

# Priests 'for all seasons' celebrate 60 years

Two of the diocese's most beloved priests will be among those celebrating jubilee anniversaries of ordination this month.

Ordained June 8, 1929, in old St. Patrick's Cathedral by Bishop John F. O'Hern, Fathers Benedict Ehmman, 84, and Thomas F. Brennan, also 84, will mark 60 years of priesthood during a Mass of Thanksgiving Tuesday, May 23, at 11 a.m. in the Church of St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads.

Celebrating 50 years of priestly service will be six members of the Class of 1939. Seven members of the Class of 1964 will also mark the 25th anniversary of their ordination.

Fathers Ehmman and Brennan sometimes joke that they were the least athletic members of their ordination class, yet are the only two members of the class to celebrate their 60th anniversary.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, a student — and later friend — of both priests, called them "people for all seasons and all times and ages."

"I don't think I have ever heard an unkind word from them or about them," he said. "They never gave me any impression that they wanted to be anything other than they were — totally dedicated and joyful in their priesthood. I owe my persistence in my vocation to both of them."

As a faculty member and "house parent" at St. Andrew's Seminary during the 1930s and 1940s, Father Brennan's gentle encouragement helped Bishop Hogan and many other young men survive the rigors of life in the minor seminary.

"We had no shortage of vocations then, and we were severely tested. They were always threatening to send us to some other diocese," Bishop Hogan recalled. "(Father Brennan) was so very kind and thoughtful during those difficult days. He always had a kind word."

To Father Ehmman, who was director of music and liturgy at St. Bernard's Seminary from 1938-47, Bishop Hogan credits his appreciation for liturgy and church music.

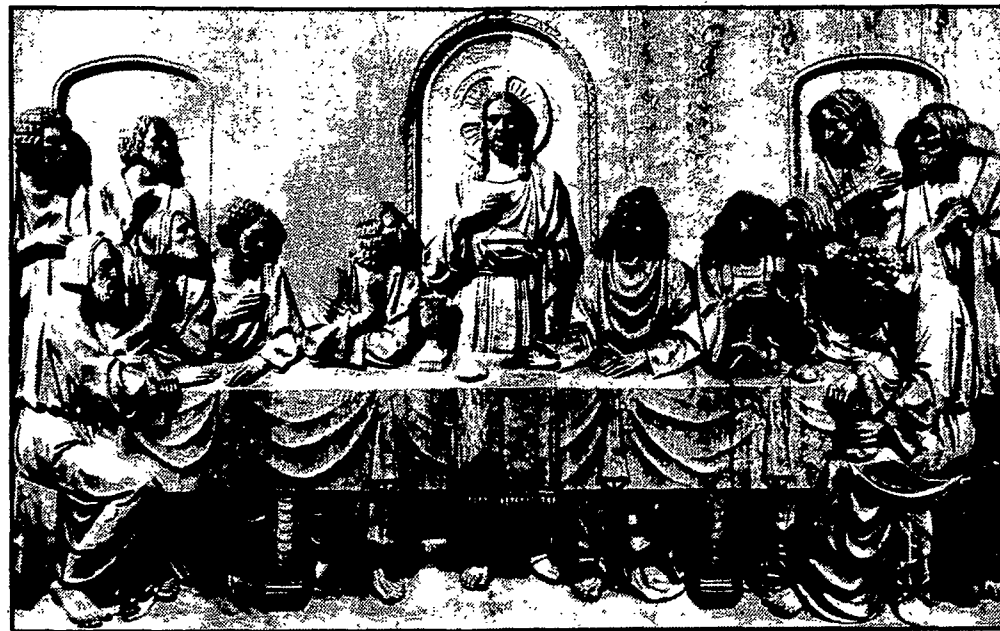


Although both priests have officially been retired since 1975, they continue to inspire spiritual heirs — men young enough to be their sons and grandsons. "I look to them as what I'd like to be at their age," said Father John Hayes, priest intern at Mother of Sorrows Church in Greece. "They are both very good and holy men ... who are able to show their happiness in priesthood. That's needed right now."

Father Ehmman was among those who helped — both locally and nationally — to pioneer the liturgical reforms wrought by the Second Vatican Council. His attraction to liturgy began with music, for which he displayed an early talent and a lifelong love. Not long after his ordination in 1929, he was appointed a professor of church music and public speaking at St. Andrew's Seminary. In 1938, he became professor of music and liturgy at St. Bernard's Seminary — a position that provided him "quite a loudspeaker" for his views on the need to encourage people's active participation in song and prayer during the Mass. Those views were inspired by Pope St. Pius X, whose writings and initiatives on liturgical reform in many ways foreshadowed the Second Vatican Council.

