

Father Moody, Western Maryland priest, dies at 89

By George P. Matysek Jr.

gmatysek@CatholicReview.org

A retired Western Maryland pastor who was well known for his outreach to the elderly died Jan. 16 in his native Frostburg.

Father William J. Moody, former pastor of St. Ann in Grantsville and St. Joseph in Midland, was 89 and had been in declining health.

“He was totally devoted to taking care of people in nursing homes and shut-ins,” said Susan Gerhard, administrative assistant at St. Michael, Frostburg. “He took care of people we will never know about.”

Gerhard remembered that her friend frequently made Communion calls, offered regular Masses at an area nursing home and celebrated a live televised Mass for shut-ins from a Cumberland television station. Even as he approached 90, the priest was still reaching out to others, she said.

“There’s going to be a huge void without him,” Gerhard said.

Capuchin Franciscan Father Gregory Chervenak, pastor of Our Lady of the Mountains in Cumberland, said Father Moody was a “very spiritual and holy man.” Father Moody was a strong supporter of the Knights of Columbus and had started a First Friday prayer hour for them.

“He loved being a priest and he had great devotion to the Eucharist,” said Father Chervenak, who was to give the homily at Father Moody’s Jan. 19 funeral at St. Michael in Frostburg, Father Moody’s home parish. Bishop William C. Newman was to be the celebrant.

“He [Father Moody] was a very pastoral guy,” Father Chervenak said. “He was very unassuming in his dedicated service. He didn’t toot his own horn.”

Father Moody attended St. Michael School in Frostburg as a child. He was drafted into the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1942 and served in the southwest Pacific during World War II.

After leaving the Navy in 1946, Father Moody graduated from Frostburg Teachers College and began a teaching career in the Baltimore County public schools. Father Moody prepared for the priesthood at Pope John XXIII National Seminary in Massachusetts and was ordained a priest for the Baltimore archdiocese in 1970. He served as associate pastor of St. Anthony of Padua in Baltimore from 1970 to 1972; St. Mary, Cumberland, from 1972 to 1985; and St. Patrick in Cumberland in 1980.

Father Moody was pastor of St. Ann in Grantsville from 1985 to 1995 and St. Joseph in Midland from 1988 to 1990.

“His strength was his sincerity,” said Camilla Rawe, who worked with Father Moody at St. Ann. “He tried to do his best. He would not let any stones go unturned when it came to working with the elderly. It takes a special person to do that.”