



The MESSAGE

Southwestern Indiana's Catholic
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Celebrating 'a faithful servant of the Lord'



Counterclockwise from top left: Top left, Surrounded by Father Joe Ziliak's family and friends, and priests and deacons of the Diocese of Evansville and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Bishop Joseph M. Siegel prays as he sprinkles the casket with holy water at the beginning of the Mass of Christian Burial. At bottom, the sanctuary of St. John the Baptist Church filled to overflowing for the Mass, which also was live-streamed. At right, Bishop Siegel censes the casket at the conclusion of Mass.

The Message photos
by Tim Lilley

BY TIM LILLEY
The Message editor

ICC opposes bill to place limits on charitable bail funds

BY VICTORIA ARTHUR
Statehouse Correspondent for
Indiana's Catholic Newspapers

The Indiana Catholic Conference is challenging a bill recently passed by the Indiana Senate that would restrict the ability of charitable groups to cover bail costs for people awaiting trial who cannot afford to pay it themselves.

Senate Bill 8 was introduced early in the 2022 legislative session as part of a package of bills aimed at fighting crime in Marion County and elsewhere in the state. The measure aims to regulate charitable bail organizations by requiring that they register with the state Department of Insurance, as bail bond companies do. Additionally, it would limit a charitable group to posting bond just twice in a 180-day period and for bail amounts of \$2,000 or less.

Those restrictions, the ICC and other opponents argue, only widen the gap in a criminal justice system that already places the poor at a disadvantage.

"This is not the way that the criminal justice system should work — that only those who have money have the advantage of being out of jail until their trial, particularly on a nonviolent offense," said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "Remember that when people are arrested, they are presumed inno-

cent until proven guilty. If they cannot make bail and have to remain in jail until their day in court, they could lose their job; they could lose their house; and families could be put out on the street."

Espada, a former deputy prosecutor in Marion County, outlined additional concerns in a recent letter to the House committee now considering the bill.

"Because Indiana relies on cash bail, a significant portion of our jails are filled with pretrial detainees — people who are still legally innocent, but who have had bail set against them that they cannot afford to pay," she wrote in the Feb. 7 letter to the House Courts and Criminal Code Committee. "They are subject to the harms of incarceration, including worsened physical and behavioral health outcomes, and a greater likelihood of future justice system involvement."

"The Church cannot support any policy changes that would result in more Hoosiers being incarcerated before their guilt has been established by the court."

Monica Smith, a Catholic and attorney with extensive experience in criminal and civil litigation, was among those testifying against Senate Bill 8 during a January committee hearing. The Indianapolis native, who has long advocated for reforms in the criminal justice system in Indiana and nationwide, currently serves as the associate director of policy and advocacy for the

nationally-based Vera Institute of Justice.

"People forget that most Americans don't even have a \$1,000 in their savings accounts," said Smith, a lifelong member of Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis. "So, anytime a monetary amount is set on a person's freedom, it really creates two systems of justice: one for people who have access to cash and collateral, and another one for people who do not."

Smith is currently dedicated to a Vera Institute project called the "In Our Backyards Initiative," which focuses on incarceration in small cities and rural areas. She said her testimony before the Senate committee was to "highlight that even though it was presented as a package for Marion County, it would have repercussions throughout the entire state."

"One thing that we know now is that rural counties spend 1.7 times more money on pre-trial detention than Marion County spends," Smith said. "If more people are held on unaffordable bail and if charitable bail organizations aren't able to assist them, then, naturally, the pre-trial population is going to rise in those places."



See [ICC](#), page 5

Editor's note: After our Feb. 11 issue went to the printer, we learned that Rev. Joseph L. Ziliak, senior priest of the Diocese of Evansville, died Feb. 8 — not Feb. 7, as were initially notified and reported in our Feb. 11 print coverage.

In his homily during the Feb. 12 Mass of Christian Burial for Rev. Joseph L. Ziliak, Deacon Joseph Seibert of St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh noted that the family asked that his homily not be a eulogy. He said they wanted him to focus on the scripture readings for the Mass.

"Well, we'll see where that goes," he said with a smile. "Father Joe was a faithful servant of the Lord."

