

'60s 'street priest' leaves Newton parish

By KATHRYN MARCCHOCKI

The Rev. Paul R. Shanley, nationally known for his work with runaways, drug abusers and homosexuals, announced this week he will resign as pastor of St. Jean's-St. John's parish in Newton.

Shanley is taking a one-year sabbatical for health problems caused by his distress over the Vatican's revised oath of fidelity required of new priests, according to a parishioner. He announced his decision at a closed meeting Monday night.

at the church. Only registered parishioners were allowed to enter, and members of the press were escorted outside.

"The people are very upset about it. They're devastated," said Min Donovan, a pastoral associate in the church. "They are saddened by his leaving."

About 150 of the parish's 600 adults attended the meeting, she said. Attempts to speak to Shanley yesterday were unsuccessful. "At this point, at least, he feels it's a pastoral, a family matter," Donovan said.

And a church member said he warned his flock that they would be approached by members of the press and instructed them not to answer questions.

But at least one parishioner told reporters Shanley's departure stems from his disapproval of the Vatican's revision of the oath of fidelity and profession of faith required of all new priests.

Shanley, who was ordained in 1960, already has made his profession of faith and oath of fidelity to the teaching of the Catholic church, according to church officials.

But he allegedly disputes a revision made to the oath this year which will require assent to the teaching authority of the church.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Boston confirmed Shanley's resignation, but would not discuss his meetings with Cardinal Bernard J. Law, saying they are "confidential."

Shanley is due to start his sabbatical next month and will be staying in Palm Beach, Calif., parishioners said. Shanley, who is in his late 60s, was nationally known for

his ministry to homosexuals until he was reassigned to parish work in 1979 by then-Cardinal Humberto Medeiros. He came to St. Jean's-St. John's 10 years ago and served as its pastor for the past 6, Donovan said.

The Newton parish has been a good fit for Shanley who was known as the "street priest" in the 1960s.

"If he's considered controversial, I think it's controversial in the eyes of some people," Donovan said yesterday. "The people are wonderful here. . . . They are warm and caring."

Controversial priest leaves Newton parish

By Gloria Negri
GLOBE STAFF

A controversial Roman Catholic priest has resigned from his parish and will go on a sabbatical for an undisclosed period of time, officials said yesterday.

Rev. Paul Shanley, pastor at St. Jean's-St. John's Church in Newton, announced his plans to his parishioners during a meeting at the church Monday night.

Father Shanley could not be reached yesterday for comment, but John B. Walsh, spokesman for the Boston Archdiocese, confirmed that he had resigned and said, "To the best of my knowledge he's not leaving the priesthood, but is taking a sabbatical."

Father Shanley's resignation occurs amid speculation that he took issue with recent revisions to two oaths - the Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity - required of all new pastors.

The new oath is considered by some to be more encompassing than the existing version to leave less room for personal conscience.

Walsh denied the speculation, saying that a new profession was published in the official Vatican newspaper last February but that it had not been promulgated in the United States.

"No one is being required to take the new oath," said Walsh, adding that Father Shanley had already taken the oaths to become pastor at St. Jean's-St. John's.

Rev. Daniel J. Cavanaugh, a pastor in residence at St. Jean's-

St. John's, said Father Shanley resigned because of a stomach ailment and plans to spend the next several months resting in California.

In the 1960s and '70s, Father Shanley was known as the "street priest," and even the "hippie priest" for his ministries with Boston's young runaways, drug addicts and drifters. He was specifically assigned by the Boston Archdiocese to work exclusively with what he referred to as "our alienated youth."

He never hesitated to espouse causes or to be outspoken on issues, even if his opinions were contrary to those of his clerical superiors.

In 1969, as curate of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Braintree, Father Shanley resigned from the Archdiocesan Priests Senate when he took a stand in an internal controversy involving St. Ann's Church parish elementary school in Quincy. He not only called for the removal of the pastor of St. Ann's, but he took both the Senate and Cardinal Richard Cushing to task for their handling of the situation.

In 1970, Cardinal Humberto Medeiros appointed Father Shanley to work with homosexuals and other "sexual minorities" and their families and, for eight years, he was among a handful of priests across the country doing such work. However, Father Shanley's ministry to the gay community ended when he and Cardinal Medeiros differed on the church's outreach to homosexuals.