

JAMES F. CHURCH, 1932-2017

# Funeral Mass set for longtime monsignor, who was pastor at many local churches

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A funeral Mass will be celebrated for Monsignor James F. Church, a cleric who served the Sacramento diocese at various parishes and in many roles during his long service to Roman Catholics.

Church, 84, died last Sunday. Church, who was affected by Alzheimer's disease for the past four years, was ordained a priest in 1958 at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. He retired in summer 2014.

In between, he served as faculty and financial administrator at Bishop Armstrong School, St. Francis High School and the Galt seminary, and as assistant superintendent of diocesan schools.

Church taught for seven years at his alma mater, Christian Brothers High

School. He also was the pastor of many churches, including St. Peter, St. Philomene, St. Charles and St. Rose in Sacramento during his



Monsignor James Francis Church

nearly six decades as an active priest.

Bernie Church, retired McClatchy High School baseball coach, remembered his brother as a modest and unassuming person.

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*Victor Herrera, St. Rose parishioner*

During his time as a priest, Church attended classes at universities during the summer.

When he returned, he never knew where he would be assigned, according to his diocesan biographer. He was named monsignor in 1977, a few days before his 45th birthday.

His last assignment as pastor was at St. Rose Parish on Franklin Boulevard, where he replaced longtime parish pastor Monsignor Edward Kavanaugh.

“They were in the very best hands,” said Kavanaugh, who remembered his priestly colleague as charitable and a great communicator with children.

"He was a man's man, a priest's priest," said Bernie Church. "He always seemed to have an inner peace. He quietly went about his business being a priest and a friend to all."

James Francis Church, later known to some as "Father Jim," was born in Lodi on Jan. 26, 1932. Like his father, who was drafted by the Sacramento Solons before fracturing his ankle, Church was a good athlete.

He earned seven varsity letters at Christian Brothers High School in basketball, baseball and football. He made The Sacramento Bee and Sacramento Union all-city baseball teams in 1950.

Church was a good student, carrying a grade-average of 3.6 to 4.0 all four years at Christian Brothers, according to a biography prepared by the Rev. John Boll, the diocesan archivist. He also found time to star in the annual school play and serve as student body president his senior year.

While some told Jim Church that he would be a great professional baseball player, a priest suggested he consider becoming a member of the clergy. Not long after that, the baseball diamond's loss was the church's gain.

He earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from St. Patrick's Seminary.

St. Rose parishioner Victor Herrera remembered Church as a good friend who was kind and humble. Church baptized Herrera's daughter and his two grandsons were his altar boys.

"He was great with kids," Herrera said. "Even at his Mass when he heard a little baby crying, he would tell the congregation, 'It is the angels singing.' He was a good man. He was a good example for all of us."

Church spent his last years at Mercy McMahon Terrace assisted living on J Street. On Sundays, he would gather with his family.

In his diocesan biography, Church was quoted as saying that he had a peaceful experience as a priest. His life, he said, had been happy.

A rosary will be said at 6 p.m. Sunday at Immaculate Conception Church, 3263 First Ave. A Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Monday at St. Anthony Church, 660 Florin Road.

Remembrances may be made to The La Salle Club, Christian Brothers High School, 4315 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Sacramento 95820, or to a charity of choice.

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