



Fr Armand Nigro, S.J.

(1928-2019. In Malawi 1991-1993)

27 September 2019

Armand Nigro was born in Minnehaha section of Spokane, USA, a large Italian immigrant neighborhood, to Frank Anthony and Margaret Mary (Vecchia) Nigro. His only sibling, Mary Rose, later became a CSJP Sister. He went for schooling to Gonzaga High and afterwards entered the Society at Sheridan, Ore in 1944. He studied at Gonzaga University and earned a BA (1950) and MA (1951). He did his regency at Holy Cross Mission in the lower Yukon River teaching Indian and Eskimo boys. He studied theology at Los Gatos, California and was ordained in 1956. He then was sent to the Gregorian University in Rome and completed his PhD in Philosophy in 1963.

His ministry began as a teacher of philosophy in Seattle University and then he moved to Gonzaga University where he lectured in philosophy (1965-1975) and in theology from 1975 onwards. He became deeply involved in training for ministry and in 1981, he co-founded the Mater Dei Institute for late vocations. The institute later developed into a center of training for spirituality. He had a great impact on many religious who became involved, not only in doing the Spiritual Exercises, but also in directing others in them.

While at Gonzaga University he offered his services as a philosophy teacher to boost up the staff at Kachebere, Malawi. For a couple of years (1991-1993) he taught half time in Malawi and the other half in Gonzaga. He helped organize and fund scholarships at Gonzaga University for newly ordained Malawian priests.

The last 15 years of his active ministry was as a retreat director to clergy, religious and laity. He spearheaded the development of training other religious, especially sisters, as retreat directors for religious and lay. He had a great impact directly and indirectly on the lives of hundreds of religious. He was a prolific writer but while he never published a book he wrote over 500 articles mostly on spirituality and retreat direction.

He was a much sought after retreat director and presenter, who lived a simple and holy life with great love for all he met.



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Father Armand Nigro was born 29 March 1928 in Spokane, WA. He entered the Society on 14 August 1944 I Sheridan, OR; ordained 16 June 1956 and made his final profession on 15 August 1962. He died on 27 September 2019 at Sacred Heart Jesuit Center in Los Gatos, California.

A Tribute by Sr. Molly Neville SNJM:

A gentle, holy, happy man of God after the mind and heart of Christ!

Fr. Armand was a Jesuit priest for 75 years; philosopher, theologian, gifted preacher, teacher of prayer, spiritual director, retreat guide, spiritual advisor, co-founder of the Mater Dei Ministry Institute in Spokane – which began in 1981 as a seminary for older vocations - were among some of his contributions and gifts to the Church. His compassion and deep faith shone through his presence. His love of priesthood was palpable. One thing I learned recently is that he gave retreats in India and Italy for Mother Teresa.

I have known Fr. Armand for almost 50 years conducting retreats and days of prayer with him both in CA and outside the state. After he directed our SNJM 30 Day Retreat in Los Gatos in 1972, he encouraged us Holy Name Sisters to become spiritual directors and givers of directed retreats, focused on scripture and discernment. Our community leaders encouraged us in this call and we formulated the Retreat Team which served the greater Bay Area with directed and other retreats for over 35 years. He encouraged and mentored our beginnings. His brilliant intellect and profound mentoring enabled me and many to discover the richness of Ignatian Spirituality and the life of St. Ignatius, the master discerner. To this day my Bible and copy of "Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius" by Louis Puhl SJ are covered with his notes of wisdom and examples of the movements of the Spirit. What a friend, mentor and spiritual influence he became for me and so many in my Holy Names Community.

I do want to thank Fr. Armand, in the name of the hundreds of thousands of women religious world-wide whom he invited and empowered to become spiritual directors and retreat ministers with a Vatican 2 theology. He saw the hunger in the people of God. His contemplative and perceptive knowledge of scripture, his devotion to Mary and concern for the poor were contagious. His was a practical theology. He said he never wrote a book but did create over 500 articles on the themes of prayer, discernment, the persons

of Jesus and Mary and use of scripture for one's prayer life. A friend, Rose Marie Doyle told him "We are your books". I could not agree more.

A memorable aspect of ministering with Fr. Armand were his constant "surprises of the Spirit". I remember one day he called and asked if three of us Holy Names Sisters would like to hear a talk in SF given to women religious on Discernment? Of course, we were thrilled to go hear this presentation and I offered to drive. On the way, one sister asked who was giving the talks? He replied a wonderful team who truly understood discernment and the Rules of Discernment. We were delighted. A bit later one asked how he selected the group. He responded: 'the Spirit'.