



The Rev. Chester J. Pilarski, a senior priest of the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw, died Thursday, April 16, 2015 at his home.

He was born May 10, 1925 in Rogers City to the late Walter and Agnes Pilarski.

Our dear brother, uncle, friend, neighbor, teacher, social worker and pastor, Father Chet, was escorted by the Blessed Mother to his brother and Savior, Jesus Christ.

He was known, loved and admired by many people. He loved and cared for everyone.

Father Chet was an avid reader, athlete and a fan of all sports. He enjoyed playing baseball, football, basketball, ping pong, billiards/pool and golf. He was known to have won many desserts from fellow-seminarians as they paid their debt to the winner of ping pong matches.

He lived life to the fullest and suffered many, many, illnesses with great fortitude and hope.

As an advocate of positive thinking, Father Chet didn't speak harshly or give negative comments but, affirmed and encouraged people, young and older. Appreciation and gratitude were daily attributes for Father Chet as he expressed gratitude for parishioners' generous, selfless work. He appreciated every visit, phone call, card and letter of encouragement.

His door was literally always open to his devoted parishioners, neighbors and friends who would simply place, on the counter or in the refrigerator, countless venison neck roasts, steaks, sausage, fish, canned and baked goods, meals, produce and homemade wine. People knew they were always welcome to just walk in.

Father Chet was predeceased by his mother and father, Agnes and Walter John Pilarski; his little brother, Ralph; and his big sister, Sister Mary Agnese Pilarski.

Those left to mourn his loss are his brothers and sister-in-law, Raymond Pilarski, a priest of the Diocese of Gaylord, and Walter R. and Jacqueline (Wozniak) Pilarski; his nephews and nieces, Gary M. and Mary Therese Pilarski, Robert Pilarski, William and Shelley Pilarski, Cathryn and Greg Haines, Mary Jo and Jim Monroe and Jennifer and Jim Tilton; his grand nieces and nephews, John, Hannah, Thomas and Eric Pilarski, Daniel, Rebecca and Lauren Haines, Emily, Megan and Sarah Monroe and Cole and Kate Tilton; his adopted family, Mark and Jane Grzegorzcyk, Elizabeth and Derryll Schenk, Paul and Katie Grzegorzcyk, William and Jillian Grzegorzcyk, John and Heather Grzegorzcyk, Jim and Amanda Grzegorzcyk, Maria Grzegorzcyk and Bryan Sinicki, Carolyn Grzegorzcyk, Markie Grzegorzcyk and their 21 grandchildren.

We offer our gratitude to Father Chet's friends, his brother Priests and Deacons, Doctors Rajesh Dandamudi, Terry Dardas and the late Eugene Kulinski; his dentists, Doctor Frank Matthew Piesko and the late Doctor Frank Piesko, Sr.; to all those who cared for him at McLaren Bay Region and Bay Special Care Rehab; his lawyer and long time friends, Jim and Ann Florip; his dear friends at Monitor Pharmacy; former secretaries; coworkers and parishioners.

Father Chet received his elementary education at St. Ignatius of Loyola School in Rogers City and his secondary and college education at St. Joseph Seminary in Grand Rapids.

He continued his priestly formation at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit where he studied philosophy. He studied theology at St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore, Md.

He was ordained to the priesthood on June 3, 1950 by the Most Rev. Stephen S. Woznicki, the second Bishop of Saginaw, at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw.

Father Pilarski served as associate pastor at St. Mary, Alpena. He was pastor of Sacred Heart, Kawkawlin; St. Christopher, Bridgeport; Blessed Trinity, Frankenmuth; Blessed Sacrament, Midland; and St. Agnes, Freeland.

Also, during his priesthood, Father Chet served as associate director and director of Catholic Charities in Alpena and Bay City, chaplain of the Newman Club at Delta College and Saginaw Valley State University, director of the Diocesan Personnel Board, director of the Diocesan CHD office, and director of the Office of Pastoral Planning of the Diocese of Saginaw.

During his priesthood, he completed graduate courses at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, earning a master's degree in social work.

He spent a year in field work at the Detroit Catholic Family Center. He also attended Notre Dame, Ind.

Father Chet was a member and former chaplain for the Knights of Columbus. Father Chet taught at Delta College for 20 years teaching philosophy, logic and semantics.

He served as a welfare commissioner for the State of Michigan, being appointed to that position by Gov. John Swanson and re-appointed by Gov. George Romney.

Father Chet was an instructor at Bay City and Grand Rapids Mercy School of Nursing.

In his later years, Father Pilarski participated in various diocesan events and also served as sacramental minister at St. Valentine, Beaver; St. Anne, Linwood; and Sacred Heart, Kawkawlin. These are now the three churches of Prince of Peace Parish.

Father Pilarski attained senior priest status on July 14, 2004 at 80 years of age and continued to celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy on a regular basis until February 2015. He was grateful to have been able to hear confessions on Monday of Holy Week.

Father Pilarski's funeral Mass will be celebrated at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, April 21 at Prince of Peace Parish, Sacred Heart Church, 2510 Fraser Rd. Kawkawlin.

The Most Rev. Joseph R. Cistone, Bishop of Saginaw, will preside and the Rev. Harold Sikorski will preach the homily.

Visitation will take place from noon to 9 p.m. on Monday, April 20, 2015 at Prince of Peace Parish, Sacred Heart Church.

The Vigil Liturgy will begin at 7 p.m. and the Rev. Ronald Dombrowski will preside. Graveside services will be held at 1 p.m. Wednesday at the Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Rogers City.

Arrangements are entrusted to Rivertown Funeral Chapel, Kawkawlin.