



## New shepherd ordained for Jackson



Biloxi Bishop Roger Morin imposes hands on Bishop Joseph Kopacz, the 11th bishop of Jackson, during a Feb. 6 Mass of Consecration at St. Peter the Apostle Cathedral in Jackson. Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi of Mobile was the ordaining prelate. Bishop Kopacz, a priest of the Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania, succeeds Bishop Joseph Latino. Photo/Larry Wahl

## Catholic Day at the Capitol

The 4th annual Catholic Day at the Capitol will be held Feb. 19 in the Central High School Auditorium located inside the MS Dept. of Education building. The event is sponsored by the Poverty in America Taskforce and Catholic Charities, Inc. and is supported by the Dioceses of Jackson and Biloxi.

Catholics from across the state will gather in Jackson for advocacy and issue training, celebrate a noon Mass at the Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle, and enjoy lunch together. After lunch participants will walk one block to the Mississippi Capitol Building where they will participate in a press conference to be held on the south steps of the Mississippi Capitol Building. Register online today at [www.catholiccharitiesjackson.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesjackson.org)

A bus will leave the Diocesan Pastoral Center at 6 am and return by 7 pm. Space is limited to 25. To reserve your spot, call (228) 702-2100.

## Father Pete Mockler remembered as good shepherd, trusted advisor



Bishop Roger Morin and 70 priests concelebrated a Mass of Christian Burial for Father Pete Mockler on Jan. 30 at Our Lady of the Gulf Church in Bay St. Louis. Father Pete, who died on Jan. 30 after a brief illness, was pastor of St. Ann Parish in Lizana at the time of his death and formerly served as pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf Parish. A native of Ireland, Father Pete was buried on the grounds of St. Patrick Church in Newbridge, Ballinasloe, County Galway, Ireland.

Story and photo  
BY TERRY DICKSON

BAY ST. LOUIS -- When Mary Mockler learned that her oldest son, Father Pete Mockler, had recently been diagnosed with a terminal illness, she said, "God gave him to us 65 years ago and, if God is ready for him now, who are we to stop him?"

Indeed, God was ready to call his faithful servant home and did so on Jan. 30. Father Pete, pastor of St. Ann Parish in Lizana, was surrounded by family and loved ones when he died at the parish rectory.

His brother, Father Paddy Mockler, pastor of Most Holy Trinity Parish in Pass Christian, said his brother experienced a happy death.

"We believe in Jesus and, if Jesus is who he claims to be, then today we should be very happy for my brother," Father Paddy said during a Feb. 2 Memorial



Fr. Mockler

Mass for his brother at St. Ann Parish, where Father Pete served as pastor from 1980 to 1988 and from 2001 until his death.

"Life is a preparation for heaven and I have no doubt that my brother could say with Simeon, 'Now master, you can let your servant go in peace for my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all people.' My brother had a great life. He had a wonderful death. People were so good to him in life and they were so good walking him to heaven's gate. He was so well cared for. There was a great procession of priests, deacons, religious sisters and lay people (prior to his death). It was just absolutely fantastic. It was just an absolutely fantastic outpouring of love the last several weeks of his life."

The outpouring of love continued at a second Memorial Mass on Feb. 4 at Our Lady of the Gulf Parish in Bay St. Louis where Father Pete served as pastor from 1988 to 2001.

SEE FATHER PETER MOCKLER, PAGE 4



## FATHER PETER MOCKLER

From page 1

Father Pete's brother, Michael, and his sisters, Mary Ryan, Ann Walsh, and Teresa Logan, traveled from Ireland to be with their brother at the time of his death and to take part in the celebrations of his life. Although Father Pete's mother and other family members were unable to make the trip, they were able to watch the Mass from Our Lady of the Gulf via a live internet video feed.

Father Pete's first cousin, Father Tommy Conway, was one of the altar boys when Bishop Joseph Brunini ordained Father Pete on June 10, 1973, at St. Patrick Church in Newbridge and was given the honor of preaching at the second Memorial Mass. Father Conway, pastor of St. Fabian Parish in Hattiesburg, said both Father Pete and Father Paddy influenced his decision to become a priest.

### Stabilizing force

To those who intimately knew Father Pete, his given name, Peter, was well-deserved because, like Simon Peter, the rock upon whom Jesus built his church, Father Pete was a rock to his family, his brother priests, the diocese and the people he served.

Father Conway said Father Pete was the oldest of 12 children and was only 15 when his father, Jim, died.

"His mother raised 12 children on a 21-acre piece of land, a wonderful fertile rich hill of local Woodbrook land with nice hills stretching up the river -- and she had little help from her neighbors, but a large heap of faith," he said.

"She was a great woman. She is a great woman. But I want to remind you that she was a Conway before she became a Mockler."

Father Conway said James Mockler's death caused Father Pete to step up and be the man of the house.

"Petey often fed babies and changed nappies or what you call diapers in Mississippi," Father Conway said.

"He probably even changed Father Paddy's diaper."

Father Pete came to Mississippi in August 1973. He served as associate pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Gulfport (1973-1978) and Sacred Heart Parish in Pascagoula (1978-1980). His pastorates included St. Ann Parish in Lizana and Our Lady of Chartres Mission in Delmas (1980-88), Our Lady of the Gulf Parish in Bay St. Louis (1988-2001) and St. Ann Parish in Lizana and Our Lady of Chartres Mission in Delmas, (2001-2014).

Father Pete also served on numerous diocesan boards and committees, including the diocesan presbyteral council, priest personnel board, school board, finance council and Association of Priests.

Father Pete was the very first director of the diocesan permanent diaconate program and for many years served as director of continuing education for priests.