The online version of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines eulogy as "a commendatory oration or writing especially in honor of one deceased; high praise."

From here, using that definition, it's easy to characterize the entire Mass as a eulogy.

The sanctuary at St. John the Baptist Church in Newburgh, where Father Joe served as pastor from July 1987 until his retirement from pastoral ministry in July 2012, filled to overflowing for the Mass. More than an hour before the Mass began, mourners lined the entire main aisle of the sanctuary to pay their respects.

Mass attendees included 41 priests of the Diocese of Evansville and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, 14 deacons from parishes across our diocese and 4th Degree Knights of Columbus, who served as the Honor Guard.

Father Joe died Feb. 8 at Ascension St. Vincent Hospital in Evansville.

Deacon Joe, who served with Father Joe at St. John the Baptist, opened by offering condolences to the family on behalf of Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, the priests and deacons, and all in attendance. He also mentioned George

See [ZILIAK](#), page 2



The Message photos by Tim Lilley

More than an hour before the Feb. 12 Mass for Christian Burial began, mourners lined the main aisle of St. John the Baptist Church to pay their respects to Father Joe Ziliak.

Ziliak

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The Message

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and Linda Provenge, “who were like his local family and cared for him.”

In a Feb. 11 post to Facebook, Linda said, “To know Father Joe was life-changing in many ways. He treated everyone as if he knew them forever. He was a gentle soul — kind, brilliant, compassionate, personable and had a dry sense of humor. He was a leader and a visionary.”

Deacon Joe continued his homily by saying, “It’s difficult not to eulogize a person like Father Joe.” He explained that the two were at St. Meinrad together, “and he later became my pastor, even my boss when I worked as a deacon here at St. John’s.”

The Gospel reading was Luke’s account of two disciples encountering the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus. He emphasized that they recognized Jesus as the man they encountered “in the breaking of the bread.”

He said, “In the course of Father Joe’s almost-60 years as a priest, how many times did (he) recognize Jesus in one form or another? Jesus was present to him when he celebrated the Eucharist. And I would say that he saw Christ in many of you with your expressions of love and kindness over the years. And think of the many times that Jesus broke open the Word for Father Joe as he prepared homilies or articles that he wrote as editor of **The Message**.”

See **ZILIAK**, page 8

Father Joe Ziliak’s life and service

BY THE MESSAGE STAFF

Father Joe was born Nov. 20, 1936, in Evansville to Edwin M. and Cecilia C. (Obert) Ziliak. He was a son of St. Benedict Cathedral Parish in Evansville.

Father Joe attended St. Benedict School in Evansville through eighth grade, then completed high school and college at St. Meinrad College in St. Meinrad. He attended seminary at Collegium Cannisianum Seminary and University in Innsbruck, Austria. He was ordained a priest April 7, 1962, by Bishop Paul Rusch of Innsbruck. He celebrated his first Mass as a priest in a small chapel in Oberammergau, Germany, and he celebrated his first Mass in the U.S. Aug. 12, 1962, in St. Benedict Church in Evansville.

After completing a master’s degree in English literature in 1962 at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Father Joe served the Diocese of Evansville in a variety of capacities, including: Teacher, vice rector and librarian at Magister Noster Latin School, Evansville; Diocesan Director of Radio and Television and Vicar for Seminarians; and Editor, Evansville edition of *The Criterion*, newspaper for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He was administrator of St. Nicholas Parish, Santa Claus, Indiana, and the founding editor of **The Message**, newspaper of the Diocese of Evansville. He was pastor of Nativity Parish, Evansville, while continuing as editor of *The Message*. He became associate publisher of **The Message** and was later named pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish, Newburgh. He served on the Council of Priests, as a Diocesan Consultor, as administrator of Mary, Help of Christians, Parish, Mariah Hill, Indiana, and St. John Chrysostom Parish, New Boston, Indiana. He was presbyteral moderator at St. Bernard Parish, Rockport, Indiana, and St. Martin I Parish, Chrisney, Indiana. He retired from full-time pastoral ministry in 2012, but served as the vicar for retired priests until his passing. After his retirement, he served as sacramental minister of St. Bernard Parish, Rockport and St. Martin I Parish, Chrisney in 2014.

