

Retirement

Priest, 88, continues India mission

Elder law clinics set for May 9

ROCHESTER — The New York State Bar Association's Elder Law Section will present two clinics on living wills and health-care proxies on Thursday, May 9.

One clinic will be presented at 10 a.m. in College Green, 850 Clinton Square, and the second clinic will begin at 10:45 a.m. at the Valley Manor, 1570 East Ave.

Both clinics will feature attorneys and witnesses who can help participants write proxy agreements and living wills.

Living wills are statements that provide instructions to doctors regarding such life-sustaining treatment as artificial respiration, hydration and nutrition, often used to treat patients in comas.

Health-care proxies are family members or trusted friends designated to make health care decisions for anyone 18 years or older who has become incapacitated. Procedures and treatments governed by health-care proxy law include organ transplantation, dialysis and receiving antibiotics.

While health-care proxies are recognized by law, the state legislature has yet to approve living wills.

Lawyers are not required to execute a living will, or designate a health-care proxy, according to the bar association. Persons wishing to use either option simply need two witnesses. Proxy forms will be available at no charge.

For information, call Gail Reeves at the Valley Manor, 716/442-6450, or call Laurie Willard at College Green, 546-4900.

AMBIKAPUR, India (CNS) — Even at 88, Jesuit Father Jules van Oostayen has no plans to stop working.

Since he arrived in India in 1934, the Belgian-born missionary has helped build the Raigarh and Ambikapur dioceses, brick by brick.

"Retirement?" he responded in surprise when asked about it by UCA News, an Asian church news agency based in Thailand.

"Oh, there's still plenty to do," said the frail figure as he walked around his workshop directing tribal co-workers.

He has designed architectural plans, made construction materials and built churches, convents, schools, boarding houses and health centers, mostly for dioceses in central India.

"I don't know how many buildings I have built," he said, pointing to a heap of files. Strewn about his room in the Ambikapur bishop's house are the construction materials and files from 53 years' work.

Father van Oostayen spends the day producing various materials at his workshop on the bishop's house grounds. He has no degree in architecture, but says he learned the trade from

his parents as they built their home.

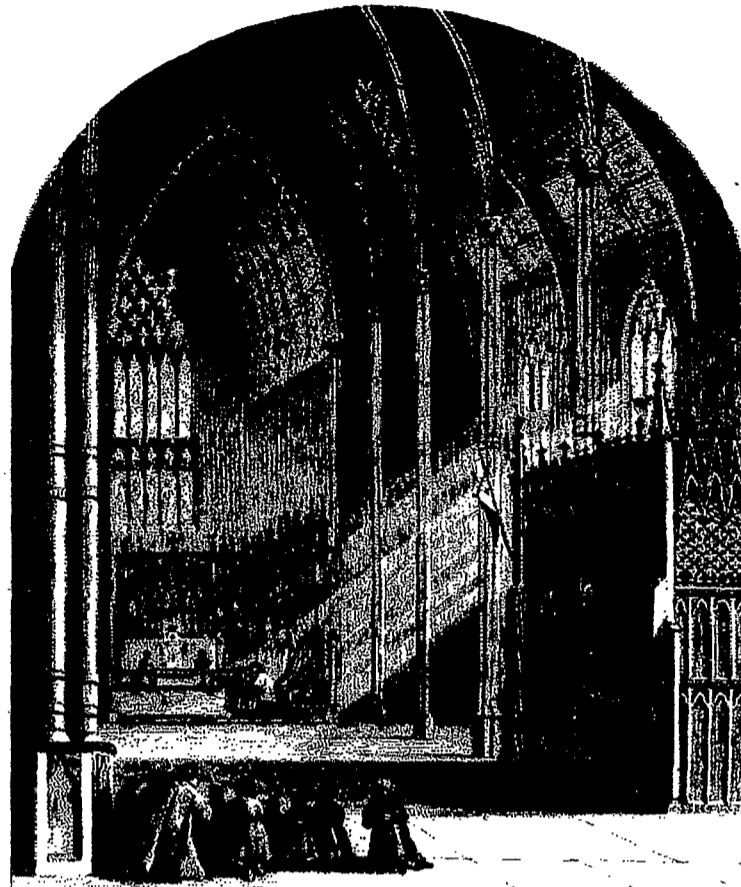
Father Xavier Ekka, former vicar general of Ambikapur Diocese, said priests and nuns come to Father van Oostayen for plans and advice. In the workshop he makes roofs, ironwork and furniture for the buildings.

Business leaders have requested items after seeing their superior quality, but the priest does not accept orders from them because he lacks time, Father Ekka said.

Since a uniform construction plan is followed in the diocese, few new designs are needed, Father van Oostayen said. He said he has made changes to prevent thieves from entering the buildings.

Since district officials banned new churches to avoid interreligious rivalry, the diocese has been building more community halls in villages, the priest-architect said.

He delights in relating his adventures building Raigarh cathedral in Kunkuri, about 1,000 miles southeast of New Delhi. Materials were brought from distant cities; tribal Catholics carted the stones for free.



"Three bishops are buried there," Father van Oostayen observed.

The priest said he does not plan to return to his native country, although he has already undergone 16 operations. He now reads with a magnifying glass, and his hearing is impaired.

"We came from Belgium with no idea of returning," he said, adding that he has not visited Belgium since he left.

One of his two brothers became a Jesuit priest and worked in India for years before he was killed in World War II. His only sister, who became a nun, died two years ago.

After priestly studies in India, Father van Oostayen taught mathematics at Kunkuri's Jesuit high school for six years. He organized Raigarh diocesan ac-

counts and a people's savings bank at Ranchi, in neighboring Bihar state.

One of four surviving Belgian Jesuits in Ambikapur Diocese, he has spent most of his life among indigenous people in Madhya Pradesh state. He obtained Indian citizenship "the day it was declared" an independent country.

Only once was he asked to produce his citizenship papers, which he did not have with him at the time. He managed the situation with a counter question to the young police officer: "Have you got your citizenship papers?"

Such humor and presence of mind still keep the octogenarian missionary useful in a land where missionaries are often viewed with suspicion.

Volunteers

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volunteers also interview with the agency they may serve, she said.

Ideal volunteers like to work with people, Ciccone observed, and generally feel a strong need to connect with others.

"They're bored," she said of many first-time volunteers. "Many of them have been retired for two or three years. There's only so many days they

can play golf or be with the grandkids.

She added that while she doesn't ask whether her volunteers are religiously motivated, she has concluded that most volunteers have faith of some sort, whether spiritual or philosophical.

"There's a little voice inside of them that says ... 'I need to help someone else,'" she concluded.

EDITORS' NOTE: To learn more about RSVP, call Ginny Ciccone at 716/454-3224, ext. 117.

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