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Bishop Paprocki, priests to gather for annual jubilee celebration

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Priests in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois will join Bishop Thomas John Paprocki for the annual priests' jubilee celebration on Tuesday, May 9 at Villa Maria Catholic Life Center at Lake Springfield.

Silver jubilarians this year are Father Rodney Schwartz and Father Donald Patrick Gibbons. The golden jubilarian this year is Msgr. Michael Kuse. Celebrating 55 years of service this year are Father Philip Kraft, Father Ronald Trojcek, Father Jerry Wickenhauser, MM, and Father Joseph Zimmerman, OFM. Celebrating 60 years of service are Father Louis Schlangen, Father Henry Schmidt and Father Kenneth Rosswog, OFM. Celebrating 65 years is Father Sylvano Pera, OFM. And finally, celebrating 70 years is Father Vincent Elsen, OFM.

This year's presenter is Father James Mason, a priest of the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D., and president-rector of Kenrick-Glennon Seminary. He has a law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School and worked as a prosecutor in Minneapolis. He later attended the Pontifical North American College in Rome and received a degree from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas-Angelicum, Rome. He has a certificate in spiritual direction and retreat ministry at the Institute of Priestly Formation in Omaha, Neb., where he served on the board and taught a course on the spirituality of the diocesan priesthood.

Celebrating 70 Years

Father Vincent Robert Elsen, OFM

Father Vincent Elsen, OFM, has been a priest longer than any other Catholic priest currently living in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. He was ordained just a few days after his 26th birthday on Dec. 14, 1947. He spent his first decades as a priest advancing his education and then serving as an assistant or pastor in parishes in Nebraska, Illinois, Louisiana and Tennessee.

Beginning in 1991 he served in Texas as a senior parochial vicar or vicar at several parishes in San Antonio. He was chaplain at St. Francis Village in Crowley, Texas from 1994 to 1998 and then was a hospital chaplain in Fort Worth from 1998 to 2010. He also served in supply ministry in Fort Worth from 2004 to 2010. He remained serving the people of God in Texas until he was nearly 90 years old.

Father Vincent moved to Alton in 2010 and resides in St. Clare's Villa there. He is now 95 years old.



Celebrating 65 Years

Father Sylvano Pera, OFM

A native of Memphis, Tenn., Father Sylvano Pera, OFM, grew up in a parish where both the religious sisters who taught at the school and the parish priests were Franciscans. For high school he entered St. Joseph Seminary in Westmont, which was the Franciscans' minor seminary. He studied at St. Francis in Quincy and in Rome.

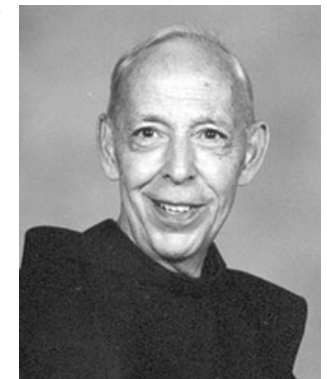
Father Sylvano was ordained by Bishop William A. O'Connor on June 24, 1952. He served some years outside the Springfield diocese and also in many Springfield diocesan parishes including St. Rose of Lima, Montrose; St. Aloysius, Bishop Creek; Immaculate Conception, Dieterich; St. Elizabeth, Marine; St. Gertrude, Grantfork; St. James, St. Jacob; St. Norbert, Hardin; St. Michael, Michael; St. Anselm, Kampsville; St. Agnes, Belleview; Our Lady of Lourdes, Decatur; St. Mary Help of Christians, Effingham (Green Creek); Sacred Heart, Lillyville; and Sacred Heart, Effingham.

Just before his 60th year anniversary he told Catholic Times, "Studying for the priesthood as Franciscans, we understood our responsibility would be to help the diocesan priests. When a bishop does not have enough priests in his diocese, we would fill in at parishes where we were needed."

He has always said his task has been "to bring Jesus to the people ... young people, old people, the sick and others." He has strived to "tell them how merciful, loving and compassionate God is, and to help them in their struggles in life to stay close to Jesus."

