



Fr Charles E. Schmitz, S.J.

(1938-2017. In Zambia 1967-1969)

18 February 2017

Father Charles “Chuck” E Schmitz entered into God’s peace February 18 2017 at the Sacred Heart Jesuit Center, Los Gatos, California. He was 78 years old. A devoted priest and religious, “Padre Carlos” opened wide his heart to the needs, hopes, dreams, fears, and faith of the Spanish-speaking peoples of the Northwest. From celebrating the sacraments to championing human and legal rights, Chuck brought a deep passion and energy to people, places, and institutions in and out of the Church.

Born in Seattle on 29 June 1938, to Charles E and Florence (Karst) Schmitz, Charles Emmitt Schmitz was the oldest of three siblings. He grew up in Salem, OR, where he attended St Joseph Grade School and Sacred Heart Academy. He graduated from Seattle University in 1960. Originally set to be commissioned as an officer through the ROTC program, he chose a different calling: religious life and the priesthood. Fr Schmitz entered the Jesuit Novitiate in Sheridan, OR on 7 September 1960 and did the regular course of liberal arts and philosophical studies there and in Spokane.

Ever eager to do greater things, Chuck volunteered and was sent to teach (with other Oregon Province Jesuits) to Mpima Minor Seminary in Kabwe, in 1967. He returned to the U.S. two years later and began his studies in theology for priesthood. Ordained a priest on 17 June 1972 in Spokane, Fr Chuck undertook graduate studies with hopes of returning to Zambia. Unfortunately, his offer to help seminarians in their educational goals was refused. Though it hurt him inwardly, he was able to regroup and soon other doors of ministry were opened to him Chuck’s work took him to graduate work at the Graduate Theological Union in.

Berkeley, CA; head of the Campus Ministry Department at Seattle University; pastor at St Leo’s Church (Tacoma, WA); Central America Liaison for the Jesuit Conference; minister and rector of Gonzaga Prep (Spokane, WA); superior of St Luke (Woodburn, OR), Socius to the Provincial, superior/coordinator of Ignatian Spirituality at St Joseph (Yakima, WA); and pastoral minister to Prince of Peace Church (Belfair, WA). Prior to entering the Jesuit tertianship program in Jalisco, Mexico, Chuck immersed himself in the Spanish language and soon became a fluent speaker in a short period of time. A great joy of his was to lead Spanish speakers through the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius or other forms of prayer.

He was an energetic, intelligent, seemingly comical, informed type of person. His capabilities gave him preaching facility in Spanish and artistic creatively to paint, draw or design any visuals necessary for classes or displays. He had an innate generosity and an overwhelming joy to share these creative powers with others.

One of the crosses Chuck bore, with great dignity and patience, was the decline in his physical health in recent years. Accustomed to vigorous work, exercise, and play, he found himself in his later years significantly limited in energy and endurance. Walking the length of the building could easily tire him or bring much pain. Yet this did not detract from his love for watching and rooting loudly for the local sports teams (in person or on television).

Chuck joined the Regis Community in Spokane for assistance in his health care needs in 2013; he joined his brother Jesuits in Los Gatos, CA, in mid-January 2017 to receive skilled nursing care at the infirmary there and passed away on 18 February 2017.