In 1983, Father Joe was appointed to the Metropolitan Evansville Progress Committee. In 1984, he was elected to a two-year term on the Catholic Press Association Board of Directors. He was reelected in 1986, this time to a three-year term on the CPA board.

Father Joe led pilgrimages and tours to destinations in more than 50 countries on six continents. He visited Rome and Vatican City during the service of St. John XXIII, St. John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis.

He was preceded in death by his parents. Survivors include four brothers: Edwin A. (Donna), of Noblesville, Indiana; Donald A. (Jean), of Columbus, Ohio; Lawrence, of Greenwood, Indiana; and Jerome (Barbara), of South Bend Indiana; 13 nieces and nephews; and many great-nieces and great-nephews.

Following the Feb. 12 Mass of Christian Burial at St. John the Baptist Church in Newburgh, interment was in the mausoleum of St. John the Baptist Cemetery in Newburgh.

Memorial contributions may be made to St. John the Baptist School in Newburgh and/or the Diocese of Evansville Priest Retirement Fund.

We Remember in Prayer

Following is a feature in *The Message*, designed to help draw together the People of God in southwestern Indiana.

- **Sister of Providence Mary Ann Lechner, 92**, died Feb. 1 in Union Hospital in Terre Haute, Indiana. She was born on Feb. 8, 1929, in Jasper to Silas and Theresia (Hopf) Lechner.

Sister Mary Ann entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence Jan. 8, 1947, and was given the name Sister Robert Ann. She professed Final Vows Aug. 15, 1954. She earned a bachelor’s degree from St. Mary-of-the-Woods College and a master’s degree from Indiana State University.


Of her 75 years as a Sister of Providence, she ministered as teacher for 48 years in schools in Indiana and Illinois. Her service included teaching at St. John School in Vincennes 1965-67 and St. Francis Xavier School in Vincennes 1968-69. Retiring from teaching in 1997, she volunteered as GED coordinator for five years at the Hispanic Center in Indianapolis, and then worked as financial assistant for four years at LaPlaza, an organization that united the Hispanic Center with two other Latino support groups in Indianapolis. In 2010, she returned to the Motherhouse and was volunteer receptionist at Woods Day Care until its closing.

She then continued to serve in a myriad of ways — always quietly, generously and capably. She had a peaceful, caring presence, which made those she met feel welcome and at ease.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Feb. 8 — Sister Mary Ann’s 93rd birthday — at Church of the Immaculate Conception at St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Interment followed in the cemetery of the Sisters of Providence.

Please keep Sister Mary Ann, her family and the Sisters of Providence in your prayers.

Please send information for WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER to Tim Lilley at The Message, P.O. Box 4169, Evansville, IN 47724 or e-mail tlilley@evdio.org.



SISER MARY ANN LECHNER



Bishop Siegel blesses the casket before accompanying it to the Mausoleum at St. John the Baptist Cemetery in Newburgh for interment.

ICC
Continued from page 1

But the primary driving factors behind Senate Bill 8 and a similar measure, House Bill 1300, are some recent murders and other violent attacks in Marion County. Sen. Aaron Freeman (R-Indianapolis), the author of Senate Bill 8 and sponsor of the recently passed House Bill 1300, points to several individuals who went on to commit heinous crimes after

having their bail posted by a national not-for-profit organization called The Bail Project. The ICC counters that supporters of the bill should consider the criteria used by these charitable groups, including some faith-based organizations. "Charities only provide bail on nonviolent offenses, and most nonviolent people don't suddenly commit violent acts," Espada said. "So, if the measure is in response to murder and other violent actions, why limit these charitable

Lessons
Continued from page 4

liturgy. In his book "The Convert's Guide to Roman Catholicism," Keith Nester wrote, "The Mass is where Heaven and Earth meet as the sacrifice of Calvary is made present on the altar." The mass is not meant for our entertainment. Rather, it is the ultimate way to honor Christ's sacrifice for us and to be in communion with Him through His body and blood. Christ feeds us every time we receive Him, just as God fed manna to the Israelites in the desert. When we truly understand and believe this Catholic teaching, why would we ever forfeit God's heavenly gift?

