

PROFILE

Rev. Swift recalls career as priest

by Pam Garner
of The Star-Herald staff

Rev. Gerald Swift ST will retire from the priesthood at St. Therese's Catholic Church in Kosciusko September 1, after serving churches throughout the southeast for over 40 years.

Swift serves the Catholic congregation in Louisville half of each week and Kosciusko, the other half.

He has been in Louisville 13 years and in Kosciusko for 10 years.

"At an early age I felt a call from God to dedicate my life to his service and to try to be a powerful good in the lives of the people I would encounter in the ministry," said Swift.

Swift, who was raised in Manhattan, New York, graduated from the Catholic University, School of Theology in Washington D. C. in 1946.

He served assignments in Savannah, Tennessee; Hitchcock, Oklahoma; Norfolk, Virginia; Alexandria, Virginia; Camden, Kosciusko and Louisville.

"I volunteered to come to the south," said Swift. "I saw a need for a pastor in central Mississippi."

"Although Catholicism is the largest Christian denomination in the world with over 600 million members, less than one percent of the population in the south is Catholic," he added.

Swift said he first realized the need for Catholic priests in the south during his first week as a minister in Tennessee.

"A Catholic gentleman came to my door and told me he had been waiting for me for 50 years," noted Swift.

"As a child he had been baptized into the Catholic church in Jackson, Tennessee and had never lived near a church. When I moved into his area it was his first opportunity to attend a Catholic church," he added.

Swift said there has been a Catholic church in Kosciusko for approximately 50 years and the



Rev. Gerald Swift

membership has stayed "about the same."

"I first became familiar with the Kosciusko congregation when I was at Camden from 1958-62. We took care of Kosciusko and Carthage churches out of Camden," he said.

"The principle thing I enjoy most about my work is the feeling that I am doing something that is very necessary," said Swift.

"I have a deep interest in trying to establish parish family communities," he added.

Although he said he has seen no change in the religious lives of the people in Kosciusko in the 10 years he has been here, Swift said he has noticed an increased interest in furthering and developing public education.

"They have taken big steps in the public education system here," he said.

"The greatest difficulty of people today, in the community, schools and church, is building a strong enough faith to face the ever growing indifference to religious and moral principles," said Swift.

"It is very hard to be a real Christian," he insisted.

Swift said the solution to that problem is for individual families to develop "deep religious convictions."

"People must have the courage to live by their convictions and to walk alone and not follow the crowd," he said.

Swift enjoys reading and listening to classical music in his spare time.

Upon retirement he will settle in Colonial Beach, Virginia.

"I hope to have the opportunity to travel and visit with family and friends," he said.

Rev. Bosco Genuardi ST, of Los Angeles, California, will succeed Swift.