

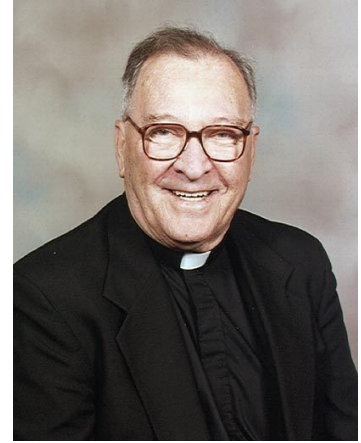
ABOUT OUR NAMESAKES

MSGR. JOHN CILINSKI

The Arlington Diocese lost a longtime caretaker of the sick, familiar face and friend Aug. 14 with the death of Msgr. John T. Cilinski. He was 85.

"Our diocesan family, and especially my brother priests and I, are experiencing on the human level a profound loss in the death of Msgr. Cilinski," said Arlington Bishop Paul S. Loverde. "He served faithfully as a priest for 61 years in both the Diocese of Richmond and, after 1974, the Diocese of Arlington."

Msgr. Cilinski, who was in residence at St. Agnes Parish in Arlington, was born June 6, 1924, in Alexandria, the son of Peter and Amelia Cilinski. He grew up in Northern Virginia, attended St. Mary Elementary School in Alexandria and graduated from St. Mary's Academy in 1941. He attended St. Mary's College and Seminary in Baltimore, Md.



He was ordained to the priesthood May 22, 1948, for the Richmond Diocese. Presiding at the ordination was Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle, then-Archbishop of Washington.

Msgr. Cilinski worked with the Missionary Fathers, a group of priests who traveled around the diocese during the summer in the St. Mary of the Highways Chapel trailer, called "a home and a church on wheels," according to a Catholic Herald article written in 1999.

Msgr. Cilinski was elevated to monsignor by Pope John Paul II in 1990. He served as parochial vicar at several parishes as a member of the Richmond Diocese, including St. Mary Parish in Richmond, St. Ann Parish in Arlington and St. Vincent Parish in Newport News. In 1955, he became director of the Richmond Diocese Missionary Fathers. In 1960, he was appointed pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish in Front Royal. He became pastor of St. John Parish in Waynesboro in 1964 and a year later was named pastor of St. Philip Parish in Falls Church. In 1981, Msgr. Cilinski became pastor of St. Ann Parish and was named rector of the Cathedral of St. Thomas More from 1989-94. He was pastor of Our Lady of Angels Parish in Woodbridge from 1994 until his retirement in June 1999. He also was a diocesan consultor and dean of Deanery V prior to his retirement.

Msgr. Cilinski is one of seven children, two of whom also entered the religious life. His brother, Father Julius Cilinski, also a priest of the Arlington Diocese, died in 2004, and his sister, Holy Cross Sister M. Camilla, died in 2007. His nephew, Father Robert Cilinski, is pastor of All Saints Parish in Manassas.

During his time as a priest, Msgr. Cilinski was known for his dedication to the job.

"Cilinski was one of the hardest working priests I've ever known," said Father James R. Gould, pastor of St. Raymond of Peñafort in Springfield. "No one will ever match Monsignor in his attention to the sick and the suffering. For Communion calls, he did them every day, including Christmas."

Following his retirement, Msgr. Cilinski never gave up his ministry.

"I'd much rather die with my boots on," he said in a 1999 interview.

So he kept working, spending much of his time visiting the sick and giving them Communion.

Bishop Loverde spoke of Msgr. Cilinski's dedication to helping the sick, calling his work "extraordinary."

"His years of retirement were filled with his daily visits to the sick in the hospitals and convalescent homes, especially at Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington," the bishop said. "He not only ministered to the sick, but gave support and counsel to their families and to the health care providers. Truly, his pastoral care for the sick was epic."

As a result of his work ethic and his willingness to go the extra mile for others, Msgr. Cilinski leaves behind a multitude of friends and loved ones.

One such friend, St. Agnes parishioner Lisa Dow, became connected with Msgr. Cilinski while she was bedridden for two months at the end of an extremely high-risk pregnancy six years ago. Msgr. Cilinski, who she hardly knew at the time, would come to visit her every day. He prayed for and offered support to her family through the ordeal, and stayed in close contact even after Dow's baby, born two months premature, was in good health.

"We're going to remember his generosity and his compassion for our children and our family," said Dow's husband, Paul. Not only that, Paul said he would remember the priest for his sense of humor. "He was one of the funniest people I ever met."

Another St. Agnes parishioner, Donna Bierlein, said she knew Msgr. Cilinski for 15 years and has counted him as a close friend for the past nine.

