

Father Christopher Carney, known for gentleness, dies

Father Christopher M. Carney, a beloved pastor known for his gentleness and wisdom, died Jan. 15 after a long illness. He was 77.

A retired priest in residence at St. Ignatius, Hickory, Father Carney was praying the Litany of the Saints with his good friend Monsignor James Barker, pastor of St. Ignatius, when he died.

“Father Chris was beloved for his gentleness and his pastoral wisdom and his compassion,” said Monsignor Barker, who first came to know Father Carney some 35 years ago while serving as a seminarian at Our Lady of Victory in Arbutus, where Father Carney was pastor.

Although Father Carney, who had suffered a heart attack and stroke in recent years, no longer said Mass publicly, he said Mass every day in his room. On feast days and other important days he would come to church and “folks would line up to greet him after Mass,” Monsignor Barker said. “When he heard confessions his line would be the longest because people wanted his words of wisdom and guidance.”

A Philadelphia native, Father Carney was a Christian Brother for 22 years before entering the priesthood in 1971. He earned a bachelor’s degree in education from La Salle College in 1953 and a master’s degree in theology the following year. He taught at what is now Bishop Walsh School in Cumberland and schools in Philadelphia. For more than a decade he served as assistant to the director of finances for the Christian Brothers.

Father Carney said he felt called by the Holy Spirit to the ministry of his priesthood after a happy conclusion to his ministry as a Christian Brother.

“He still had a fondness for the brothers and kept in touch, but he loved being a priest,” Monsignor Barker said.

Father Carney’s first assignment was as associate pastor of St. Thomas More,

Baltimore, where he eventually became administrator. He was the pastor of Our Lady of Victory for 12 years and then served as pastor of Church of the Annunciation in Rosedale until 1992, when he became pastor of St. Michael the Archangel, Overlea, where he worked for nine years. He became the senior priest at St. Ignatius in 2001.

Father Carney loved to travel, especially to Rome, where he had the privilege of saying Mass several times with Pope John Paul II in his private chapel at the Vatican.

“He had a special love for the Blessed Mother that carried him throughout his life,” Monsignor Barker said.

A funeral Mass will be offered at 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 17 at St. Ignatius. Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien will be the chief celebrant, and Monsignor Barker will be the homilist.