Catholic mainstay Piovan dies at 78

BY MONIQUE ROTH
L'OBSERVATEUR

LAPLACE — The Rev. Benjamin Piovan, founding pastor of Ascension of Our Lord Church in LaPlace, died Monday in Saltillo, Mexico. He was 78.

Archbishop Philip Hannan appointed Piovan as founding pastor of AOL in 1979. In December 2006, Piovan retired from his pastoral duties at AOL to continue God's priestly work in Saltillo, where he was able to fulfill his dream of missionary work.

Amarna Englert, church secretary at AOL, said she worked with Piovan for over five years.

"We're going to miss him so much," Englert said. "He never expected anything out of us that he didn't do himself."

She said Piovan thoroughly enjoyed his missionary work in Mexico, which included ministering to over



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100 churches, as well as his own San Miguel Church. She said in addition to serving the people of Mexico in a spiritual way, he also enjoyed teaching them how to grow and cultivate food and crops.

"He taught them how to get the best out of the Earth God gave us," she said.

AOL celebrated Piovan's 50th Ordination Anniversary on May 29, with Piovan in attendance.

Born in Padua, Italy, on February 24, 1936, Piovan entered the seminary at 11-years-old and made his religious profession at 17.

With special permission from his parents, Piovan came to America as Brother Benny, a Salesian. After finishing college in New Jersey, he taught three years in a Salesian school in Tampa, Fla., before spending the next two years in New York as teacher and residential life coordinator.

After returning to Italy to finish his studies at the Theology Seminary, Piovan was ordained a Priest in 1964 at his church of baptism, Our Lady of

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Good Health.

After Ordination, Piovan taught in New Jersey for two years. In 1967 he came to Louisiana to Archbishop Shaw High School to teach biology and serve as dean of discipline. While there he also served as prison chaplain to Jefferson Parish in Gretna.

In 1971 Piovan joined the Archdiocese of New Orleans and was appointed as chaplain to St. Charles Catholic High School, a post he held for over 30 years.

Other assignments included Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Kenner and St. Rita in Harahan.

In addition, Piovan served in the Metropolitan Tribunal, the Catholic Knights of America State Chaplain, the Archbishop Blenk Assembly 318, the Ascension of Our Lord Knights of Columbus Council 9623 and the St. John-St. Charles Deanery.

He formed the Clergy of the Alliance, resulting in today's establishment of the Ministry of Care. He also extended himself to area hospitals, nursing homes and funeral homes.

Visitation is from 6 to 9 p.m. Monday at AOL, 1900 Greenwood Drive, with the rosary recited at 6:30 p.m.

On Tuesday, visitation will resume from 9 a.m. to noon, when the funeral Mass will begin. Interment will be in St. John Memorial Gardens in LaPlace.

Memorial donations may be made to The Piovan Endowment or the Saltillo, Mexico mission in care of Ascension of Our Lord, 799 Fairway Drive, LaPlace 70068.

Funeral arrangements will be provided by Millet Guidry Funeral Home in LaPlace.

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