A turning point in my faith

life was a CRHP weekend. My CRHP sisters and I often marvel about the spiritual impact that saying yes to that time has had on our lives. We continue to meet and share God's word, as well as reading many books that have encouraged growth in our prayer and personal lives. God desires that each of us accepts His invitation to grow in grace and faith. In my own experience, I can attest to the joy that only a relationship with God offers. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Kristine and her husband Jim Schroeder are members of St. Boniface Parish in Evansville. They have four grown children and 22 grandchildren.

institutions?" Freeman also questions the leverage that this and similar organizations have when it comes to the primary purpose of bail: ensuring that the accused shows up in court. "I see a difference between a bail bondsman, who has a financial interest in bringing that defendant back and making sure they appear in front of a judge, and a charitable bail organization that may or may not be in Indiana and may or may not have any ties to the community," said Freeman, a former Marion County deputy prosecutor, during a Senate hearing on his bill. "What incentive do they have to make sure that person appears in court?"

But Smith, who has served as a public defender in several states, argues otherwise. "I can tell you that, in my experience, people are so grateful that a stranger would go out of their way to help them at the worst moment of their life," Smith said. "And the vast majority of people return to court. They want to have their case resolved. They want to get on with their lives." In her letter to legislators, Espada noted that "in parts of Indiana, the service provided by charitable bail funds is perhaps the sole intervention available for pre-trial detainees who do not have the means to afford bail."

She also pointed to a pastoral statement from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled "Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice." "As the bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States remind us, 'We seek justice, not vengeance. We believe punishment must have clear purposes: protecting society and rehabilitating those who violate the law,'" Espada stated in her letter. "The ICC believes that the restrictions on charitable bail funds in Senate Bill 8 would not further the protection of society and the just rehabilitation of the incarcerated, but merely prohibit charitable institutions from performing more acts of mercy."

Remembering
Father Joe

What do you say about someone who changed the trajectory of your life?
Thank you!

REFLECTION
BY MARY ANN HUGHES
Special to The Message

I thanked Father Joe Ziliak every time I saw him. He hired me as a writer for **The Message** in 1985. I was a mother of two young children, and wanted to work part-time so that I could raise my children. He most graciously hired me to do just that. When you refer to him as the founding editor of **The Message**, that's exactly what he was. He founded the diocesan newspaper from the ground up. He designed it, he hired the staff, he developed the editorial policy, and he set up the advertising and subscription systems. He completely created **The Message** and laid the groundwork for what it is today. I have nothing but admiration for him, as a priest and as a Catholic journalist.

Mary Ann retired as the managing editor of *The Message* in December 2015.

Bishop's
Schedule

- Confirmation Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Evansville, 4:30 p.m. CST, Saturday, Feb. 19.
- Confirmation Mass, St. Mary Church, Huntingburg, 10 a.m. EST, Sunday, Feb. 20.
- Mass, Sarto Chapel, Evansville, 11:30 a.m. CST, Thursday, Feb. 24.
- Men's Cursillo Mass, Sarto Chapel, Evansville, 7:15 a.m. CST, Friday, Feb. 25.

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Mary M.



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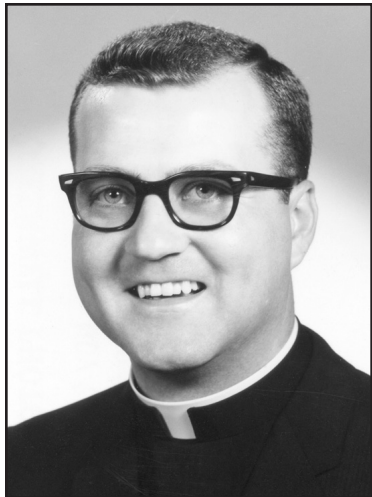
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Rev. Joseph L. Ziliak remembered as ‘one of a kind’



Father Joe Ziliak is shown in this 1966 portrait.

BY MEGAN ERBACHER
The Message assistant editor

In the 35 years Terri Buehner lived in Newburgh, she said everyone knew Rev. Joseph L. Ziliak, even if they weren’t Catholic.

“He was one of a kind,” she said. “He was a visionary. He had a plan for St. John, and he had a plan that included Newburgh. He was very proud of that town.”

