

# Fr. Stephen J. Szigethy, CSSR, parochial vicar, at 61

Father Stephen Joseph Szigethy, CSSR, who served as parochial vicar at Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph Church since August, 1990, died suddenly of a massive coronary at Genesee Hospital in Rochester on Wednesday, March 6, 1991. He was 61.

Born in New York City on Aug. 12, 1929, he was the son of the late Stephen and Eleanor (Falk) Szigethy.

After attending school in New York, Father Szigethy professed his temporary vows in the Redemptorist order on Aug. 2, 1950, at Ilchester, Md. Two years after making his perpetual vows, Father Szigethy was ordained to the priesthood on June 19, 1955, at Mt. St. Alphonsus Seminary in Esopus, N.Y.

A priest of the Redemptorist order for 40 years, Father Szigethy served at the Redemptorist mission in Brazil from 1956 to 1974.

After serving as a parochial vicar at St.

Wenceslaus Parish in Baltimore from 1978 to 1983, he served as parochial vicar at St. Clement's Parish in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., from 1983 until August, 1990. He also had pastoral responsibilities at the Mission of St. Therese Chapel — the mission church of St. Clement's — in Gansevoort, N.Y. during that time.

Bernadette Miller, a parishioner at St. Catherine's Church in Mendon who met Father Szigethy while he was in Saratoga Springs, described the priest as extremely active and popular among the youths.

"He loved to ride a motorcycle, fly airplanes and fish with the kids," said Miller, a former parishioner of St. Therese's. "He had tremendous compassion, and he was very devoted to Our Lady of Perpetual Help."

Miller added that Father Szigethy was still receiving letters from people in Brazil in the years since he left South America.

The priest also had a strong devotion to

canon law, Miller said.

"A real trademark of his was that a priest should be a lion from the pulpit and a lamb in the confessional," Miller said.

Father Thomas Loftus, pastor of Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph Church in Rochester, celebrated a Mass of Christian Burial for Father Szigethy at the Rochester church on Saturday, March 9.

Father Loftus also celebrated a Mass in honor of Father Szigethy on March 11 at Mission of St. Therese Chapel in Gansevoort. Father Loftus was assisted by Father Andrew Carr, a former classmate of Father Szigethy, and Father Kevin Milton, pastor of St. Clement's.

Burial followed in the Redemptorist plot at St. Peter's Cemetery in Saratoga Springs.

Father Szigethy is survived by five sisters, Mary Hoffman of Madison, Conn., Joan Szigethy of Albany, Therese Szigethy of the Bronx, Paula Kaempffer of Rose-

mount, Minn., and Monica Szigethy of Gansevoort; six brothers, John Szigethy of Mohegan Lake, N.Y., Joseph Szigethy and Alphonse Szigethy both of Huntington, N.Y., Frank Szigethy of Bronxville, Thomas Szigethy of Monroe, and Gerald Szigethy of the Bronx; and 17 nieces and nephews.

The family suggests memorial donations be made in the form of Masses or contributions to Mission of St. Therese Chapel, Gansevoort, 12831, or to St. Clement's Church, 231 Lake Ave., Saratoga Springs, 12866.

— Richard A. Kiley

## Faith

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one of several routes that bring authors to perception of reality's spiritual dimensions.

Indeed, the late Walker Percy, in a 1987 address to the National Catholic Education Association, observed that while the novel is "almost exclusively a creature of Christianity," serious writers — no matter what their religious persuasions — seek "a deeper truth about the way things are, the way people are, in a word, a truth about the human condition."

Percy, a Catholic who died May 10, 1990, said that the moral insight in a novel "follows from the form and excellence of the thing." Such insight, he added, "follows naturally from its making, and is not imposed from without. It does not preach."

Nevertheless, a novel can convey a message. And the message of Catholic novelists can be uncomfortable for church leaders.

Greene, for example, was criticized for depicting a weak priest — one who drank too much and fathered a child — in *The Power and the Glory*.

The views expressed in works of fiction have a way of influencing the thinking of the reader, Finley observed, suggesting that church authorities today seem unaware of that power.

Father Girzone's *Joshua* novels, for example, challenge church teachings on such issues as celibacy, birth control and divorce, and are critical of church authorities. And the books are reaching a wide audience, with *Joshua*, the first of the series, recently passing the 1 million mark in sales.

Yet, Finley noted, the church seems not to have noticed.

"If Hans Kung or Edward Schillebeeckx were to write a technical theological work propounding the themes Joseph Girzone preaches, they would be called on the carpet in the Vatican," he remarked. "Far more people are going to be influenced by (Father Girzone's) books than would be by Kung and Schillebeeckx."

In a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Father Girzone said he consciously attempts to challenge the church through his novels.

"What I try to do is take the church and try to show how the church could be an effective means for healing wounds in society," Father Girzone said. "I'm trying to show the church hierarchy the church's potential in our society. The church is the most powerful force for good in society."

In some ways, Father Girzone is simply echoing the sentiments Greene voiced in 1969 in an address entitled, "The Virtue of Disloyalty."

"Isn't it the storyteller's task to act as a devil's advocate, to elicit sympathy and a measure of understanding for those who lie outside the boundaries of State (or church) approval?" Greene asked.

"The novelist's task," he continued, "is to draw his own likeness to any any human being, to the guilty as much as to the innocent."

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