

DIocese OF SAN BERNARDINO



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

July 28, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings of Peace!

It is with gratitude for his life of service far from Poland, his native land, that I inform you that Fr. Chester C. (Czleslaw) Kopec was called to his eternal rest July 21, 2020. Fr. Chester, 83, had been in assisted living for some years due to failing health and was recently admitted to Kaiser Hospital, Fontana. Accepting his illness with peace and resignation, he remained alert until a few days before he died at Kaiser Hospital, and was greatly blessed to have the support of Rev. Msgr. Tom Wallace and faithful caregivers. We pray that he may now enter the joy of our loving God, whom he trusted, loved and enthusiastically served.

Chester Kopec, one of seven children, survived by his sister, Teresa Kolodziej, was born in Poland, July 7, 1937 to Franciszek Kopec and Adela Planeta. He was baptized July 20, 1937 at Smegorzow. Poland. He attended local schools and colleges and the Oratorian Seminary in Tarnow, Poland, 1956-1963. Chester Kopec was ordained to the Congregation of the Oratorian Fathers June 29, 1963 by Most Reverend Jerzy Ablewicz. Following ordination Fr. Chester did priestly ministry in parishes in Poland and pursued studies in Theology, graduating with a Master of Theology Degree, from Catholic University, Lublin in 1977 and a Licenciate from the Pontifical Faculty of Theology, Kraców in 1980. He was proficient in English, Spanish, Polish and had some facility in speaking German, French, Russian and Italian.

After spending some years in parish ministry in Winnipeg and Victoria, Canada, he requested to transfer in 1979 to San Bernardino Diocese to a more congenial climate. He was welcomed by Most Reverend Phillip F. Straling to St. Edward's Parish, Corona as Associate Pastor and later as Administrator at St. Madeleine Sophie Barat Parish, Trona. He was incardinated into the Diocese of San Bernardino on October 6, 1983.

Soon after, Fr. Chester Kopec began a long term of dedicated chaplaincy service until his retirement in 2004. He served in Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, Blythe; County Hospital, San Bernardino; and for fourteen years in California Institute for Men, Chino. Enthusiastic in

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the ministry, fast in speech, yet with humor, empathy, and a listening ear, he touched the lives of countless people with hope and healing. During these years and in his retirement, he welcomed opportunities to celebrate Mass when needed in the neighboring parishes and to join in priest gatherings in the Diocese. In his final years as a resident of Brookdale Assisted Living House, he joyfully offered Sunday Mass for his fellow residents. A US citizen since 1986, he paid regular visits to his family in Poland and maintained a devoted relationship with the Oratorian Fathers to which Congregation his brother, Fr. Stanislaw Kopec, belonged.

I will celebrate Mass of Resurrection for Fr. Chester Kopec on Thursday, August 13, 2020 at 11:00 AM at Our Lady Queen of Peace Cemetery, Colton. Entombment will follow at 12:00 Noon in All Souls Chapel and Mausoleum. I ask you to remember Fr. Chester in the three Masses we offer for a brother priest. *Niech odpoczywa w Pokoju Wiecznym.* (In Polish *Rest in Peace*).

Fraternally in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerald R. Barnes".

Most Reverend Gerald R. Barnes
Bishop of the Diocese of San Bernardino

GRB/elp