

# Father Bayer, scholar-priest, dies

Father Edward J. Bayer, a scholar of moral theology and a former pastor who dedicated his retirement to teaching seminarians in New Guinea, died Feb. 18 after a brief battle with cancer. He was 79.

“He was a brilliant, holy man,” remembered Monsignor James P. Farmer, pastor of St. Ursula in Parkville and one of Father Bayer’s closest friends.

“He was totally devoted to Jesus and the priesthood,” said Monsignor Farmer, who gave the homily at the Feb. 22 funeral Mass offered by Bishop Denis J. Madden at St. Ursula. “His whole life revolved around bringing people closer to Christ. He loved academics and the pastoral side of ministry. It was a rare combination of talents.”

Father Bayer grew up in the Shrine of the Little Flower in Baltimore, where he attended the parish school through fifth grade. He studied for the priesthood at St. Charles College High School in Catonsville, St. Charles College in Catonsville, St. Mary’s Seminary and University in Roland Park and the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

Ordained Dec. 16, 1956 in Rome, Father Bayer served the early years of his priesthood as an associate pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Hydes, St. Augustine in Elkridge and St. Michael the Archangel in Overlea.

Father Bayer, who earned a doctorate in moral theology from the Gregorian University in Rome, was the former pastor of St. Lawrence in Jessup, St. Dominic in Hamilton and St. Bernadette in the Washington archdiocese. He then worked as a professor at the Catholic Bioethics Center in Missouri, Allentown College in Pennsylvania and the Pontifical College Josephinum in Ohio.

After serving as an associate pastor and administrator of St. Clement Mary Hofbauer in Rosedale, Father Bayer was named pastor of Holy Family in Randallstown in 1994 – a post he held until his 2001 retirement.

Father Bayer decided to relocate to New Guinea after reading about a shortage of instructors at the seminary in the Diocese of Vanimo. He spent nine years teaching

moral theology at New Guinea's De Boismenu College, Port Moresby and Sacred Heart Interdiocesan Seminary before declining health forced him to return to the United States.

Father John Lombardi, who served with Father Bayer at Holy Family, remembered in a written reflection that Father Bayer relished his priesthood in New Guinea. He wrote that Father Bayer was "cooking pigs on spits and living near a volcano; witnessing hope in youthful seminarians; learning a new, radically different culture and celebrating the Mass in new forms - sometimes amidst dancing natives and waving hands and colorful skirts and instrumentation."

"For a guy trained in Rome in the 1950s, he sure was resilient and often commented on how much variety is part of our Holy Catholic Church," said Father Lombardi, administrator of St. Peter, Hancock and St. Patrick, Little Orleans.

Deacon Richard "Monti" Montalto, who also ministered with Father Bayer at Holy Family, remembered that his friend was a leader in the anti-segregation movement in the 1960s and was known for quietly helping those in need and serving as a former spiritual director for the Cursillo Movement.

"A lot of people didn't know that he would personally assist people who had alcohol or drug problems," Deacon Montalto said.

Father Bayer took great pride in publishing papal encyclicals and other writings every week in Holy Family's bulletin.

"He was an excellent teacher," said Deacon Montalto, remembering that many authors asked his friend to read their books before they were published. "People really loved him."