"He had a passion for learning and he wanted all of us to go to every workshop, every retreat and every opportunity given for renewal," Father Conway said.

"However, we had another Galway priest leading the charge not for ongoing education but against. Father Gerry Cleary never understood why we needed that stuff. He always felt that he learned it all in the seminary. Father Peter knew how to needle Cleary just a little. He would push and ask Father Cleary when he went to school. Of

course, Cleary had to agree that he went in the 1950s.

"I remember him one night telling Cleary, 'Gerry, if your doctor told you that he went to medical school in the 1950s and never went back for a refresher course, how would you feel?' All Father Cleary said was, 'Peter, you are full of bull!'"

### Leader, advisor

Father Conway said that one of Father Pete's greatest accomplishments was his leadership post-Hurricane Katrina in establishing Project Hope and Compassion on the St. Ann Parish Grounds.

"Thousands of volunteers have come and stayed at St. Ann's, where they were helped and nourished, both physically and spiritually. And then they helped people rebuild their lives, their homes and their communities under Father Pete's leadership. He did it all without any fuss or fanfare. He did it quietly, knowing that it was the right thing to do."

Bishop Morin, who was principal celebrant for the Mass at Our Lady of the Gulf, said that Father Pete was "a great gift to the church."

"I am sad at the passing of Father Peter Mockler," Bishop Morin said.

"I, personally, will miss him. He has served the diocese in many and varied ways, especially on boards, committees and councils. Father Peter was a good advisor -- frank and candid. He gave me advice. I had many opportunities to consult with Father Peter and benefit from his advice and his counsel. Father Peter had, I would say, a very analytical mind. He was able to do an evaluation and assessment of the situation and he was able to express the conclusion that he arrived at from that evaluation."

He also called Father Pete "a man of charity."

"There are charitable ways of saying, 'Bishop, you're wrong,'" Bishop Morin said.

Nevertheless, Bishop Morin added, "I appreciated his advice and counsel."

Deacon Roberto Jimenez, diocesan director of development, remembers Father Pete as one "who always had a deep concern for the finances of the church and that the ministries of the church were being funded appropriately."

Deacon Jimenez said Father Pete offered a voice of logic and reason during the regular meetings of the diocesan finance committee and was a staunch supporter of diocesan programs and ministries, especially Catholic schools and the annual Catholic Sharing Appeal.

"He contributed a lot," Deacon Jimenez said.

"It's going to be a great loss because of his extensive knowledge of the needs of our church and our schools."

### Caring shepherd

Our Lady of the Gulf parishioner Anna Brannin said Father Pete was a special priest who had deep concern for young people.

"Father Pete was my priest during my high school years, and I'll always remember him for his dedication to the youth. In addition to always supporting our CYO group, he was also a true believer in the importance of a Catholic education. Without his (and the parish's) fi-

nancial assistance, it wouldn't have been possible for me to attend OLA, something I am blessed and grateful for every day," said Brannin, who is currently the librarian at St. Stanislaus College in Bay St. Louis. Father Pete hired Jo Sharp as the secretary of Our Lady of the Gulf Parish in 1996, a position she still holds. She said Father Pete was more than just a boss.

"Like with so many other families, Fr. Pete became a member of our family," said Sharp.

"Father Pete ministered to my father in 1997 when he was dying, and was kind enough to preside over his funeral. The night my father passed away, Father Pete drove from the Bay to my parent's home in Slidell; he arrived to find a distraught wife, children, and grandchildren, all in shock over the loss of the patriarch of their family. But when he began to pray in that room, a peace came over all of us that we had never experienced before. I am eternally grateful to him for being there in our time of need. His spiritual strength and direction was, I believe, what helped our family to see our way through the initial stages of grief."

Sharp added, "If he knew nothing else before he passed, I believe he knew without a doubt how much he was loved and appreciated by so many people."

"That love and appreciation was evident until the very end," said Karen Parker, who worked closely with Father Pete at St. Ann and was constantly by his side during his last days. Parker said an endless procession of people of all ages filed in to visit their beloved Father Pete to express their love and admiration.

"Father Pete touched so many lives, people of all faiths. He is a good shepherd for our Heavenly Father," said Parker.

"To have known such a priest in these times was a true gift only God could give. God willing, we will continue in our parish community what he lived. He was an inspiration to so many."

Father Pete is survived by his mother, Mary Mockler, 11 siblings, Mary (Sonny) Ryan, Kathleen (Kevin) Mullins, Margaret (Johnny) Mullins, Bridie (Tony) Haverin, Fr. Paddy Mockler, Eileen (John) O'Loughlin, Nora (Tommy) Bane, Ann (John Francis) Walsh, Michael Mockler, Bernadette (Sophinne) Mocker, and Teresa (Martin) Mockler, his aunt, Margaret Quinn, his cousin, Fr. Tommy Conway, and numerous nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and nephews, and other relatives.

Father Pete will be buried on the grounds of his home parish, St. Patrick's Church in Newbridge, County Galway, Ireland.

### THANKSGIVING NOVENA TO ST. JUDE

O Holy St. Jude, Apostle and Martyr, great in virtue and rich in miracles, near kinsman of Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor of all who invoke your special patronage in time of need, to you I have recourse from the depth of my heart and humbly beg to whom God has given such great power to come to my assistance.

Help me in my present and urgent petition. In return I promise to make your name known and cause you to be invoked. St. Jude, pray for us and all who invoke your aid. Amen.

Say three Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glorias. Publication must be promised. This Novena has never been known to fail.

I have had my request granted. Publication promised. JCH