

Fr. Kukulski always put care of others first

DETROIT— His friends – and countless people who he cared for both physically and spiritually during his 50 years of the priesthood – knew Fr. Stanislaus Kukulski as kind, nonjudgmental and extremely humble.

Fr. Kukulski, passed away on June 27 at the age of 75, after a bout with cancer.

“I knew of no other individual who ran all over the archdiocese, of six counties, visiting the sick and bringing messages of happiness, prayers and consolation to them,” said Msgr. Stanley Milewski, a friend and classmate of Fr. Kukulski since high school.

Ordained on June 4, 1955, Fr. Kukulski served as associate pastor of Corpus Christi Parish, Detroit; St. Barbara Parish, Dearborn; St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Detroit; and St. Albert the Great Parish, Dearborn Heights. In 1968, he was appointed chaplain of Northville State Hospital, Northville, where he served until his retirement in July of 1999. During his time at the hospital, he also served at the Our Lady of Providence Home for girls with Down’s Syndrome.

And throughout his ministry and even after his retirement, his brother priests say, he would care for the sick wherever he met them.

“He was an extreme man of service, and extremely nonjudgmental,” said Fr. Richard Yost, OSFS, who through his deaf ministry served with Fr. Kukulski in Northville. “He helped many, many people who were sick and had no one to care for them. And he would never go around telling you that he’s caring for them.”

Fr. Yost – who helped care for Fr. Kukulski during his illness, after witnessing his care for so many others – said Fr. Kukulski never complained or had harsh words about anyone, nor did he treat them any differently because of their position or illness.

“He had no regard for state in life, whether you were the governor or whether you were someone standing out on the street for a buck,” he said.

More than by preaching, Fr. Yost said Fr. Kukulski taught by example and by telling stories.

Fr. Yost recalls Fr. Kukulski meeting people in intensive care units, visiting the sick daily and spending hours with them, stopping his car sideways in the middle of a road to protect a wounded animal, and keeping relationships with those he cared for through letters.

When people – or even animals, which he loved – needed care, it took precedent over anything else for Fr. Kukulski. So extreme was his devotion to caring for the sick and needy, Fr. Yost said, that people sometimes saw him as strange.

“He did not see the world as we see it,” Fr. Yost said.

In addition to caring for the mentally ill throughout his priesthood, his friends said Fr. Kukulski would care for his mother, friends and the sisters with whom he ministered.

Fr. Kukulski's friends also knew him to be an avid writer, an avid and thorough reader – especially when it came to psychology or philosophy – and a great listener.

“As a friend he was always concerned about you,” said his classmate Fr. John Hall. “He'd listen to you and give what he felt was a way to help out. People enjoyed him. Whether he was celebrating Mass or having a conversation with you.”

Another classmate, Fr. John Canavan, said he would remember Fr. Kukulski's face.

“He always wore a very gentle smile that radiated with the joy of his priesthood and the joy of his work,” Fr. Canavan said.

Fr. Kukulski's body will lie in state at St. Florian Church, 2626 Poland, Hamtramck, today, from 10 a.m. until celebration of his funeral Mass at 11 a.m. Burial will be at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Detroit.

Fr. Kukulski is survived by his brother, John (Jean), and several nieces and nephews. Condolences may be sent to: Mr. and Mrs. John Kukulski, 32453 Stricker, Warren, 48088.

— *Joe Kohn*, The Michigan Catholic