



### **Rev. Dr. Joseph P. McDermott**

Father McDermott was born in Worcester MA on May 28, 1935, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Nathan McDermott. His family moved to Hudson, MA where he grew up attending St. Michael's Catholic Grammar School and graduating from Hudson High School in 1953.

From his earliest recollections he wanted to become a priest. He attended St. Philip Neri School, Boston College In-town, 1953-4, then entered Cardinal O'Connell Seminary and continued on to St. John's Seminary after which he was ordained on February 2, 1962 at St. Stephen Church in Framingham. He offered his first Mass on February 4th at St. Michael Church in Hudson.

His first assignment was Associate Pastor at St. Michael's in Avon from 1962 to 1968. He then became Associate Pastor at St. Catherine's in Norwood from 1968 to 1975.

During his time at St. Catherine's, he was Spiritual Director to the altar boys, ushers, lectors, Catholic Youth Organization, Young Adults Club, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, folk Masses, and taught religion classes to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders at the grammar school. He was also president of the Norwood Clergy Association; founder and representative for St. Catherine's to the Norwood Interfaith Association, and shared chaplaincy duty at the Norwood Hospital and a nursing home in Norwood. He also founded and was Spiritual Director of the charismatic prayer group.

In 1970, he was one of the founders of Pulse, Inc., a community based self-help program in Norwood that focuses on helping young people who are caught up in alcohol, drugs, broken homes, and various anti-social behaviors which could lead to their imprisonment. He served as President/Director from 1972-5 and again in 1982.

In 1974, after becoming aware of the growing charismatic movement and attending a charismatic prayer meeting at the Cenacle in Brighton, he and eight adults

along with thirteen teenagers experienced a Life in the Spirit Seminar at St. Gerard's Church in Canton; all were baptized in the Spirit. At their request a prayer community began, first meeting at homes but eventually at the Church. Within a year the group grew to 65 members.

In 1975, he took a sabbatical and entered the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge where he received a fellowship. During this period he was asked by the Archdiocese of Boston to perform part-time chaplain duties at Walpole State Prison. He then became the full-time chaplain at Norfolk State Prison in 1976.

In 1977, Cardinal Medeiros appointed him to be executive director of the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom, the prison ministry program of the Archdiocese. In this position and as chaplain of Norfolk, he realized that crime and punishment could best be dealt with by all religions jointly, and in 1979 he founded an interfaith prison ministry program, Prisoner Spiritual Ministries, Inc., serving as executive director from 1979 to 1989. In 1981, to further inform the public about what the Lord was doing in prison, he began a prison ministry radio program, "Gates Unbarred", heard every Saturday from 10 to 11 AM over WRCA, 1330 AM.

During the late 70s, Joe entered into a course of studies that led to a doctorate in clinical psychology from Andover-Newton Theological School in May of 1980. He also pursued studies at Harvard, Boston University and Weston Theological School. Added to these academic achievements were a master's degree in history and master's degree in divinity which he received while pursuing his studies at the Seminary.

In 1980, he helped found Seek, Inc., a community based self-help program and hot-line south of Boston where he served as executive director. The first training class had 200 students.

In 1976, while serving as chaplain at the Norfolk prison, Joe believes that his deep commitment to the charismatic renewal movement was the result of experiencing a severe clinical depression which lasted until 1981. His prayer life was most intense in those years and he views it as the beginning of a strong relationship with Jesus. In 1976 while at St. Jude's Church in Norfolk, a woman asked him to pray over her and she rested in the Spirit. Later, another woman, experiencing severe pain in her arm, asked him to pray over her after which the pain was relieved.

Knowing that this ministry comes from the Lord, he continued conducting healing services in many parishes. He has also accepted speaking engagements to discuss prison life and has made it the topic of TV, radio shows and newspaper columns. He was the main speaker at the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International Breakfast in Braintree in 1982 which drew the largest group of people ever attending their Saturday morning meeting. As a result of this engagement he was asked to speak of his prison experiences to other gatherings in Massachusetts and Maine.

Joe has appeared on Channel 5's The Good Day Show, Chronicle, and Five All Night Live; Channel 40 in Springfield's Conversation With; cable TV in Fall River; as well as the Janet Jekhlian Talk Show (WBZ Radio), and The Hubert Jessup Show (WHDH). He wrote a column about prison which appeared every Saturday in The Hudson Daily Sun and The Marlborough Enterprise.

Governor King appointed him to the Advisory Committee on Chaplains in State Institutions, and Governor Dukakis asked him to serve on the Governor's Advisory Committee on Drunk Driving. He also served as vice president of the Eastern Region of the American Catholic Correctional Chaplains Association during 1978-79 and 1981-2.

On September 1, 1992, he was appointed pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Stoughton where he served until 2014. Under Joe's leadership, church-centered activities increased and flourished thanks to more than 500 volunteers. These innovative religious programs and enhancements have embraced parishioners of every age. Some of them are:

- A thriving religious education program for Kindergartners through juniors in high school.
- A parish food pantry that serves about 500 needy families a month.
- An interim replacement parish between 1994-98 for five deacons in preparation for the priesthood.
- A tithing parish since 1999 which donates ten percent of its weekly offertory to organizations that help the needy.
- A frequent and well attended Mass and Healing Service held in the church the last Sunday of the month.
- A men's group called Saint Joseph's Covenant Keeps that meets the last Saturday of each month.
- Life in the Spirit Seminars which are given Thursday evenings for praise and worship to have a more personal relationship with Jesus and to learn more about the Faith.

Joe was granted senior priest/retirement status in 2014, at which time he became resident at Blessed Sacrament Church in Walpole. He still is active as a part time chaplain at Norfolk Prison.