

Father Funk, Frederick pastor, dies

Father Wayne G. Funk, the longtime pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Frederick who was known for his encouraging, pastoral presence, died Feb. 16 at Frederick Memorial Hospital. The 70-year-old priest had battled cancer for nearly five years.

Archbishop William D. Borders celebrated a funeral Mass Feb. 20, with Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien offering the final commendation. Bishop W. Francis Malooly, western vicar, led wake services Feb. 19.

"One of the things that always impressed me about Father Wayne was that he seemed to be able to see the good in people and call it forth in a very down-to-earth way," said Father Richard Murphy, who has been serving as co-pastor of St. John during part of Father Funk's illness.

Father Murphy met Father Funk in Rome as a seminarian when Father Funk was serving on the faculty of the Pontifical North American College in Rome, a highly-regarded seminary. Father Funk was very encouraging of young men discerning the call to the priesthood, Father Murphy said.

"I remember times in the seminary when he had a lot more confidence in me than I did," Father Murphy said.

Father Funk was pastor of St. John for 18 years. Among his accomplishments at the parish include regionalizing the parish school, restoring and air-conditioning the church, transforming the former convent into a pastoral center and introducing a ministry to Spanish-speaking Catholics, Father Murphy said.

Father Murphy remembered his friend as a leader to "worked strenuously to keep an eye on the budget."

"He hired skilled people that he trusted and allowed them to do their ministries without micromanaging them," said Father Murphy, noting that St. John is a large parish consisting of about 4,200 registered families.

Born in Baltimore, Father Funk was ordained to the priesthood in 1962 at the

Church of Christ the King in Rome. His first assignment was to St. Agnes in Catonsville as associate pastor before being appointed to the faculty of the Pontifical North American College. He later served as associate pastor of St. Matthew in Northwood, becoming pastor there after several years as director of clergy personnel for the archdiocese.

Despite his illness, Father Funk was very active at the parish right until two weeks before his death. One of the last things he did before being taken to the hospital was celebrate Mass, Father Murphy said.

"It was really beautiful that some of us could be with him when he died," said Father Murphy, noting that Father J. Kevin Farmer, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Community in Middletown, Father Rafael Murillo, associate pastor of St. John, Frederick, and Maria Johnson, archdiocesan director of Hispanic ministry, joined him in praying with Father Funk at his bedside when he died.

"He was a gracious man who was constantly doing things for others with no fanfare," said Father Murphy. "He will be missed."