

# Farewell, Father Paul

## ...Kingsville will miss you

By Gloria Bigger Cantu

It was an emotional night for the Rev. Paul Puthenangady as he continually thanked and expressed his gratitude at his appreciation and farewell celebration that honored him for 35 years of service as a priest with the last eight years at Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church.

Several presenters at the appreciation dinner and celebration praised Father Paul's contributions, not only to Our Lady of Counsel, but also to the community.

Over 350 people attended the event, held at the Texas A&M University-Kingsville ballroom Jan. 9.

Father Paul will be returning to India Jan. 26 because the Bishop in his homeland assigned him to a parish there.

Our Lady of Good Counsel members campaigned to keep Father Paul here with a petition.

Bishop Edmond Carmody, who is retiring, wanted him to stay with the parish, but Father Paul's Bishop in India prevailed.

Father Paul said he has accepted his assignment and is obedient to his new orders.

"I had a commitment to stay a few years and have no regrets about my commitment," he stated.

"I have been a priest for 35 years, and I am happy to acknowledge that my eight years in Kingsville were the most joy filled years of my priesthood."

Long time member of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Tony Ramirez, who served as master of ceremonies at the event, summarized Father Paul's achievements during his time in Kingsville.

"He is truly a man of God," Ramirez said.

"Father Paul leads and lives by a Christ-like example," Ramirez said.

"He has a joy for life and a special gift for inspiring people," he said.

"Father Paul substantially improved Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish during his eight year assignment, not only materially but especially spiritually," Ramirez, who served as president of the building committee, said.

Ramirez also serves as a Eucharistic minister. Through Father Paul's

leadership, the membership succeeded in building a new parish center with a rectory, an auditorium, state-of-the-art kitchen and classrooms for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine classes for the children.

The facility, which cost \$900,000 to build, was funded from private donors and fundraisers; it opened a year ago.

Ramirez said Father Paul's dream was to have an adoration chapel at Our Lady of Good Counsel, and he saw that come to fruition with the new chapel at the parish center.

Father Paul also added a 7 p.m. Sunday mass and a mass at the Christus Spohn Hospital Kleberg chapel.

He volunteered to celebrate mass at the other churches in Kingsville whenever needed.

"He attended to the sick, the poor and the homeless and to the many foreign students at Texas A&M-Kingsville, especially a large number from his native land, who regularly attend mass at our church," Ramirez said.

"I have seen him blossom into a great Catholic leader who brings the best out in all of us," he said.

"I consider Father Paul a true, close friend. My family and I will very much miss not seeing him regularly," Ramirez said.

Besides the presenters, Father Paul was honored by other priests who sat at the head table.

They were Rev. Raju D. Thottankara, pastor of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Gregory; Rev. Piotr Koziel, pastor of St. Gertrude Parish her and head of the Kingsville Deanery; Rev. Joseph R. Torres, parochial vicar, St. Martin Church; Rev. J. Isidore Garcia, pastor, of St. Martin Parish; and Rev. Peter Thenan, Father Paul's replacement at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish.

Presenters who honored and commended Father Paul's accomplishments included Benny Soto, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish Council; Rev. Koziel and Adan Munoz Jr. executive director of the Texas Commission on Jail Standards and former Kleberg County Sheriff.

Munoz presented Father Paul with a certificate of

appreciation from Gov. Rick Perry.

On behalf of the Kleberg County Commissioners Court, County Judge Pete De La Garza presented Father Paul with a resolution recognizing his service to the community and his parish.

Kingsville Mayor Sam Fugate presented the honoree with a key to the city.

"There (must be) a lot of good Catholics present tonight, because the Dallas Cowboys are playing tonight," Fugate quipped before presenting the key to Father Paul.

"I got the key to the city but not the county," Father Paul said smiling.

"The county is wide open and the county will always have its door open to you," responded De La Garza.

On behalf of the parish, Norma Hinojosa and Mary Lou Pena, presented Father Paul with an engraved gold St. Christopher medal as well as a monetary gift.

Special guests at the head table were Munoz and wife Middy from Austin; Judge De La Garza and wife Melissa De La Garza, Kleberg County Tax Collector-Assessor; Kingsville Mayor Sam Fugate, LCDR Brian Rutherford with the Navy Recruiting District and Kingsville Record and Bishop News reporter Gloria Bigger-Cantu.

Special guests that Ramirez recognized in the audience were Tony Barbour, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish Deacon; Sisters Consuelo Ramirez and Sister Maxie, representing the Missionary Daughters of the Most Pure Virgin Mary Order; Servando Torres, Central Baptist Church, and Juan Escobar, former District 43 state representative.

Also in the audience were Kleberg County Clerk Leo Alarcon and Kleberg County District Martha Soliz.

Before the celebration began, John David Guerrero led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mariachi Kineno and the Kingsville Youth Ballet Folklorico, directed by Miguel Briseno, provided entertainment.

After the dinner and presentations, a dance followed with DJ Rene Canales playing the music.



Parishioners Mary Lou Pena, left and Norma Hinojosa present Father Paul with a St. Christopher medal and monetary gift from Our Lady of Counsel parishioners.



County Judge Pete De La Garza and Father Paul embrace after receiving a resolution signed by the Kleberg County Commissioners Court.



Kingsville Mayor Sam Fugate presents Father Paul a key to the city of Kingsville at his appreciation and farewell dinner Jan. 9.



Adan Munoz Jr. presents Father Paul with a certificate of appreciation from Gov. Rick Perry.

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