

Rev. Joseph A. Kenney, 84, priest at area churches

By JACQUES KELLY
SUN STAFF

The Rev. Joseph A. Kenney, retired pastor of St. Clement's Roman Catholic Church in Lansdowne, died Tuesday of heart failure at Long Crandon, a retirement home for priests in Baltimore County. He was 84.

In his 57 years as a priest, he served as a curate at the Shrine of the Little Flower parish in Northeast Baltimore and as pastor of St. Joseph's in Taneytown, St. Rita's in Dundalk and St. Clement's. He retired in 1987.

"He was a joyful, exuberant and gregarious man. He created an atmosphere about him. He loved to tell stories and jokes. There wasn't a home in this neighborhood where he wasn't welcome, and he excelled at visiting," said the Rev. Michael J. Orchik, pastor of the Shrine of the Little Flower. "Among the people who knew him in their school years, he was a legend."

Father Kenney was transferred from the Belair Road church in 1963, but he returned for class reunions and the parish's feast day celebration each October. A crowd of old friends would gather around him each time he returned to his former church.

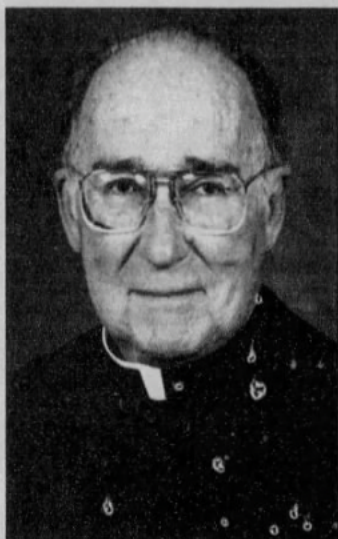
"He was a quiet, humble, reserved man who connected with the parish," said Frank Lynch, a former Chesterfield Avenue resident who now lives in Bel Air. "At lunchtime, he would come into the schoolyard and the kids would flock to him. Children liked his quiet ways."

Family members said Father Kenney enjoyed traveling and often took trips to Europe and Nova Scotia. He often paid the way for his nieces and nephews to accompany him.

He also liked inviting friends and family to meals at local restaurants. It was a tradition continued after his death: He made arrangements to prepay for a large lunch after his funeral today.

Born in Baltimore, he spent his early childhood at St. Anne's parish, at Greenmount Avenue and 22nd Street. He then moved to Poplar Grove Street in West Baltimore before entering St. Charles College Seminary in Catonsville in 1931.

After spending six years in the minor seminary, he continued his



1990 PHOTO

The Rev. Joseph A. Kenney
was a "legend" in the community.

philosophy training at St. Mary's Seminary in the 900 block of N. Paca St. in Seton Hill. He then studied theology at St. Mary's Seminary in Roland Park.

He was ordained by Bishop John McNamara on June 8, 1943, at the Basilica of the Assumption.

A Mass of Christian burial will be celebrated at 11 a.m. today at the Shrine of the Little Flower, 3500 Belair Road.

Father Kenney is survived two sisters, Julia Schmidt of Owings Mills and Sophie Baldwin of Greenfield Township, Pa.; and nieces and nephews.