

Father Paul J. Cuddy, columnist, dead at 83

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

AUBURN — Father Paul Joseph Cuddy, a columnist for the *Catholic Courier* since 1967, died in Worcester, Mass. on New Year's Day, 1992. He was 83.

Father Cuddy had been on retreat at a Benedictine priory in the Worcester area. While leaving the priory's chapel Monday evening, Dec. 30, he slipped and fell, suffering skull damage that produced swelling on the brain. Father Cuddy was taken to the University of Massachusetts Medical Center where he eventually died.

With Father Cuddy's passing went one of the diocese's most colorful and consistent voices of homespun Christianity. "On The Right Side," Father Cuddy's popular *Courier* column, continually highlighted his travels throughout the diocese and the world, while bolstering a conservative view of church life.

Father Cuddy liked to pepper his weekly accounts with anecdotes of every kind, usually telling his latest encounter with someone — Catholic and non-Catholic, citizen and alien — who had piqued his interest.

More often than not, he wrote in a "question/answer" style, setting up for himself any variety of queries and examining through responses to an imaginary questioner.

Father Cuddy also supported the church's overseas missions, particularly in Kenya, and he often urged his readers to donate to missionaries.

An Auburn native, Father Cuddy was the son of Michael J. and Nora

Dunford Cuddy. He attended Auburn High School, and later enrolled at St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries, Rochester. He also studied at Assumption College in Windsor, Ontario.

One of his fellow seminarians was Father Raymond G. Heisel, currently in residence at Our Mother of Sorrows at Paddy Hill in Rochester.

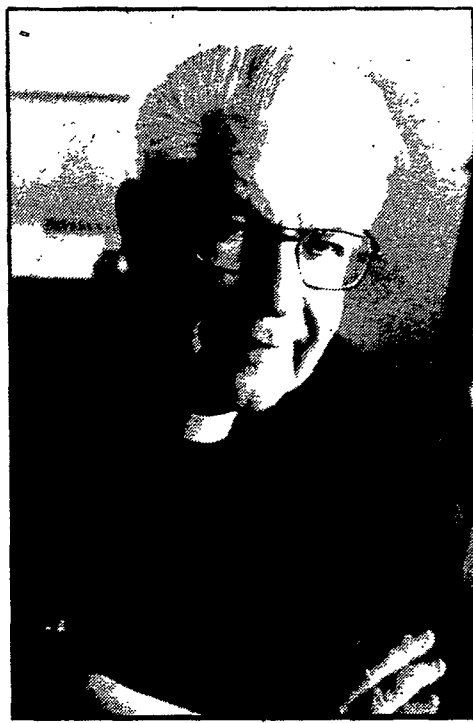
"He was always a very, very charitable man, right from the beginning," Father Heisel recalled, adding that Father Cuddy "had a great sense of humor."

Ordained on June 15, 1935, Father Cuddy received as his first assignment the post of assistant pastor at St. John's in Clyde. He was named assistant pastor of Immaculate Conception in Ithaca in 1938.

World War II saw Father Cuddy commissioned as a U.S. Army chaplain, a position he held for four years. During his military service, Father Cuddy attained the rank of captain and authored several brochures and pamphlets for the moral guidance of the men in his charge.

After the war, Father Cuddy was Catholic-student pastor at Sampson College, and served in a variety of other capacities in the next few years. Among them was the assistant pastor at St. Anne's Church in Rochester, and the spiritual direction of St. Andrew's Seminary.

He was recalled to military service in 1952, serving as a U.S. Air Force chaplain at Lackland Air Force base in San Antonio, Texas. During his tenure there, Officer Candidate Paul Shields Walker composed a Mass setting in



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

For more than 24 years, Father Paul J. Cuddy wrote spirited pieces for his *On the Right Side* column in the *Catholic Courier*. The veteran pamphleteer used his column to defend traditional Catholic practices, promote the missions and encourage the faithful.

Father Cuddy's honor. Father Cuddy also served at Biggs Air Force Base in Texas. He attained the rank of major before being discharged in 1957.

No matter what his rank or his schedule, Father Cuddy always found time to encourage young people to keep their faith, according to his nephew, Father William Cuddy, director of the Jail Ministry Office in the Diocese of Syracuse.

"He was the first priest I ever knew," Father William Cuddy said, recalling the late cleric as "not afraid to die," and "free of his possessions." He noted that his uncle helped him sort out his own calling to the priesthood, and in his later years, often sent donations of money to the Jail Ministry Office.