With his appointment in 1947 as pastor of St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen, Father Ehmman found "a kind of workshop" to practice what he had been preaching. "The people were very gracious ... They took to changes very well when you could get them to see the theology and the rationale for it," he said.

His 1961 transfer to St. Michael's, Rochester, dropped Father Ehmman into another world altogether, but one to which he adapted equally well. In the midst of race riots and tensions created by a changing



This Alois Lang's wood carving of the Last Supper depicts Christ establishing his holy priesthood.

neighborhood and a struggling parish school, Father Ehmman managed to follow the Vatican II sessions closely while at the same time studying Spanish in night school so that he could converse with the burgeoning numbers of Puerto Ricans arriving on the city's north side.

Mary Beth Fuehrer, who served during that time on St. Michael's parish council, liturgy committee and school board, recalled Father Ehmman's struggle to adjust to his new environment. "I remember there was a murder (in the neighborhood) within his first week as pastor," Fuehrer said. "It was hard for him to deal with the raw reality of the inner city, but he was very brave."

Father Brennan was born in Rochester, but has spent more than half of his 60-year priesthood in the City of Corning, serving as pastor of St. Mary's Church from 1953 until his retirement in 1975, and continuing as pastor emeritus since then.

His inclusion among Corning's most notable citizens on the "people wall" mural in the city's civic center, illustrates Father Brennan's standing in the wider Southern Tier community.

Among parishioners of St. Mary's, meanwhile, he is described as a "people's pastor," "a Rock of Gibraltar," and "an example to other priests."

"He has always been interested in and close to his people, to their problems and activities ... He has the personal touch without being obvious about it," one long-time parishioner explained. "In his own quiet way, he has been a super pastor and still is despite his retirement."

Before being assigned a parish, Father Brennan helped to shape and nurture the vocations of hundreds of diocesan priests during 17 years as a faculty member at St. Andrew's Seminary, 1931-48. From St. Andrew's, Father Brennan moved to St. Patrick's, Mt. Morris, in 1948, where he served for five years as pastor before moving to Corning in 1953.

Retirement hasn't changed his service as a priest, Father Brennan said, but it has relieved him of administrative responsibilities and a lot of night meetings. That loss of responsibility, he conceded, has been a mixed blessing — particularly in the parish he headed for so many years. "Yes, it is difficult at times," he said.

## The Class of 1939

Father John A. Karp, ordained June 25, 1939, in Poland, arrived in the United States in 1951. After seven years at St. Hedwig's in Wilmington, Del., he moved to St. Stanislaus Parish, Rochester, where he served 12 years as assistant. Incardinated into the Diocese of Rochester in 1966, Father Karp became pastor of St. Stanislaus, Bradford, and St. Joseph's, Campbell, in 1970. He returned as assistant to St. Stanislaus from 1974-78, when he moved to St. Casimir's in Elmira. One year later, he retired and returned to Rochester, where he now lives.

Father Joseph M. McNamara was ordained June 3, 1939, by Bishop James E. Kearney. A native of Montezuma, N.Y., he was assigned as assistant to St. Mary's, Auburn, in 1939.

Four years later, he moved to Cornell University in Ithaca, where he served as chaplain for three years before being assigned to Sacred Heart Cathedral as assistant. Father McNamara moved to St. Charles Borromeo in Elmira Heights as assistant in 1947, and became chaplain at the Elmira Reception Center, part of the Elmira Correctional Facility.

In 1961, Father McNamara became pastor of St. Anthony's Parish in Groton, where he served until his retirement in June, 1981. He was instrumental in building a new church, completed during the parish's 100th anniversary year in 1975. Since his retirement, Father McNamara has continued to serve as pastor emeritus at St. Anthony's.

## Father Thomas F. McVeigh

born in County Armagh, Ireland, was ordained by Bishop Kearney June 3, 1939. For nearly 20 years he served in his first assignment as assistant at Rochester's Corpus Christi Parish, Rochester, before becoming pastor of Holy Angels, Nunda, and Holy Name, Groveland, in 1958.

