

St. Alphonsus to remember heroic son of parish

The Shrine of St. Alphonsus in Baltimore will host a 3 p.m. memorial service and reception Feb. 28 for Father Casimir Pugevicius, a son of the parish and a noted defender of human rights and freedom in Lithuania.

Father Pugevicius, who died Feb. 29, 2000, headed the New York-based Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid for 17 years beginning in 1976. In that role, he coordinated covert efforts to expose human rights abuses by the Communists who then ruled the central European nation. Father Pugevicius sometimes employed Catholic nuns and priests to smuggle reports on human rights abuses out of Lithuania. He also helped sneak religious books and resources into the country.

During the memorial service, parish leaders will hang a medal in the church that marked his receiving the Order of the Grand Duke Gediminas - one of Lithuania's highest honors.

"He was a very unpretentious person," remembers Monsignor Arthur Bastress, St. Alphonsus' pastor. "He did what he did because he knew it had to be done. Our parishioners are very proud of him."