

# 50 Years In Priesthood For Father Steponaitis

The Rev. Justin Steponaitis, pastor of St. Francis Parish, will celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with a special con-celebrated Mass of Thanksgiving in St. Francis Church at 3 p.m. Sunday.

Bishop Bernard P. Flanagan and many area priests will con-celebrate with Father Steponaitis. The St. Casimir's Men's Choir of Worcester, under the direction of Olga Kersis, will sing with Valius Rozevicius the soloist.

A dinner reception will follow the

Mass at 5 p.m. at the Elks Club, Orange. General parish co-chairmen are John Krustapentus and Dr. Henry Gailunas.

Father Steponaitis was born Sept. 1, 1912, in the village of Skaigiriai, Sintautai parish, Lithuanian, the son of Kazimieras and Petronele (Stalioraitis) Steponaitis. He was one of 10 children. He attended grammar school in Katiliai and Sakai and Naumiensis secondary school.

He prepared for the priesthood at the diocesan seminar in Vilkaviskis and was ordained on June 13, 1937, by Bishop Antanas Karosas at the Vilkaviskis Cathedral.

His first assignment in the priesthood was to the parish of St. Joseph in Plutiskes. Eighteen months later he was assigned to the Cathedral parish of 10,000 people.

In October 1944, Father Steponaitis was evacuated to Germany by the retreating German Army and then was assigned to do pastoral in Northern Germany where he took care of



**FATHER STEPONAITIS**

the Lithuanians in six displaced persons camps. In 1948 he was sent to England by Bishop Vincent Podolski to care for the spiritual needs of the Lithuanians in Liverpool, Manchester, Widnes, St. Helens and several scattered small villages in Northern England.

On July 23, 1953, he was sent to Dallas, Texas, to do parish work. Then, on Jan. 28, 1954, he was assigned as curate to Our Lady of Vilna parish, Worcester.

In June 1968, Father Steponaitis was assistant pastor of St. Casimir's parish, Worcester. On Sept. 10, 1971 he was appointed administrator of St. Francis of Assisi Parish. Following his incardination as a priest of the Worcester Diocese he was named pastor and has been the parish's spiritual leader for the past 16 years.

Throughout his priesthood, Father Steponaitis has been devoted to his priestly ideals and to the youth and elderly. He is an avid horticulturist and the parish grounds are proof of his talents.

Throughout his tenure, St. Francis has had an active parish council, Women's Guild, Knights of Lithuania Council, Boy Scout Troop and a 34-member altar server group. During his stay at St. Francis, Father Steponaitis has done extensive parish, church and hall renovations and through his efforts a large Lithuanian-style steel wayside cross was erected on the church property. William Wisnaukas of Gardner, a member of the Knights, commented, "He has gained the respect of the Lithuanian people and the many non-Lithuanians who are part of the parish family."