Following his military discharge in 1957, Father Cuddy was appointed pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Clyde and St. Patrick's in Savannah. In the wake of the Second Vatican Coun-

cil, he became disgruntled with what he saw as the left-leaning tendencies of the Rochester diocesan newspaper (then called the *Courier-Journal*), and undertook a battle royale with its editors. He even went so far as to lobby his parishioners to subscribe to other Catholic news publications.

Father Cuddy's battle with the paper ended in 1967 when he was invited to write a column for it. From its very start, Father Cuddy's epistles were marked by a no-nonsense defense of traditional Catholicism against critics, both inside and outside the church. The new columnist knew exactly who he wanted to write for — "the people."

"(The people are) good fathers and mothers whose main interest is their families, their work and their recreation ..." Father Cuddy wrote in one of his earliest columns. "They are intelligent people, but most of them are not interested in theological confrontations or in taking over the running of the church."

Father Cuddy left the pastorate in 1967 to work as chaplain at St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell. Also during the 1960s, he began serving as a tour guide for pilgrimages to the Middle East, Ireland, the European continent and other far-flung spots.

Father Cuddy's last position was as assistant pastor of Holy Trinity in Webster in the 1970s before retiring in 1978.

Since 1988, Father Cuddy had lived at St. Alphonsus in Auburn. In his retirement, he kept active by writing his column, visiting the sick, and distributing devotional literature and Catholic periodicals.

Father Cuddy is survived by 21 nieces and nephews and 84 grandnieces and grandnephews. He was predeceased by his sister Florence McLane, and four brothers: Frank, Raymond, Joseph and George.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan was the principal concelebrant at the Mass of the High Priest on Sunday, Jan. 5, at St. Alphonsus. Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Bishop Dennis W. Hickey served as principal concelebrants at the Mass of the Resurrection on Monday, Jan. 6.

Interment was slated to take place at St. Joseph's Cemetery, Auburn.

Guild, politicians petition Bishop Clark on schools

ROCHESTER — Three area politicians and the association of diocesan Catholic attorneys have joined the fray over reorganization of Catholic schools in Monroe County's Northeast Quadrant.

The Catholic School Committee, a group claiming the support of hundreds of quadrant parents opposed to reorganization efforts, has obtained one letter of support from county Sheriff Andrew P. Mefoni; Irondequoit Supervisor Frederick W. Lapple; and Arnold J. Eckert, R-Irondequoit, minority leader of the county Legislature.

About 68 business people also signed the letter, according to Kenneth A. Kuhn Jr., the committee spokesman. A second support letter — dated Dec. 23 — was sent to Bishop Matthew H. Clark by the St. Thomas More Lawyers' Guild, an association of Catholic lawyers from the Rochester diocese, Kuhn said.

Kuhn also said that he would deliver a basket filled with 600 letters in support of the group's goals to Bishop Clark's office at the Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road, on Tuesday afternoon, Jan. 7. The basket will also contain a 20-minute videotape on Northeast schools, he said.

Diocesan officials, meanwhile, have scheduled a Jan. 10 press conference to announce a final plan for reorganizing Northeast Quadrant schools, according to Father George Norton, diocesan spokesman.

The announcement will culminate a week of work on the plan by the Christian Education and Formation Council. Beginning Monday evening, Jan. 6,

representatives from quadrant parishes met in closed session with council chairman Peter Spinelli and Sister Mary Ann Binsack, director of diocesan Faith Development Ministry. The meeting took place at Northeastern Catholic Junior High in Irondequoit.

The council was slated to examine the parishes' input at a meeting on Wednesday night, Jan. 8, Father Norton said. Also at that meeting, the council was also expected to complete its recommendations on school reorganization for submission to Bishop Clark, the priest added.

Kuhn also pointed out that the Catholic School Committee sent each of the council's 16 members a binder stating his group's case against closing schools.

The quadrant has been embroiled in controversy since the fall of 1991, when its governing board recommended closing three schools in June, 1992. The board later withdrew its recommendations after the Catholic School Committee vehemently opposed the recommendations.

Despite the board's failure to devise a reorganization plan, Bishop Clark has said he will not accept a status-quo decision on the quadrant schools.

In December, the diocese blocked an effort by the Catholic School Committee to offset the quadrant's deficit through the sale of raffle tickets.

In other efforts to keep the schools open, the committee has distributed ribbons to parents to wear as a sign that they support Catholic schools.

— Rob Cullivan

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