

OBITUARIES

Msgr. Joseph P. Wacławski, helped sponsor Asians

July 15, 1917 — Nov. 11, 2004



Monsignor Joseph P. Wacławski, former youth director for the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo and longtime pastor of St. James Parish in Depew, died Thursday in his Depew home following a long illness. He was 87.

The Buffalo native grew up in Black Rock and attended Assumption graduate school. He graduated from the Diocesan Preparatory Seminary and the Little Seminary of St. Joseph and the Little Flower. He received his seminary training at Our Lady of the Angels Seminary and was ordained to the priesthood in 1942 by Bishop John Duffy.

Known as "Father Joe," the monsignor served briefly as administrator of Immaculate Conception chapel in Cassadaga before becoming assistant pastor of St. Paul Parish in Kenmore from 1943 to 1947.

He served as assistant pastor of Assumption Parish and later at St. Stanislaus Parish, where he spent nine years.

Monsignor Wacławski served eight years as diocesan youth director, while serving as well as weekend assistant at St. Josaphat Parish in Cheektowaga, resident director of Camp Turner in Salamanca and chaplain of St. Rita's Home.

In 1964, he was appointed superior of the diocese's mission in La Paz, Bolivia, a post he held until 1969.

He then became pastor of St. James for the next 23 years. He helped arrange for families from places like Vietnam and Laos who had immigrated to be sponsored by the parish. One Vietnamese boy later became a priest who now works in a Vietnamese parish in California, according to St. James parishioner Janet Corda.

"He was very instrumental in trying to better

the lives of others," said Corda.

At 50th anniversary celebration of his ordination, friends recalled how the humble priest, an airplane pilot in his younger days, organized a group of about 50 Catholic youth from St. Stan's Parish to take their first airplane trip, from Buffalo to Rochester.

Monsignor Wacławski enjoyed the outdoors and tinkered with farming, raising strawberries and garlic. He often had a faithful dog at his side, including most recently a Brittany spaniel named Casey.

He retired as pastor in 1992 but continued to serve in ministry as a mission priest in the Glenmary Missions in Tennessee, where he would drive many miles between parishes to offer Sunday Masses.

Surviving are a sister, Mary Penkas of Buffalo and a brother, Thaddeus of Buffalo.

Monsignor Wacławski will lie in state from 4 to 8 p.m. Sunday in St. James Church, 496 Terrace Blvd., Depew.

Auxiliary Bishop Edward M. Grosz will preside at a Mass of Christian Burial at 10:30 a.m. Monday in St. James Parish. Burial will be in St. Stanislaus Cemetery, Cheektowaga.