

Senior priest sets sights on national games in '93

MILWAUKEE (CNS) — Four years ago, Father John Kolanko, a 78-year-old priest of the Milwaukee Archdiocese who has maintained a weekly fitness regimen since the 1960s, slipped on some ice and wrenched his knee.

Although arthroscopic surgery helped heal the injury, the priest didn't believe his knee was back to its original condition. So he decided to enter the Wisconsin Senior Olympics last summer "to see if I was still competitive," he said.

The answer came in the gold medals Father Kolanko won in three of the five events he entered. The priest, participating in the 75-79 age group, won the 400-meter run, the discus throw and the shot put.

Father Kolanko's love for athletics dates back to seminary days.

"I wasn't a brilliant student so, in the seminary, it was athletics that gave me my fuzzy points. Others could excel in scholarship, but I wasn't that brilliant," Father Kolanko told the *Catholic Herald*, Milwaukee's archdiocesan newspaper.

In the seminary, he played baseball, basketball, hockey and tennis.

"I considered myself the best tennis player at the seminary," he said. As a junior in a football game against the seniors, he recovered a fumble and ran 64 yards for the game's only score.

"You accent the positive and make

the best of your best," Father Kolanko said.

In residence at Our Lady of Good Hope Parish in Milwaukee, he is involved with the parish's St. Vincent de Paul Society and senior citizen club and a northwest Milwaukee ecumenical dialogue. He also regularly visits sick parishioners.

"I can identify with the older people. I think it's sad that we have more and more older people and there are fewer older priests," Father Kolanko said.

He recalled one hospital visit when he addressed a 62-year-old parishioner as "kid." "I told him since I'm 78, I could call him a kid. They usually enjoy that," Father Kolanko said.

And he has no intention of slowing down. His current goal is to compete in the U.S. National Senior Olympics scheduled for Baton Rouge, La., in 1993.

"There's the old saying 'you use it or you lose it,'" Father Kolanko said. "The temptation at my age is to sit around and do nothing and that's not good."

Two other priests represented the archdiocese in the Senior Olympics. Father Michael Sablica, 71, won eight gold medals in five swimming events and three distance dashes. Jesuit Father Leo Burns, 86, took six medals in other events.



File photo

In this 1985 photo, Mother Teresa of Calcutta lifts a baby during the National Right to Life Convention in Washington, D.C.

Mother Teresa, 82, is the best-known of all Albanians, says nation's leader

NEW YORK (CNS) — Mother Teresa, 82, is the most famous of all Albanians and is beloved by her native country, according to the president of Albania.

"She is very well respected and beloved by everyone in Albania," said Sali Berisha at a June 17 event hosted by the Appeal of Conscience Foundation at the Park East Synagogue.

Although Mother Teresa is ethnically Albanian, she was born in Skopje, capital of what became the Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

At the time of her birth, in 1910, the area was part of the Ottoman Empire.

Berisha, a cardiologist who became Albania's first non-communist president after his Democratic Party won elections in March, said Mother Teresa was the Albanian best-known not only to the outside world, but within Albania as well.

The Appeal of Conscience Foundation is an interreligious agency founded in 1965 to work for religious freedom and other human rights, with

special emphasis on Eastern Europe.

Monsignor Nicholas A. DiMarzio, vicar for human services in the Archdiocese of Newark, reported after participation in an Appeal of Conscience delegation to Albania last year that Mother Teresa's Missionary Sisters of Charity were operating a home for elderly women and a catechetical center in the Albanian capital, Tirana.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier, founder and president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, recalled at the breakfast that Albania — under the late Communist First Secretary Enver Hoxha — became the only country in the United Nations to make all religion illegal.

Berisha added, however, that Albanians were one of the most religious of peoples, and never lost their faith in God.

"Now, in Albania no one is persecuted any more," he said. The religious communities face difficulties because their institutions were destroyed and their clergy "terrorized," he said. But he said the religious situation was improving with the help of many international agencies.

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