Ziliak, 85, senior priest of the Diocese of Evansville who served as the founding editor of *The Message*, died Feb. 8 in Evansville. Father Joe was known and loved across the diocese and the region because of his media and pastoral ministries, and his work as leader of pilgrimages and tours across the world.

Buehner taught at St. John the Baptist School in Newburgh and worked with Father Joe for 20 years. A favorite among students and staff, she shared, was the monthly birthday blessing.

“He would hold his hands under your face, and I don’t know what it was, but when Father Joe did the birthday blessing, you got filled with such peace and warmth,” she said. “It was like Jesus Himself was standing there. I know it sounds silly, but every staff member talked about that.”

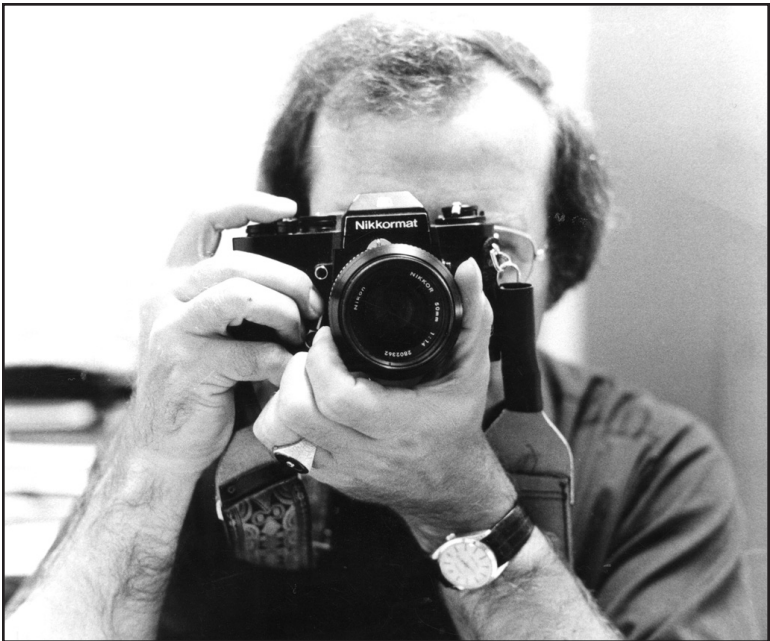
Father Joe always said “cradle to grave,” Buehner recalled, because she said he strived for the parish to be just that.

“No one could be like him,” she said. “He just made you want to do the best you could do. Everything he did was in a serving manner. I don’t think it was ever for himself. He just made you want to be a better person. He was all about the community coming together.”

Father Bernie Lutz, senior priest of the diocese, knew Father Joe his whole life because they are first cousins. “Joey,” as Father Bernie called him, was a strong man, intelligent, with good foresight and great vision. Father Joe was also a good athlete and singer, Father Bernie recalled.

The two got together often, and Father Bernie joined his travels frequently.

“Joey, as a priest, he was very good,” Father Bernie said.



This undated photo shows Father Joe, camera in hand, framing up the next photo he would take for *The Message*.

“He had an uncanny knack to meet and to encounter people. He never forgot a name. His memory was very good. He knew all kinds of people. When he distributed communion, he would give the person’s name and then give the host.”

Father Donald Dilger, diocesan senior priest and weekly columnist for *The Message*, met Father Joe in 1958-59 at the Canisianum Seminary in Innsbruck, Austria. It was Father Dilger’s final year there and Father Joe’s first, and the year the two became friends.

Father Dilger always spent Holy Week in Rome during his years at the Canisianum. In 1959, the two went to St. Peter’s Basilica together, and it was Father Joe’s first visit to St. Peter’s. Father Dilger especially recalled their visit to Michelangelo’s Pieta.

Father Dilger assisted Father Joe at his first Solemn High Mass.

“I still have, in front of me, the bronze crucifix he gave me on that occasion,” he said. “On the back of the crucifix, there is a prayer in German; an offering of the day and the day’s work to the Lord.”

Angie Anderson taught at St. John for about 12 years. Anderson, who works part-time at the Diocese of Evansville Catholic Center, said both of her children, now grown, celebrated their sacraments with Father Joe.

