

## Chaplains

Continued from page 1

case of Michael Mahoney, pastoral assistant at St. Columba's Parish, Caledonia.

A retired Marine major, Mahoney began his military career in the Air Force in the 1960s. At the time, he was a Lutheran.

During basic training in 1967, Mahoney — who is currently in his second year of the permanent diaconate process — met Catholics and attended a few masses, where, he said, he experienced the presence of God.

Mahoney was then stationed at High Wycombe Air Station in England, where the chaplain was Father Kevin Fahey, a Benedictine.

"He was such a warm caring person, he just finished the work begun in basic training," Mahoney said. "He completed the

work God began in me."

The effect on Mahoney was so profound, in fact, that he converted to Catholicism in December, 1987, and when he left the Air Force, enrolled at St. Benedict College, St. Joseph, Minn., with the idea of becoming a priest. He married instead and enlisted in the Marines, but became a Benedictine oblate.

After retiring from the Marines in 1988, Mahoney became a pastoral assistant at St. Columba's Church, and in 1989, enrolled in the permanent diaconate program. "Without that contact (in the military), I would not be on the path I'm on," he observed.

One of the diocese's current active duty chaplains, Father Paul Freemesser, who is stationed at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, pointed to that pastoral contact with the men and women in the service as one of the aspects of the job that keeps

him involved after 20 years.

"Basically, what's exciting about it is you're simply doing personal, pastoral care with people all the time," Father Freemesser said. Because the military takes care of much of the administrative work of the base chapel, the chaplain can focus on this pastoral work more than a civilian priest or pastor might be able to, he noted.

Father Freemesser works with troops heading for the Persian Gulf. He was also part of the Panama invasion — Operation Just Cause — in December, 1989. He said that troops needed him and other chaplains to be available to them.

"Basically, you respond to whatever their needs are," Father Freemesser said. "You're in a critical situation, and you simply work with these people and reach out to meet them where they might be, simply being a friend, boosting morale, reminding them that God is with them no matter what happens."

Once a priest expresses interest in becoming a chaplain, he must receive permission from his bishop. Then the priest must meet the requirements of the particular service in which he wishes to serve. Those requirements include not only the emotional, intellectual and spiritual criteria he had to meet to become a priest, but also physical ones.

The chaplain recruit must go through training programs to acquire the knowledge and special skills needed to function in the military. A chaplain in the army, for example, would need to know military protocol, the proper channels to obtain supplies, and even the basics of reading military maps.

Still, the archdiocese faces the same problem facing most dioceses today: the declining number of priests. The military archdiocese, however, is experiencing the problem in a much severe way. According to figures provided by the archdiocese, the

national ratio of priests to Catholics is one-to-1,000, while in the military it is one-to-2,200.

Chaplains also face the difficulty of being involved in military situations that some Catholics consider to be questionable or immoral.

"It's an age-old question — how can you bless anybody who's going out to kill somebody?" Father Freemesser acknowledged. "You can't. God does that. You just do the best that you can and hope that people will learn from their mistakes."

Indeed, Father Freemesser observed, not having chaplains would deny men and women in the military a basic right guaranteed in the United States' Constitution, and would leave them without the help and inspiration that chaplains can provide.

Mahoney noted that in his experience, chaplains provide a witness to the troops through the importance they place in the exercise of their faith.

At one time, Mahoney recalled, he was stationed in the Mediterranean Sea on a five-ship flotilla. The flotilla had one Catholic chaplain who had to travel from ship to ship to celebrate Mass every Sunday.

Usually, the chaplain traveled by boat to each ship, but during rough weather he had to be transported by helicopter and lowered by rope onto the pitching decks.

"It was such a powerful example to the men, who were amazed the chaplain had to go through this to say Mass," Mahoney said.

The fact that the priest would take such risks, go into combat with the troops, risk his own life to serve men and women, was a strong statement to those troops, Mahoney noted.

"The priest is always there as a constant reminder of Christ," Mahoney concluded.

## Msgr. Wilson Kaiser, former CRS director

ROCHESTER — Monsignor Wilson E. Kaiser, a Rochester native and former director of African operations for Catholic Relief Services, National Catholic Welfare Conference, died in the Katerina Tekakwitha Nursing Home in New York City on Oct. 4, 1990.

A Mass of Christ the High Priest was celebrated for Monsignor Kaiser on Oct. 9 at St. Thomas More Church. He was 76 years old.

Born in Rochester on Nov. 7, 1913, Monsignor Kaiser was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Great Falls, Mont., on June 9, 1940. After spending nine years in hospitals and parishes, he joined Catholic Relief Services and was stationed in Germany from 1949-58. During his years in Germany, he took part in the Berlin Airlift.

In 1958, he moved to Kenya and became the head of CRS operations in sub-Saharan Africa. He remained in that position until

the early 1970s. During those years, he helped a number of Kenyan seminarians and priests attend St. John Fisher College in Rochester, including the current prelate of the Diocese of Machakos, Bishop Rafael Ndingi.

In the early 1970s, Monsignor Kaiser worked with CRS operations in Morocco until he retired from the agency in 1978. He retired from active priestly ministry in June, 1983.

Troubled by a history of heart problems, Monsignor Kaiser suffered a stroke in December, 1983. In 1984, he entered the Katerina Tekakwitha Nursing Home in New York City, where he remained until his death.

Monsignor Kaiser is survived by his brother, Charles Kaiser, and a nephew, William Kaiser, both of Rochester.

Interment was in White Haven Memorial Park, Pittsford.

## Real estate

### AGE 50 & UP?

Looking for  
AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HOUSING

- All utilities included
- 24 hr. Maintenance
- Carpeting/Draperies
- Activities program
- Cable TV
- On site laundry
- Supermarket next door
- Busline to downtown
- Off street parking

CURRENTLY  
ACCEPTING  
APPLICATIONS

(INCOME & OCCUPANCY  
REQUIREMENTS)

ALL THIS AND MORE AT...



• **Pinnacle Place** •  
BEACON MANAGEMENT CO.



Please Call 442-9440  
919 Clinton Ave. South, Rochester, NY 14620



### HIDDEN MEADOWS COMMUNITY

Florida-Style Living for 55  
years or older

A Friendly Atmosphere Providing

- Club House for Community Activities
- Golf League
- Card Club
- Organized Trips
- Much More

OPEN FOR INSPECTION SUNDAYS  
1 PM-4PM (OR SHOWN BY APPT.)

CALL: 494-1424

7289 LAKE RD. BERGEN, NY 14416

1 Mile South of Rte. 33 & 19



To advertise in the Catholic Courier's Real Estate section, call (716)328-4340.