

# Fr. Cyprys was a 'friend to everybody'

JOE KOHN  
The Michigan Catholic

DETROIT — Friends and family members say Fr. Ronald Cyprys was a holy priest, a gentle man and a caring friend to everyone who knew him.

Fr. Cyprys, who was pastor of Our Lady of Grace Parish in Dearborn Heights since 1991, died July 29 after he had developed cancer following a liver transplant in March. He was 63.

"He was the finest, most humble and compassionate priest," said Mary DeWitt, who came to know Fr. Cyprys well through years working at Our Lady of Grace, where her husband, Robert, is the deacon. "He not only preached the Word of God, he lived it by his word and his actions."

Fr. Cyprys was born Sept. 30, 1943, in Detroit. He was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Detroit on June 7, 1969.

He was an associate pastor at St. Cyril of Jerusalem in Taylor from 1969 to 1971, St. Ambrose Parish in Grosse Pointe Park from 1971 to 1976, St. Raphael Parish in Garden City from 1981 to 1988, and at St. Genevieve Parish in Livonia from 1988 to 1991.

Those who knew him described Fr. Cyprys as others-centered and self-sacrificing. DeWitt recalls him leaving his home in the middle of the night to anoint a person he'd never met, who

wasn't a member of his parish. It was just the kind of thing he did, she said.

"He was a friend to everybody,"

DeWitt said. "He was a man who could give of himself, but found it hard to take from others, because he was supposed to be the giver. ... He would do things, but he would never brag about doing it. He just quietly did what he had to do."

Throughout his ministry, Fr. Cyprys endeared himself to many in the archdiocese. Serving at St. Raphael, he became fast friends with Fr. Charles O'Neill, who would later live as a senior priest at Our Lady of Grace with Fr. Cyprys.

"I would say that he's the best priest I ever worked with in my life," said Fr. O'Neill, now living in Livonia, who visited with Fr. Cyprys on the day of his death. "Everybody loved that man. He was very congenial, very friendly, and he would get along well with everybody." Ed and Mary Parker chose Fr. Cyprys to be the godfather of their daughter. Mary's mother had been secretary at St. Ambrose when Fr. Cyprys served there.

"He was just a wonderful individual," Mary Parker said. "He was very caring. He just cared for everybody he came in touch with. There wasn't anything he wouldn't do for you, or wouldn't try to do for you."



Fr. Cyprys

The family got to know Fr. Cyprys well, taking vacations with him and visiting. It was clear, Mary said, that his relationship with the Lord was foremost in his life.

"His first love, and his first calling, was his life with God, his life for God," Parker said. "And he always said to us, 'Don't ever put me on a pedestal. I'm doing God's work, but I'm not special — I'm human just like you.'"

Fr. Cyprys realized his vocation from a very early age, said Charlene Hyland, who was his cousin and who grew up in the same house Fr. Cyprys did.

"He entered the seminary in the high school level," Hyland said. "That was something he always wanted. He never thought about being anything else but a priest."

Hyland has many fond memories of her cousin joking with the family on holidays and being there in any time of need, great or small.

"He even buried my pets," she said. "He came with holy water and everything, with his book. He had prayers for animals."

When recovering from his liver transplant, Hyland said Fr. Cyprys had a strong desire to get back to saying Masses at Our Lady of Grace — and even said one while wearing a surgical mask.

Those who knew him say Fr. Cyprys was a private man, too. He had many passions — bowling, fishing and especially golf. But they always took a back seat to those in need.

Fr. Cyprys cared for his own parents before their deaths, his mother in 1996 and his father in 2001.

It was July 4 that Fr. Cyprys found that his condition would be fatal, Hyland said.

"When we found out he had the cancer, he said, 'If God wants to cure me, He'll cure me. If not, He'll take me up into His hands,'" Hyland said. "He was calm about the whole thing. He didn't have any fear."

Fr. Cyprys is survived by aunts, uncles and cousins.

Fr. Cyprys was scheduled to be waked from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. Aug. 2 at the John N. Santeiu and Son Funeral Home, 1139 Inkster Road, Garden City. Visitation was to continue from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (prayer service at 7 p.m.) Aug. 3 at Our Lady of Grace Church, 8679 Riverview St. in Dearborn Heights.

The funeral Mass will take place 11 a.m. on Aug. 4 at Our Lady of Grace Church. His body will lie in state a half-hour before the Mass.

Memorials to Capuchin Soup Kitchen, 4390 Conner, Detroit 48215; or Our Lady of Grace Parish. Condolences to Our Lady of Grace Parish.