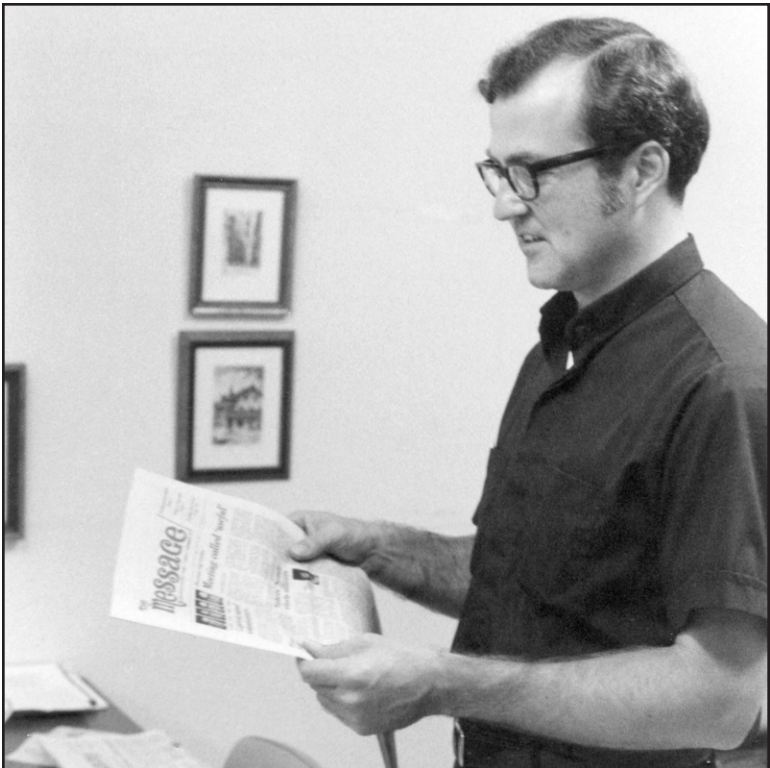
“He was like a father figure to all of us.”

When there was a problem, Anderson said Father Joe was the person to talk to because he had a “way to make you feel so at ease, calm and peaceful.”

Charlotte Bennett served as principal of St. John for 26 years, including with Father Joe as pastor. The two even retired simultaneously. Bennett said he kept her in check, and he always encouraged her.

Bennett said it was special when Father Joe presided over her husband’s funeral Mass. She was pleasantly surprised by the way he remembered her husband. She described Father Joe as caring, understanding and gentle.

Bennett said she will miss Father Joe terribly. If she could say one final thing to him, it would be: “Go in peace, my



The Message file photos
Father Joe Ziliak holds an early issue of *The Message*. He served as the paper’s founding editor and, later, as its associate publisher.

friend, and travel with the angels.”

Father Bernie admitted he would get furious with Father Joe when he showed up late, which he always did.

“Some of the clergy jokingly referred to Father Joe as the ‘late Father Ziliak,’” Father Dilger said. “Now, it is so in a final way; and humanly speaking, I wish that it were not so.”

While Father Bernie wishes

they would’ve gone deeper in their encounters, he is happy for the time they shared.

“You know Joey, he kind of stomped around on practically every part of planet earth; and some places, he was there three or four times,” Father Bernie said. “I guess he finally decided he had seen all he wanted to see and he hadn’t been to heaven yet, so he might as well check that out.”

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Ziliak

Continued from page 2

Deacon Joe also talked about how much Father Joe loved people. He said, “There are so many memories of Father Joe, not only at St. John Parish, but also in the many ways that he touched people’s lives throughout the world.” Father Joe led tours and pilgrimages to more than 50 countries on six continents.

He closed by thanking Father Joe for his spiritual guidance, love and friendship, adding that this was not a goodbye. “Rather,” he said, “it is ‘till we meet again!’”

At the end of Mass, Bishop Joseph M. Siegel offered condolences to Father Joe’s family and friends, calling him a holy and wonderful priest, and noting the major impact Father

Deacon Joe Seibert, who served as Deacon of the Mass and homilist, called Father Joe “a faithful servant of the Lord.”

Joe had on him since his arrival in Evansville.

Interment followed the Mass in the Mausoleum at St. John the Baptist Cemetery in Newburgh.