

# Paulist campus minister and film reviewer dies

Paulist Father Phillip J. Cunningham, a former Catholic chaplain at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and a film reviewer for The Catholic Review, died March 11 at age 88.

Born in Sioux City, Iowa, Father Cunningham served at Hopkins from 1966-78. During his tenure, he formed the Catholic Community on Campus, a group that had representatives on the Northeast Urban Area Council and had members elected to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council.

Father Cunningham also taught a course on Teilhard de Chardin and served on the archdiocesan Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance.

"He had a deep commitment to campus ministry, both to the students and the faculty," said Paulist Father Thomas Stransky, former president of the Paulist Fathers who was one year behind Father Cunningham in the seminary. "That is kind of unique. Most people can only relate to one group or the other."

With a keen interest in films, Father Cunningham served in the Legion of Decency - an organization that combatted indecency in the movies.

In a 1972 Catholic Review movie review of Francis Ford Coppola's "The Godfather," Father Cunningham called the baptism scene at the film's climax a "masterpiece of cinematic imagination." The sequence showed a series of murders as a baptism unfolds.

"We can easily forget the force of evil in the world," Father Cunningham wrote. "It can be urbane, logical, impeccably dressed and mannered. It is often disguised as loyalty, justice, even love. It can even stand at the baptismal font."

Father Cunningham thanked Coppola for the reminder.

Before entering the Paulist Fathers, Father Cunningham served in the Army Air Corps from 1942-45. A member of the Paulists for 60 years, Father Cunningham held a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Los Angeles, a master's degree from St. Paul's College in Washington, D.C. and a master's degree in liberal arts from Johns Hopkins University.

In addition to his Baltimore ministry, the priest ministered in Los Angeles, New York, Venezuela, San Francisco, Rome, San Diego and Tucson, Ariz.. He retired from active ministry in 1988, and was a resident of the Mercy Center in Oakland, Calif., at the time of his death.

Paulist Father John Hurley, executive director of the archdiocesan Department of Evangelization, will offer a memorial Mass April 6 at 6:30 p.m. in The Lady Chapel at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Homeland.