encouraged them to take ownership of their own lives by living and volunteering within the community. Br. Joseph was a simple man who lived with the people he served. He even had a summer cottage in Collingwood Ontario which he called “Little Portion” where he would take them in groups for a holiday near the lake.

He died on July 10th, 2018 at the age of 85 after suffering a heart attack and a long battle with Parkinson’s Disease. Funeral Mass was celebrated on July 17th, at St. Philip Neri Church in Toronto. Internment took place that day in Evergreen Cemetery in the Capuchin section, Blenheim, Ontario. Steven Sobol, who took over the work and direction of Poverello Charities said: “*If anything, he would just want to be remembered as someone who tried his best to live out the Gospel in the footsteps of St. Francis. He told me many times that the only hope for humankind was the Franciscan way. He was called to live the way of St. Francis and that’s what he did.*”

