

Fr. Wiant to leave Victor pastorate

Jennifer Ficaglia/Catholic Courier

During his 42 years in the priesthood, Father George Wiant has pastored at rural and urban parishes, ministered to high-school students and helped the impoverished in Wayne County.

Although the nature of his assignments varied over the years, one thing always remained constant for him throughout his ministry.

"I was happy in it," Father Wiant remarked.

Father Wiant, 67, pastor at St. Patrick's Parish in Victor, will retire June 24. His retirement will be celebrated during the parish's annual picnic on June 22.

He grew up in St. Fechan's and St. Pius Tenth parishes in Chili, and attributes his decision to be a priest to the influence of his parents and the example of St. Fechan's pastor, Father John Burke. St. Fechan's, which was a mission parish of St. Pius Tenth, changed its name to St. Fechan's in 1954, and has since been relocated to Genesee Country Village & Museum.

After completing studies at St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries in Rochester, he was ordained on June 3, 1961, by Bishop James E.



Karin von Volgtlander/Catholic Courier

Father George Wiant will retire from his pastorate at St. Patrick's in Victor.

Kearney at Sacred Heart Cathedral. He was assistant pastor at Sacred Heart Parish in Auburn from 1961-62 and at Good Shepherd Parish in Henrietta from 1962-65. He was then appointed chaplain at Rochester's Bishop Kearney High School until 1971.

From 1971-78, Father Wiant was assigned to work at Rural Human

Development, a secular mission in Wayne County, which changed its name in 1971 to the Office of Human Development.

In 1978, he completed clinical pastoral education in Houston, Texas, then returned to the diocese to become the director of the Office of Human Development from 1978-79.

It was during his time with the Of-

fice of Human Development that he experienced a memorable Christmas event.

Father Wiant said he was once delivering food to the rural poor a few days before Christmas, dropping off supplies to a man who lived in what he described as a shack. The man invited Father Wiant into his home and started to talk about God.

"I felt the presence of God very strongly in that situation," he said.

He was assistant pastor at St. Mary's Parish in Dansville from 1979-80, then was assigned to his first pastorate at St. Joseph's Parish in Weedsport from 1980-85. He then served from 1985-90 as pastor of the Northern Cayuga Cluster, which included St. Joseph's and the parishes of St. Patrick's in Cato and St. John's in Port Byron. He has served at St. Patrick's since 1990.

Father Wiant plans to retire to his cabin in the Bristol Hills, and is discerning what ministry he will perform after his retirement.

One of the things Father Wiant said he liked most about his ministry was watching people grow in their faith.

"I've just enjoyed working with people and growing with people," he said.

Honeoye priest plans to continue in ministry

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Father Edward B. Zenkel will take some time off after officially retiring June 24, but plans to keep active assisting at various diocesan parishes.

"I'm not retiring from the priesthood — I'm retiring from administration," said Father Zenkel, pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Honeoye.

Father Zenkel said he has made no formal plans for his post-retirement years, but will take up residence at a family home in Livonia. His parishioners will fete him at a reception after 5 p.m. Mass on Saturday, June 14.

Deacon Roger Loomis, who has served alongside Father Zenkel at St. Mary's for four years, praised the priest for his work.

"He's really taught me an awful lot," Deacon Loomis said, noting in particular Father Zenkel's expertise in liturgy. "He's very aware of the norms and the flow and the importance of a certain movement. He's very aware of keeping the liturgy worshipful. He knows what's appropriate and what's not."

Deacon Loomis also expressed gratitude to Father Zenkel for en-

couraging him in his own work, and said "we've had a lot of fun together."

Raised in the neighborhood of Holy Apostles Parish on Lyell Avenue in Rochester, Father Zenkel said he was surrounded by family members, parish priests and neighbors devoted to the church. For example, his uncle, Father Michael J. Tydings, was a diocesan priest until his death in 1967, and his aunt, Sister of St. Joseph Marie Tydings, a diocesan school teacher who died in January of 2002. Father Zenkel's father, the late Edward J. Zenkel, had spent some time in seminary before leaving to get married, and was devout. Father Zenkel added that he also was influenced when he was growing up by the then-pastor of Holy Apostles, Msgr. George V. Predmore.

"I think our parents and the people of the parish sort of held the priests in very high esteem," Father Zenkel said. "You might say the whole atmosphere of Holy Apostles at that time would encourage one to be a priest."

Father Zenkel attended Holy Apostles Grammar School, and then St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's sem-



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

Father Edward Zenkel will retire from his pastorate at St. Mary's in Honeoye.

inaries in Rochester. He was ordained by Bishop James E. Kearney at Sacred Heart Cathedral on June 3, 1962. After ordination, he was assigned to serve as assistant pastor of Guardian Angels Parish in Henri-

ta. In 1967, he was assigned to serve as assistant pastor at St. James Parish in Waverly.

In 1968, Father Zenkel was named chaplain at the State Industrial and Agricultural School at Industry, where he served until 1981, when he became pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Leicester and St. Lucy's Parish in Retsof. In 1994, Father Zenkel was named pastor of St. Mary's.

In addition to his parish ministry, Father Zenkel also served as a member of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission following the Second Vatican Council. He said this role came naturally to him because his parents had many Protestant friends when he was growing up. He added that he believed Christ would be pleased by ecumenical efforts because he prayed for his followers "that they may be one."

Looking back on his years in the priesthood, Father Zenkel said he most enjoyed his encounters with people because these experiences gave him opportunities "to be involved in their lives, giving their life meaning through a relationship with Christ and the church."