

Cumberland priest dies at 80

Capuchin Franciscan Father Louis Petruha, who served in Cumberland parishes in the 1970s and in recent years, died March 31 following an extended illness. He was 80 years old.

In the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Father Petruha served as an instructor at the Capuchin Novitiate in Annapolis (1966-67), as associate pastor at Ss. Peter and Paul in Cumberland, which is now part of Our Lady of the Mountains (1972-75), and again at Our Lady of the Mountains (2015 until recent months, when medical issues intervened).

“Father Louis had a wonderful, outgoing personality,” Capuchin Franciscan Father Gregory Chervenak, pastor of Our Lady of the Mountains, said in an email to the Catholic Review. “His warm smile and down-to-earth nature were infectious. ... He would engage everyone with a smile and a question, and the conversation would take off from there.”

A Pittsburgh native, Father Petruha attended the parish school at St. Mary of the Assumptions in the city’s Station Heights neighborhood. He then entered St. Fidelis College and Seminary in Herman, Pa., in 1953. He entered the Capuchin novitiate at the end of his sophomore year.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from St. Fidelis College. He professed his final vows while studying theology at Capuchin College in Washington, D.C., in 1963, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1965. Father Petruha earned his master’s degree in religious education from Capuchin College the following year.

Father Petruha kept his education updated by attending courses, workshops, pilgrimages, tours and mission trips throughout his life, even after completing his formal education.

“Father Louis was constantly learning, whether listening to Bishop Barron’s presentations, taking courses online from Harvard and Yale or reading spiritual books – he always wanted to learn more,” Father Chervenak wrote. “His knowledge, ministerial experience and life experiences made him wise, and an insightful

spiritual director and counselor. He had a way of reaching into people with the Holy Spirit and leading them forward.”

Father Chervenak said Father Petruha loved, studied and prayed with the Sacred Scriptures. To share his love with the parish, he offered multiple eight-week series on the Gospels and the New Testament books.

“He was well loved and respected as a great teacher,” Father Chervenak said.

A funeral Mass was offered at St. Augustine Church in Lawrenceville, Pa., April 6.