

Father James Williams Retires After 37 Years of Priesthood

*Served Ste. Anne's on Island,
St. Ignatius Loyola in St. Ignace*

By Karen Gould

St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic Church in St. Ignace was filled to overflowing Sunday, May 27, as parishioners gathered to commemorate the retirement of Father James Williams, who has been their pastor for the last two years. He also served as parish priest for Immaculate Conception in Moran.

Retiring after 37 years of priesthood, Fr. Williams often has been described as a "people person," a skilled speaker who was known for his unrehearsed prayers.

"He could come up with a prayer at any occasion, any time, and it was always very meaningful," said Deacon Don Olmstead.

Deacon Tom McClelland agrees.

"He touched people by his personal, spontaneous prayers," he said. "They were very spiritual and very pertinent to the reality that is a part of people's lives."

Fr. Williams, who will turn 66 years old in November, often quoted poets W.H. Auden, William Yates, and T.S. Eliot in his homilies and always passed up using the lectern in favor of offering his message from the center aisle.

Rather than give a final homily Sunday, he asked his good friend, Brother James Boynton, to give the message. The two men worked together at Ste. Anne's Church on Mackinac Island for 12 years. In fact, in Ste. Anne's 337-year history, Fr. Williams is the third-longest serving priest, having been there 15 years.

After running the Memorial Bridge Run across the Mackinac Bridge the day before, Br. Boynton presented Fr. Williams with his race T-shirt and medal.

"He is the best priest I know," Br. Boynton told parishioners.

Fr. Williams' style as a pastor was to empower others to do things for the community, Deacon McClelland said, and he encouraged parishioners to take on leadership roles.



Father James Williams (second from right), priest for St. Ignatius Loyola Church in St. Ignace and Immaculate Conception in Moran, retired Sunday, May 27. For his last Mass in St. Ignace as parish pastor, he was joined by (from left) Father Rey Garcia, SJ, pastor of Ste. Anne's on Mackinac Island, Brother James Boynton, SJ, summer program helper at Ste. Anne's and the vocation director for the Jesuits Detroit Province, and Deacons Donald Olmstead and Thomas McClelland, both of St. Ignatius Loyola.

"He is very generous with praise to people who do these things to go out and help others," he said.

"All things are possible in this parish," Fr. Williams said. "I loved it here."

After Sunday's service and during a potluck dinner in the parish hall, Fr. Williams was recognized for establishing two local organizations, Narcotics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous.

"You've challenged us," said Deacon McClelland. "You've worked hard to get us to move our faith from our heads to our hearts."

"He's been a great teacher," said Deacon Olmstead. "One of the things I admire about him is that I could always call on him. He was never any further away than my telephone."

Bishop Alexander Sample noted Fr. Williams' oversight of restoration work at Ste. Anne's Church and his dedication to the St. Ignace congregation after the death of Fr. Mike Rhoades.

"It is certainly with deep gratitude that I extend my best wishes to Fr. Williams as he

enters what we refer to as 'senior priest status.' A priest never retires!" Bishop Sample said. "On behalf of the whole diocese, I am particularly grateful for his many faithful years of priestly ministry at Ste. Anne's and to the islanders. He saw to the spiritual needs of the people on the island, as well as attending to the many building issues that go along with being pastor of such an historic church. His oversight of the beautiful restoration of the church will stand as a reminder of his love for the island and its people. I am also grateful for his beautiful ministry to Fr. Mike Rhoades and the people of St. Ignatius Parish in St. Ignace during his illness, death, and the difficult days that followed. May God bless him in this new phase of his priestly life!"

Fr. Williams said he considered delaying his retirement, although something told him it was time to retire.

"I'm not retiring because I am not happy here. You are great people, a great parish," he said. "There is something, I can't even verbalize it, there is

something that tells me that this is the time for me to do this."

He said he had a great day on Mackinac Island Saturday, having two private meetings, one with Governor Jennifer Granholm and a second with Bishop Alexander Sample.

He told both of them that next Sunday he plans to sleep in, have a leisurely cup of coffee, and watch the political television show, "Meet The Press."

He and Bishop Sample have discussed the future and he said that after a period of time, if the parish asks him to come back to help, he would.

"I will disappear from the parish for awhile. It is an old Jesuit tradition," he said, "so you can let go of me."

Fr. Williams said he would like to leave his parishioners with the message that they can face the challenges of life, and they should not be faced alone.

"God always surprises us, he startles us," said Fr. Williams. "When he enters our life, he always does it in unexpected ways. So, the first impulse is to

**Please turn to page 22*

FOR RENT

Monthly or Seasonal



Matthew Geary House

Market Street
Mackinac Island

Summer 2007
May - October

For information call
(906) 847-3328

Daily Flights
to and from
Pellston and
Traverse City

Charter Air Service
to Detroit, Chicago, etc.



Serving
Mackinac Island
Since 1980

Great Lakes Air

ST. IGNACE (906) 643-7165

The Original

Come Visit the

BUTTERFLY HOUSE

& INSECT WORLD

Featuring Butterflies and insects from Southeast Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and North America

www.originalbutterflyhouse.com



We are starting our 16th year as the 3rd Oldest Live Butterfly Exhibit in America. This year features a rebuilt tropical waterfall (ideal for family pictures) and new educational exhibit featuring butterflies from around the world with trained college students to answer your questions. New in 2007, a tropical insect display featuring large walking sticks, spiders, beetles, a live turtle pond, and interactive kids butterfly exhibit.

Visit our customer friendly Gift Shop!

Gifts for all ages.

(FREE to kids 12 & under the Famous Original Butterfly House & Insect World bracelet)

The Butterfly House is only a 5 minute walk past the boat marina. Located behind Ste. Anne's Church.

(You only pay once and you can visit as many times as you'd like while staying on the Island)

A MUST SEE during your family visit to Mackinac Island

Open 10 a.m.-7 p.m. daily during peak season
Phone (906) 847-3972

Grocery Delivery

Starts Thursday, May 24th

Thursday & Monday

Village
West Bluff
Annex

Friday & Wednesday

Stonecliffe
Woodbluff
British Landing

Saturday & Tuesday

Downtown
Mission Area
East Bluff

Fax Order To: 847-0333
Email Order To: info@doudsmarket.com
Drop Order Off at Store

Orders must be made by 1 p.m. the day of delivery

Be sure to provide your personal contact info with your order

Delivery Provided by Mackinac Island Service Company for a Standard Fee.

Pizza/Deli Delivery

DOWNTOWN ANYTIME

Outside of Downtown

All Calls in by 5 p.m. • 7 p.m. • 9 p.m.
(\$12 minimum outside of downtown)

call
847.3444
to order



www.doudsmarket.com
info@doudsmarket.com
906.847.3444
fax 906.847.0333