For many years, Father Sylvano served as a beloved chaplain for Family Camp, which is held every year in late summer and is a project of Pro-Life Activities and Special Ministries.

Father Sylvano retired in 2005 but continued to serve in supply ministry for quite some time, residing at St. Francis of Assisi in Teutopolis from 2007 to 2013. He moved to St. Clare's Friary in Alton in 2013 but has recently moved again, this time to Dutchtown Care Center in St. Louis.



Celebrating 60 Years

Father Louis Schlangen

Quincy native Father Louis Schlangen was ordained on May Day in 1957 by Bishop William A. O'Connor at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield.

After ordination, his first assignment was at Ss. Peter and Paul in Collinsville. He went on to serve as assistant at several parishes including St. John, Carrollton; Ss. Peter and Paul, Springfield; St. Thomas, Newton; St. Margaret Mary, Granite City; and at St. Anthony of Padua in Effingham. Over the next two decades he was either pastor or parochial administrator at St. Mary, Brussels; St. Joseph, Meppen; St. Barbara, Batchtown; St. Mary, Pittsfield; Holy Redeemer, Barry; and Holy Family in Griggsville. He also served as a hospital chaplain at St. Francis Hospital in Litchfield.

He spent about the last 18 years in active ministry serving as pastor, then parochial administrator at St. Edward Parish in Mendon. Additionally, during his last years before retirement he served for several years at St. Joseph in Quincy. He also has volunteered many weekends celebrating Sunday Mass at the fairgrounds during the Adams County Fair.

His favorite memories include, of course, serving in parishes, but also organizing community functions for seniors, starting a library in Brussels and producing a book on cemeteries in Calhoun County. He also arranged bus trips for students and adults to places like Chicago and the Smokey Mountains.

Father Schlangen retired in 2007. Now at age 86, he is living in retirement in Loraine.

Father Henry Schmidt

Father Henry Schmidt was raised on a farm outside of Carrollton with his sister (who became a Dominican sister) and five brothers. It was the night before his high school graduation when he decided to become a priest. At age 25, he was ordained on May 1, 1957 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception by Bishop William A. O'Connor.

From the late 1950s until 1970 he served two- to four-year assignments in a number of parishes around the diocese: St. Patrick, Alton; St. Aloysius, Springfield; Immaculate Conception, Pittsfield; Holy Redeemer, Barry; Holy Family, Griggsville; and Ss. Peter and Paul, Collinsville.

He then began serving as pastor in a variety of places: St. Elizabeth, Marine; St. Gertrude, Grantfork; St. Elizabeth, Granite City; St. Francis Xavier, Jerseyville; and Little Flower, Springfield. His last assignments began in 2002, when he was pastor and then parochial administrator in three parishes: St. John the Evangelist in Carrollton, All Saints in White Hall and St. Michael in Greenfield. Since 2016, Father Schmidt has been pastor emeritus of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Carrollton and lives at St. Michael in Greenfield.

Seven years ago, Father Schmidt — who is known for wearing comfortable sandals — published a book appropriately titled *The Pastor's Sandal Path*, which is a collection of weekly letters he has written to his parishioners. The book focuses on seeing God in nature and in daily events. Some of those letters have been reprinted in *Catholic Times*.

Father Schmidt, who is now 85, has said that God has filled his life with many blessings and that “all of the parishes I've been in have been wonderful.”

Father Kenneth Rosswog, OFM

Born and raised in Quincy, Father Kenneth Rosswog of the Order of the Friars Minor is celebrating 60 years in the priesthood early this summer and will be turning 87 years old just days before his jubilee day. He entered the minor seminary in Oak Brook right after eighth grade.

Father Ken has his bachelor's degree in philosophy from Quincy College (now Quincy University) and his master's from DePaul University. On June 24, 1957 he was ordained in Teutopolis by Bishop Henry Ambrose Pinger, OFM. He recalls that 17 men were ordained that day.