Six years later, Father McVeigh moved to Epiphany and St. Rose of Lima parishes in Sodus, where he was pastor for four years. In 1968, he became pastor of St. Michael's, Penn Yan, where he served until his retirement in June, 1982. Father McVeigh then moved to Our Lady of Lourdes in Brighton, where he continues to reside.

Monsignor J. Emmett Murphy was ordained Dec. 8, 1938, at the North American College in Rome. He served as assistant in St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Auburn, and St. Francis DeSales, Geneva, before he was commissioned in the U.S. Army Chaplains' Corps in 1941. After serving in the Persian Gulf Command for four years — including three years as assistant to the chief of chaplains in Teheran, Iran — he returned to Rochester, where he assisted at Sacred Heart Cathedral and taught moral theology and canon law at St. Bernard's Seminary.

In 1956, the late Pope Pius XI raised him to the rank of papal chamberlain with the title of Very Reverend Monsignor.

Five years later, Monsignor Murphy was named pastor of Holy Apostles Parish, Rochester, where he served until his retirement in June, 1983. He now resides at Holy Rosary Parish, 414 Lexington Ave., Rochester.

Father Richard G. Stanton, pastor of Our Lady of the Lake in King Ferry and All Saints Parish in Ludlowville for more than 20 years, was ordained June 3, 1939.

The Rochester native's first assignment

was to St. Alphonsus, Auburn. He also served as assistant at St. Mary's, Elmira; St. Anne's, Palmyra; St. Cecilia, Elmira; St. Augustine, Rochester; Holy Ghost, Rochester; and St. Joseph's Wayland before 1962, when he was named administrator of the parishes in King Ferry and Ludlowville.

Father Stanton retired in June, 1984, and lives in Lansing, N.Y.

Father John S. Whalen, a former U.S. Navy chaplain and longtime pastor at Our Lady of Mercy Parish, was ordained June 3, 1939.

As an assistant pastor, he served at: St. Jerome's, East Rochester, 1939-43; Holy Rosary, Rochester, 1946-51; St. Mary's, Elmira, 1951-53; and St. Lucy's, Rochester, 1953-54.

Commissioned as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy in 1943, Father Whalen served as a chaplain with the See Bees in Trinidad, Maine, California, the Philippines and China before traveling to the Marianna Islands, Guam and Saipan with the Navy Air Command.

When he returned to Rochester and an assistant's post at Holy Rosary, Father Whalen organized the first unit of the Catholic War Veterans, and was named chaplain.

In 1958, Father Whalen moved to Our Lady of Mercy, Rochester, as pastor, remaining for more than 15 years before taking a new assignment as pastor of St. Patrick's, Mt. Morris, in 1974.

Father Whalen retired in June, 1982, and lives in Rochester.

## Class of 1964

Father James C. Burke, pastor of St. Mary's, Canandaigua since 1982, was ordained June 6, 1964, by Bishop Lawrence Casey at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Assigned to St. Mary's, Waterloo, he served as assistant from 1964-68, then moved to the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Brockport, where he was also an assistant pastor for six years. In 1974, Father Burke became associate pastor at the Church of the Annunciation, Rochester. He moved to St. Alphonsus, Auburn, in 1976, and later the same year, to Holy Ghost Parish, Rochester, serving in the same capacity as associate.

In 1978, he was named co-pastor of St. Rita's, West Webster. Three years later, he moved to Strong Memorial Hospital as chaplain, where he remained until undertaking his current assignment in Canandaigua.

## Father Peter A. Deckman

a mission priest in Bolivia for nearly 15 years, was ordained June 6, 1964, at Sacred Heart Cathedral.



After just two years as assistant at St. Thomas More Parish, Pittsford, Father Deckman responded to Bishop Kearney's appeal for Latin American mission workers, and was one of two diocesan priests sent in 1966 to the parish of St. Joseph the Worker in La Paz, Bolivia.

Nine years later, after efforts that included helping to found a brick-making cooperative, health clinic, and improved recreation and education programs, Father Deckman returned to the diocese and was assigned as co-pastor of St. Michael's Parish, Newark. In 1980, he became administrator of Holy Redeemer Parish in Rochester, but returned to Bolivia the following fall for another six years.

Upon returning to the United States in 1986, Father Deckman enjoyed a six-month sabbatical, then was named pastor at St. Mary's Parish, Dansville, and chaplain at the Groveland Correctional Facility and the State Agriculture and Industrial School at Industry.

In 1987, Father Deckman moved to Ro-

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