

THE REVEREND ROBERT E. SULLIVAN, JR.

The 100th Birthday Celebration

Since 2007, Christ Church has been blessed to have Fr. Sullivan as a member and for a time, as an assisting priest. Below is a short biography taken from a local press release several years ago and included in *Christ Episcopal Church*, written by Joan Mitchell:

The pathway that led Fr. Sullivan to Christ Church, Woodbury has been circuitous. A native of Philadelphia, he was baptized at Trinity Church, Oxford, a historic Colonial-era church in the Northeast section of the city. When Robert was ten years old, the Sullivan family moved to Hamilton Township, a suburb of Trenton, and transferred their Church affiliation to Christ Church, Bordentown. It was here that young Robert first met the late Bishop Banyard, who at that time served as Rector of the Sullivan's church. Following his confirmation in 1938 at Christ Church, Robert became a member of the Order of St. Vincent, and served as an Acolyte for several years in his home parish.

After graduation from Hamilton High School, Fr. Sullivan was inducted into the United States Army. At the completion of his Infantry training he embarked for France, where he served in the 26th Division under General George Patton. Wounded in battle, he spent time in hospitals in France and the southern part of England. Back at the front when the war ended, he was sent home in January 1946 with the Silver Star and two Purple Heart Medals.

In 1946 Fr. Sullivan entered Princeton University. Following his graduation three years later, he enrolled in the Episcopal Church's Philadelphia Divinity School. His ordination to the Diaconate was celebrated in June 1952 in his home parish of Christ Church, Bordentown, and his early assignments in this role included serving as Vicar of St. Peter's, Woodbury Heights, and St. James, Paulsboro. He was ordained to the Priesthood at Trinity Cathedral in Trenton in December 1952.

The year 1958 found Fr. Sullivan far from New Jersey at the Institut Catholique in Paris, where his studies included French Spirituality. In 1959, he returned to the United States and entered the Novitiate of the Order of the Holy Cross in West Park, New York (a monastic order of the Episcopal Church). As a member of the Order, his responsibilities included teaching at St. Andrews' Preparatory School in Sewanee, Tennessee and later at Mt. Calvary Retreat House in Santa Barbara, California.

His missionary work next took him to the Holy Cross Mission in Bolahun, a town located in a primitive section of Liberia, West Africa. For six years he served as Chaplain at the leper colony in Bolahun, while also teaching at the Mission Schools located within the colony. Fr. Sullivan remembers these six years as one of the most exciting and rewarding periods of his lifetime, and today is appalled at the constant turmoil and chaos that affects this once peaceful area of the world.

In 1971 Fr. Sullivan left the Order of the Holy Cross and returned to New Jersey, where he served as an assistant for almost a year at St. James, Long Branch. In 1972 he was appointed Rector of St. John's, Chews Landing, a distinguished Episcopal Church which has been placed on the National Register of Historic Buildings. He preached his first sermon there on a snowy Sunday morning in February to a congregation which over the next 25 years grew to know and love him. In 1989 under Fr. Sullivan's leadership the congregation celebrated their Church's Bicentennial anniversary. Fr. Sullivan remained at St. John's until his formal "retirement" in 1998.

From his background, it is obvious that Fr. Sullivan loves to travel, and by now has actually lost count of the number of times he has crossed the ocean. He is also an avid tennis player, and can be found on local courts at least once or twice each week.

Fr. Sullivan currently lives at the Mews, where again, he has become a beloved part of its community and is a pastor and chaplain to many. Joan sums up so much, as she describes Fr. Sullivan as “a warm, witty and charming man who serves as a role model of humility, generosity and kindness in his treatment of others. The parishioners of Christ Church are blessed by his presence among us”. In gratitude and love, we wish Fr. Sullivan every blessing in this 100th year of his life.