

Father Warczynski dies at 91

Father Leon K. Warczynski, the former longtime pastor of Sacred Heart of Mary in Graceland Park who led efforts to build a new parish school and inspired priestly vocations, died Oct. 19 at Stella Maris in Timonium. He was 91.

A Baltimore native who grew up in St. Stanislaus parish, Father Warczynski was pastor of Sacred Heart of Mary for nearly two decades beginning in 1963.

Baltimore Auxiliary Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, who served as an altar boy for Father Warczynski at Sacred Heart of Mary, remembered the priest as a “very gentle man who was very dedicated to the parish and to his people.”

“He was very plainspoken, very straightforward and he just loved to be around people,” said Bishop Rozanski, who will offer the funeral Mass Oct. 23 at Sacred Heart of Mary.

One of Father Warczynski’s greatest achievements was building a new school and hall in the 1960s to replace an aging facility, Bishop Rozanski said. Even though it was more expensive to construct a hall without pillars, Father Warczynski decided to do it – providing plenty of space for the Polish parish’s many polka dances and other events, the bishop said.

Father Warczynski’s commitment to his priesthood helped nurture Bishop Rozanski’s own call to the religious life.

“Certainly as my pastor, he did have an influence,” said Bishop Rozanski. “He provided a good example in the way he dealt with people, in his gentleness and in his dedication to the parish.”

Monsignor Richard Parks, who succeeded Father Warczynski as pastor of Sacred Heart of Mary, said his predecessor also played a key role in his decision to enter the priesthood. Monsignor Parks was Father Warczynski’s altar server when the priest was a young associate pastor of St. Paul in Baltimore in the late 1940s.

“He was born to be a priest,” said Monsignor Parks, who also served as a Father

Warczynski's associate pastor for six years at Sacred Heart of Mary.

"He was the kind of person who liked to be in the background," Monsignor Parks said. "He didn't like any fanfare. He was a very humble priest and always on the job."

Monsignor Parks noted that in addition to building the school, Father Warczynski refurbished the parish cemetery.

"The parish was flourishing under his command," he said.

Father Warczynski attended minor seminary at St. Charles College in Catonsville and St. Mary's Seminary on Paca Street and in Roland Park. Ordained in 1942, he served as an associate pastor of St. Peter, Westernport; St. Paul in Baltimore and Holy Rosary in Fells Point before being named pastor of Sacred Heart of Mary. He went on a medical leave in 1981 and retired in 1983.

Father Warczynski's body was received at Sacred Heart of Mary at 1:15 p.m. on Oct. 22. Viewing will be until 8 p.m., with a wake to be held at 7:30 p.m. The funeral will be on Oct. 23 at 10 a.m.