

Chaplain Counseling Encourages Patients

By SHIRLEY CEARING

DYER — Daily visits with patients is the most time-consuming responsibility of the Rev. Julian Jercha, newly appointed chaplain of Our Lady of Mercy Hospital.

Father Julian, as he prefers to be called, tries to visit each patient every day to offer encouragement and spiritual help. May times a family will ask him to break bad news of an incurable disease to a patient.

A 6:30 a.m. mass is offered in the hospital chapel for the staff, visitors and ambulatory patients. A 9 a.m. mass is offered on Sunday.

Of all the patients in the hospital, Father Julian said those who most need his spiritual assistance are the psychiatric patients and those preparing for surgery.

He notes an increase of teenage psychiatric patients.

He said:

"Parents should know where

their children are, whom they're with, what they're doing. They should set an example for them. People in pursuit of the dollar soon lose the ability to share, feel or care.

"Every generation has had its problems—we have the hippies and the beatniks."

Father Julian attributes many mental illnesses to a lack of religion.

"How we react to crises, tragedy and every day problems depends on what we have inside of us—religion, faith and courage," he said.

Father Julian has the distinction of being the tallest priest in the area. His height is 6 feet, 7 inches. At St. Mary's College, Orchard Lake, Mich., he was a center on the basketball team.

He was born and raised in Hammond where he attended St. Casimir School. He attended St. Boneventure High School in Wisconsin.

After receiving a bachelor of

science degree from St. Mary College, he entered SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary at Orchard Lake. He was ordained a priest June 7, 1950, at Sacred Heart Church at Notre Dame.

His first appointment was as an assistant pastor in St. Stanislaus Church in East Chicago. He was there 12 years.

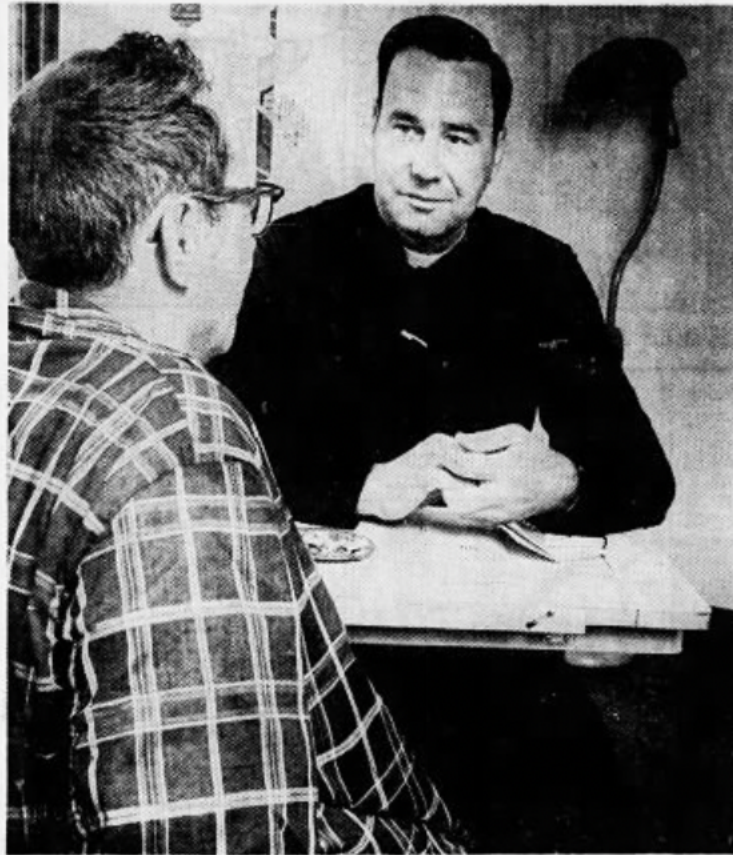
He was an assistant in St. Stanislaus parish, Michigan City and St. Paul Church in Valparaiso.

Prior to coming to Our Lady of Mercy Hospital, Father Julian was chaplain at Beatty Memorial Hospital, Westville.

He said no single incident was responsible for his entering the priesthood, although several of his uncles are priests.

His principal hobby during spare time is music. He plays the organ, piano and violin.

He collects phonograph records. He lists Andy Williams as his favorite recording star.



HOSPITAL patient has a discussion with the Rev. Julian I. Jercha.