



Father Richard R. Russell

Chaplain 1968-1989

Fr. Russell was born on October 29, 1936, in Hartford, CT. He attended St. Joseph Cathedral School, then St. Thomas Seminary where he continued his college education until 1956. He studied philosophy at St. Bernard Seminary in Rochester, NY from 1956-58. He completed his studies in Theology and graduated from the North American College in Rome in 1962. He was ordained a priest on December 20, 1961 at St. Peter's in Rome, by Archbishop Martin J. O'Connor, then rector of the North American College. Upon ordination, he served at St. Teresa in Woodbury, St. Thomas in Thomaston and Sacred Heart in New Haven. In September of 1964, he became the Assistant Chaplain to Fr. Healy '49 at Saint Thomas More.

During his time with Fr. Healy, Fr. Russell aided him with the Chapel's weekly Mass schedule as well as with confessions.

After Fr. Healy left in 1966 for sabbatical, Fr. Russell was appointed Interim Chaplain. And in 1968, he was officially appointed Yale's fourth Catholic Chaplain. A position he held until 1989.

Students remember Fr. Russell as someone who was quiet, but wonderful to talk to one-on-one. He was known for his hospitality, teaching students how to make authentic pasta dishes—particularly spaghetti a la carbonara—from his time in Rome. He also gave students space to both live together and create together, through initiatives like The White House, an intentional

community for students, and liturgical dramas. Fr. Russell also enjoyed liturgical experimentation, particularly encouraged by Vatican II and America's pop music culture. The Chapel had 5pm folk Masses through the late 60s and throughout the 70s. As Fr. Russell said in an interview with the *Yale Daily News* on November 13, 1967, "The liturgy has to come from a new excitement [of faith]...The church must try to add 'a community dimension' to the life of the student."

Fr. Russell retired from his work at Saint Thomas More in 1989 and became pastor of St. Catherine of Siena in West Simsbury. In 1991, Fr. Russell received The Yale Medal, the highest award presented by the Yale Alumni Association, for his contributions to campus life. He was the first Catholic Chaplain to receive this honor from the university. Fr. Russell served the rest of his career at St. Catherine of Siena in West Simsbury. He retired as the parish's senior priest in March of 2007. On May 19, 2016, Fr. Russell passed away.

Links

Yale Daily News. "Chaplains Work to Make 'Yale Men' Men."

<https://ydnhistorical.library.yale.edu/?a=d&d=YDN19671113-01.2.2&srpos=30&e=-----196-en-20--21--txt-txIN-Richard+Russell----->