

Local Catholics mourn loss of priests, sisters

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1

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Sr. Loreto Downing, IBVM, Fr. Thomas Kawai, Fr. Clemens Hut and Sr. Marie Louise Barhorst died in recent weeks.

The faithful are mourning the loss of two priests and two religious sisters with ties to the Diocese of Phoenix who died in recent weeks.

Sr. Loreto Downing, IBVM, died June 22 after fighting an aggressive cancer. She was 75.

Her funeral Mass was held June 26 at Ss. Simon and Jude Cathedral with interment at St. Francis Catholic Cemetery.

Sr. Loreto grew up near Blarney, Co. Cork, Ireland and entered the Loreto convent in 1957. State-side, she taught at, then led, St. Benilde School in Metairie, La., which became a Blue Ribbon school under her guidance. Sr. Loreto served 17 years directing religious education at Ss. Simon and Jude, always encouraging others to “have an attitude of gratitude.”

Those who knew her left several dozen comments in her virtual guestbook online. Several pointed out her selfless soul, sense of integrity and faith-filled life. One guest remembered her diligence in ensuring the homeless received a proper burial upon their death.

An eternal catechist and faithful Catholic, donations in Sr. Loreto’s honor may be given to the Loreto Sisters’ Retirement Fund or to the Sr. Loreto Memorial Catechist-Formation Scholarship Fund.

Fr. Thomas Kawai, parochial vicar at Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Lake Havasu City, died June 23. He was 52.

Fr. Kawai was diagnosed with cancer within a week of his death and marked 22 years of priesthood the day before his death. In the priest’s final moments, he prayed, “Jesus, I love you. Have mercy on me and forgive me all my sins.”

Fr. Kawai was ordained for the Diocese of Zaria in his native Nigeria. He served at various parishes there and in the nearby Archdiocese of Kaduna before coming to the United States in 2008. He served locally at St. Edward the Confessor, Holy Family Parish and Saint Martin de Porres parishes as well as with Mary’s Ministries. Fr. Kawai spent the last

three years in Lake Havasu City. He will be buried in Nigeria.

Fr. Clemens Hut passed away July 1. He was 102.

Fr. Hut was ordained to the priesthood at age 25 for the Diocese of Indianapolis and had his first pastor role nine years later. He moved to Arizona in 1959 serving at Phoenix’s Pius X and St. Jerome plus Mesa’s Queen of Peace and Christ the King parishes. He also served at Mother of Sorrows in Tucson when Bishop Thomas J. O’Brien was ordained a priest. Fr. Hut retired on paper in 1976.

The priest continued to serve on call at nursing homes and similar places before moving to an assisted living place himself in 2004. A trip over his beloved tortoise, “Mr. T,” put him there. The clock’s daily strike of three set Fr. Hut off for visits with hospice staff, patients and family members at the palliative care unit of his senior living facility. It was these actions and others that earned him a state-level volunteer award by the Aging Services of Arizona Association in 2010 at age 99, a fete rarely earned by a priest. Fr. Hut was an Honorary Life Member of the Knights of Columbus.

Services were held at Queen of Peace Parish in Mesa with interment at nearby Queen of Heaven Cemetery.

Sr. Mary Louise Barhorst formally entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Precious Blood in 1942 at age 15. She was born the youngest of five children in Ohio and died June 4 at the age of 86. She was a sister for 71 years.

Sr. Mary Louise served in education until her first retirement in 1994. She taught grades 3-8 in Mesa, Phoenix and Colorado and high school science at St. Mary’s High School, Gerard Catholic High School and Tucson’s Salpointe High School as well as in the Midwest. Her last 16 years in education were as a guidance counselor in Arizona. Sr. Mary Louise also served as a parish volunteer in Payson and in Ohio before retiring again in 2009.