

Thousands Pay Respects As Rev. Doyle Is Buried

More than 5000 persons paid their respects to the Rev. John S. Doyle, and many of them trudged through the snow of Mt. Calvary Cemetery today as he was buried.

The winter setting for the last rites of Father Doyle, who died Monday at 73, are particularly appropriate — he frequently helped push cars out of a snow-clogged church parking lot on Sunday mornings and he never allowed the weather to stop him from visiting the sick in their homes.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church at 3148 Abbott Rd., Hamburg, near the Orchard Park town line, holds about 1100 persons. Every seat was taken for the parish Mass offered Thursday evening, and thousands more had paid their respects earlier.

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"IF YOU talk about Sacred Heart, not many people will know which one it is," said one parishioner after the service. "If you just refer to it as Father Doyle's church, a lot of people in Buffalo know what you mean."

Father Doyle died Monday in New Orleans, where he had gone to see the Sugar Bowl football game. In a way, it was a fitting death for a man who loved sports, a man of action as well as contemplation.

When Father Doyle took over at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in 1949, it was a mission of some 200 members. When he died 27 years later, Our Lady was a 2200-family parish with a new church and school.

FATHER DOYLE'S love of children, sports and his alma mater, St. Bonaventure University, were crystalized one memorable night about a decade ago in Memorial Auditorium.

"During a Canisius-Niagara basketball game, I spotted him sitting with what looked like a hundred kids," one parishioner recalled.

"As he usually did, he probably paid their way in. On his lap he had a portable television set so he wouldn't miss Bona-



REV. JOHN S. DOYLE

venture's own game that night."

In his boyhood, John Doyle was an altar boy for Father Nelson H. Baker, founder of Lackawanna's Our Lady of Victory Basilica and Homes of Charity. Some who knew Father Doyle believe his own stature as a priest was comparable to that of Father Baker.

FATHER DOYLE earned a legendary reputation of his own for his countless visits to patients in Our Lady of Victory Hospital and Buffalo's Mercy Hospital and his visits to shut-ins throughout Orchard Park, West Seneca and Hamburg.

Father Doyle was reportedly immortalized in stone even before his death: One of the two boys in the Father Joseph Butler Memorial sculpture at St. Bonaventure is said to be John Doyle, sometimes known as "Stewie" when he attended the old Bona prep school.

But Father Doyle's parishioners don't need a statue to remember him: "No matter how many burdens he had, he always had a smile and a helping hand," one said. "That's the way we'll always remember him."