

Father John A. Delclos dies at 67

As Father Edward M. Miller prepares the homily he will deliver at the May 10 funeral Mass for his friend of 40 years – Father John Anthony Delclos – the pastor of St. Bernardine, Baltimore, reflects on how the 67-year-old retired priest was able to take the complexity out of religion and make it easy for the faithful to comprehend.

“People saw him as a real teacher of the word of God,” Father Miller said. “Someone once told him, ‘Father John, you are simple but deep.’ He didn’t quite know how to take that at first. It’s one of those compliments where you say, ‘Thank you, I think.’”

The funeral Mass will be held 6 p.m. at St. Francis of Assisi, Baltimore.

The family will receive visitors at the church from 5-6 p.m. May 10 and burial will take place May 11 at Holy Redeemer Cemetery. Those attending are asked to gather by 9:30 a.m. at Leonard J. Ruck Funeral Home on Harford Road.

Born in Baltimore July 9, 1939, Father Delclos grew up in the parish of St. Ann, Baltimore, where he also attended elementary school.

A 1957 graduate of Loyola Blakefield, Towson, he worked at Maryland National Bank while attending Loyola Evening College, earning his Bachelor of Science degree in business administration in 1966.

After a few more years as a bank manager, he entered the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Baltimore and was ordained June 5, 1971, at St. Clement Mary Hofbauer, Rosedale, where he then served as associate pastor for the next four years.

In 1975 he was appointed pastor of St. Peter the Apostle, Baltimore, but resigned in 1977 after contracting hepatitis.

After several months of recuperation he served on the retreat team at the Jesuit retreat house, Manresa, in Annapolis, was appointed in 1986 to the Division of Adult and Family Ministry to continue his retreat work for parishes of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and other groups under the direction of the Office of Evangelization.

In 1999 he was assigned as an associate pastor of St. Bernardine, Baltimore, to work with his fellow seminarian and longtime friend, Father Miller, where he served until his retirement in 2004.

“He really welcomed parish work after so many years of living out of a suitcase,” Father Miller said. “It was a piece of cake working together, and he was really loved at this parish.”

He also served as a muse for others throughout his career, including a parishioner of St. Clement who would later become Monsignor James P. Farmer, pastor of St. Ursula, Parkville.

“He was a tremendous inspiration to me in becoming a priest,” said Monsignor Farmer, adding that Father Delclos would frequently visit him at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg.

“I was always impressed with how happy and upbeat he was,” said Bishop W. Francis Malooly, western vicar, who also attended seminary with Father Delclos. “Whenever he did a parish mission, it reminded me of what it must have been like in the early church.”

Father Delclos died at his Northeast Baltimore home May 6 after a long battle with cancer.

He is survived by three brothers, K. Barry Delclos of Little Rock, Ark., Joseph V. and Victor R. Delclos of Baltimore, four nephews and one niece.

Describing Father Delclos as detail oriented, Father Miller said the priest chose every aspect of his funeral, burial, attire in which to be viewed and where charitable donations should be made in his honor.

In lieu of flowers, Father Delclos asked that people treat a homeless person with love, compassion and to a lunch or a night in a hotel. He also asked for donations to be made to the Franciscan Center or Our Daily Bread in Baltimore.

Meghan Walton contributed to this story.