

Father Paulits, 88, guided Lake Shore parish with quiet dignity

The story of Our Lady of the Chesapeake, Lake Shore, can't be told without Father Walter J. Paulits. The founding pastor of the Anne Arundel County parish, however, would not have sought such credit.

"He was a hidden jewel," said Father Brian M. Rafferty, current pastor of the parish. "He was one of the unsung heroes of the (Archdiocese of) Baltimore." Father Paulits died peacefully June 4. He was 88.

A funeral Mass was to be offered by Auxiliary Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski for Father Paulits June 9, at 7 p.m., at Our Lady of the Chesapeake. He will be buried in Philadelphia.

Born April 24, 1923, in Westmont, N.J., Father Paulits attended The Catholic University of America in Washington and Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg.

Ordained Feb. 12, 1972, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Baltimore, Father Paulits was in residence there for four months before being assigned to St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Baltimore as associate pastor. After a year, he was named associate pastor to St. John in Westminster.

He became resident priest for what was known then as the Catholic Community of Lake Shore in September 1978. The faith community in Pasadena officially became Our Lady of the Chesapeake Parish in 1980; Father Paulits officially became pastor in March of that year.

During the next six years, Father Paulits and parishioners worked tirelessly to build a church for the parish. According to the parish website, Father Paulits told parishioners during the first Mass in the building, "Let us now begin our service to the community from this room."

He remained at Our Lady of the Chesapeake until his retirement in 1991. Just a few

years later, the boisterous Father Rafferty arrived and found a kindred theological spirit in Father Paulits. Their guiding principals were: What would Jesus do?

“He was so quiet, so reserved, so dignified,” Father Rafferty said. “He was a very quiet, savvy, genteel, passionate, conscientious parish priest.”

Much to Father Rafferty’s delight, Father Paulits remained active at Our Lady of the Chesapeake, appearing at parish gatherings and celebrating Masses until the last few years. He delivered homilies that stressed Scripture and how church teachings were reflected in those readings.

The parish remains a success, Father Rafferty said, because of the groundwork laid by Father Paulits.

“The beauty of following Father Paulits was that all you had to do was keep on doing what he did,” Father Rafferty said.

During a 2006 interview with The Catholic Review, Father Paulits said he remained active by writing articles for various magazines, reading popular books and visiting his sister in Philadelphia. He said Our Lady of the Chesapeake parishioners remained a source of constant comfort.

“They are marvelous to me,” he said.

Earlier this year, Father Paulits moved to Peartree House in Pasadena. He remained in the hearts of many parishioners. Father Rafferty said they would honor their former priest with a traditional Irish wake June 9.

The pastor will miss his predecessor and friend.

“It’s a real loss to the neighborhood,” Father Rafferty said.