To: All Priests, Pastoral Administrators, Deacons, Religious, Chancery Staff, and Seminarians

From: Msgr. Robert A. Kurwicki
Vicar General

Date: September 21, 2023

We announce the peaceful death at Heisinger Bluffs, Jefferson City, Missouri, on the 19th day of September, 2023, at the age of 77, of

REVEREND MONSIGNOR MICHAEL JOSEPH WILBERS, KCHS
Retired Priest of the Diocese of Jefferson City

Monsignor Michael J. Wilbers was born on June 12, 1946, the son of late Fred L. and Julietta (Schwartze) Wilbers in Jefferson City, Missouri. He had four siblings, two brothers are deceased, Fredrick and David. He is survived by his two sisters, Mary Helen Norfleet and Julie Wieberg, both of Jefferson City, and his brother priests.

He attended St. Peter’s Grade School, Jefferson City; St. Thomas Aquinas High School Seminary, Hannibal; and Immaculate Conception Seminary, Conception, Missouri. He was ordained a deacon at St. Pius X Church, Moberly.

He was ordained a priest on February 26, 1972, at St. Peter Church, Jefferson City, by the Most Reverend Michael F. McAuliffe, Bishop of Jefferson City.

His pastoral assignments were:

- Associate Director, Diocesan Office of Religious Education and Associate Pastor of St. Pius X Church, Moberly, appointed March 13, 1972 until July 1974.
- Pastor, St. Thomas the Apostle Church, St. Thomas, appointed August 24, 1979.
- Pastor of Our Lady of the Lake Church, Lake Ozark, appointed June 30, 1999.
- Vicar for Administration, appointed September 9, 1999-February 1, 2013.
- Episcopal Vicar of the South, appointed July 1, 2002.
- Retired from active ministry on December 31, 2013.
Bishop McAuliffe nominated Father Wilbers as a Knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in 1990. Monsignor Wilbers held the rank of Knight Commander (KCHS) at the time of his death. On February 14, 2000, Bishop Gaydos announced that Pope John Paul II had bestowed the title of Prelate of Honor to His Holiness on Monsignor Wilbers.

Monsignor Wilbers also served as a member of the Education Department of the Missouri Catholic Conference from 1974-1981. He was a Priest Observer at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference of Bishops General Meeting of November 10-13, 1986. He was a member of the Diocesan Lay Retirement Committee from 1981-1/31/13, an ex-officio member of the Priests Senate from 1981-1998 and the Presbyteral Council from 1998-2013, and a founding member of the Diocesan Excellence in Education Fund Board of Directors from 1989-1/31/13.

As Chancellor, beginning in 1981, he was a member of: College of Consultants, Priests’ Personnel Board, Diocesan Finance Committee, Archivist, Administrative Committee for the Diocesan Pastoral Committee and Priests Senate. Monsignor Wilbers served as Finance Officer from 1983-1990. Beginning in 1988 as Vicar General, he continued as a member of the College of Consultants, Priests’ Personnel Board, Diocesan Finance Committee and Priests Senate.

DPC Education and Administration Commissions - 1974-97
Education Dept. of MCC - 1974-81
Diocesan Chancellor - 1981-8/89
Diocesan Finance Committee - 1981 to 12-31-13
Priests’ Mutual Benefit Society - 1981 to 12-31-13
Priests’ Senate - 1981-5/98
College of Consultants - 1983-12/31/13
Priests’ Personnel Board - 3/98-12/31/13
Presbyteral Council - 5/98 to 12-31-13
Episcopal Vicar of the South - 7/1/02-12/31/13
Vicar for Administration - 6/25/03-1/31/13
Catholic Diocese of Jefferson City Corporation - 2008-1/31/13
Diocese of Jefferson City Real Estate Corporation - 2008-1/31/13
Diocese of Jefferson City Jubilee Fund - 9/30/07-1/31/13
Catholic Diocese of Jefferson City Fund - 2006-12/31/13

Monsignor Wilbers celebrated his 25th Anniversary of Holy Priesthood on March 2, 1997 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Jefferson City. He celebrated his 40th Anniversary of Holy Priesthood at Our Lady of the Lake Church, Lake Ozark with the parish family and friends on February 26, 2012. He celebrated his 50th Anniversary with Bishop McKnight presenting him with a Papal Blessing from Pope Francis on February 27, 2023.

Monsignor Wilbers accompanied the Bishops of Jefferson City on two Ad Limina visits to Rome in 1998 and 2004 to meet with Pope St. John Paul II.
Visitation will be at St. Peter Catholic Church, Jefferson City, Missouri, on Sunday, September 24, 2023, from 4:00 until 6:00 pm, with the Wake Service at 6:00 pm presided by Very Reverend Christopher C. Cordes, Vicar for Priests. There will be an additional visitation at the Cathedral of Joseph, Jefferson City, Missouri on Monday, September 25, 2023, from 9:30 until 10:30 am. The concelebrated Mass of Christian Burial will follow at 11:00 am at Cathedral of Joseph, Jefferson City, Missouri. Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight, Bishop of Jefferson City and Most Reverend John R. Gaydos, Bishop Emeritus of Jefferson City will preside, and Reverend Monsignor Robert A. Kurwicki, Vicar General will be the homilist. A meal will follow the Mass at Cana Hall. Burial will be in the Resurrection Catholic Cemetery in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Priests are invited to concelebrate the Funeral Mass and are kindly asked to bring their alb, diocesan chasuble and stole. Deacons are also welcome and are asked to bring their alb, diocesan dalmatic and stole as well. All priests and deacons should gather and vest in Cana Hall before the Funeral Mass. Those with mobility issues may vest in the Priest Vestry.

Monsignor Wilbers was a member of the Priests’ Purgatorial Society, as are all diocesan priests. Priests are reminded of the obligation to celebrate three Masses for his eternal repose: one within a month of his death, the other two within three months. Those who concelebrate his Funeral Mass may consider it as one of the required Masses for his intention.

Please remember Monsignor Wilbers in your prayers and also invite the prayers of your people for him. We pray that the Lord look with mercy upon him and give him the reward of his priestly labors, the fullness of life promised to those who preach the Gospel.

Memorial Donations may be made to the Priests Mutual Benefit Society (PMBS), Diocesan Excellence in Education Fund (DEEF), or School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND).

For further information, please contact Very Reverend Christopher L. Cordes, Vicar for Priests at the Chancery Office (573-635-9127).