"He had a wit about him, he joked a lot and was an all-around good person," she said. "And he sure did take good care of the sick - he went to hospitals and nursing homes to give Communion seven days a week."

Six years ago, when Bierlein's husband died, she said Msgr. Cilinski was always right by both of their sides, offering support.

"As a priest, he was just wonderful," Bierlein said. "I'm going to miss everything about him."

Together with friends, Msgr. Cilinski and Bierlein would eat dinner at the Alpine Restaurant in Arlington - the priest's favorite restaurant, where he was known by the whole staff - and attend the fights of professional boxer Jimmy Lange.

Lange, a parishioner of St. Catherine of Sienna Church in Great Falls, was baptized by Msgr. Cilinski as a 5-year-old and later served as an altar boy. The priest, who was a boxer himself as a young man, remained a part of Lange's life from then on, even praying with him in the locker room before his fights.

"To me, he was not just a priest, he was my friend," Lange said.

In the days before Msgr. Cilinski's death, Lange visited him. Although the priest was mostly incoherent, the two were able to have one last conversation.

"Listen, I want you to look at me, we're going in the ring together, we're going to fight," Lange said to him.

"Yeah, we're going to fight together," was Msgr. Cilinski's quiet response.

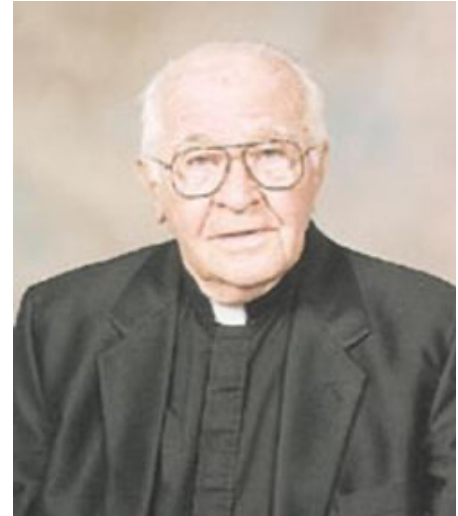
To Lange, those words spoke volumes.

"That has to make me feel like he's going to heaven to continue his fight for us," he said. "He's done so much, dedicated his life to us - the weak ones who need saving. He's been the ambassador and we've been his cause his whole life and we will continue to be."

[THE ARLINGTON CATHOLIC HERALD 8/14/2009](#)

FR. JULIUS J. CILINSKI

Fr. Julius was born in Alexandria, Virginia on June 19, 1918. He graduated from St. Charles College in 1939 and St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1945. He was ordained a priest by former Richmond Bishop, Peter Ireton on March 3, 1945. Among his numerous assignments with the Diocese of Richmond, he served as pastor of St. Paul's Catholic Church, Portsmouth, from January 1964 through the summer of 1974. While in Portsmouth, he was chaplain of the Portsmouth Fire Department, was a member of the Portsmouth Rotary Club, president of the Maryview Hospital Board of Directors and served as secretary-treasurer of the Executive Board of Maryview Hospital. He also served in our own Diocese of Arlington, with stops at Queen of Apostles Parish in Alexandria, Sacred Heart Parish in Winchester and St. Stephen the Martyr Parish in Middleburg.



He was one of three Fr. Cilinski's in the Diocese of Arlington, along with his brother and nephew. One of his sisters was a nun, two others married. The Cilinski family was and is very devout; Bishop Welsh once chose Fr. Julius' parents to receive Holy Communion from the Pope when he visited Washington DC many years ago.

There's not a person who met Fr. Julius who can honestly say they do not remember him. For wherever he went, he left a mark - something, a story of one of his assignments, a priest he worked with, a church where he was assigned. His stories always kept his audience of one or a hundred, involved and engaged. He always had a smile on his face and being around him made you thankful and put a smile on your own face. Being of Polish descent, he always said that he would put in a good word on your behalf with his cousin, the Pope.

Fr. Julius joined the Knights of Columbus in 1946 and served the Order well for over 55 years. He served as Chaplain of the St. Andrew and St. Clare Council and Friar of the Acts of the Apostles Assembly. He didn't just go to meetings: he got involved and went to as many Council and Assembly events as his schedule would allow.

Father Julius J. Cilinski died at the age of 85 on Saturday, May 8, 2004. He was remembered for his joy, humor and deep love for God during his May 13 funeral Mass at St. Andrew the Apostle Church in Clifton, Virginia. Arlington Bishop Paul S. Loverde was the celebrant. Monsignor John T. Cilinski, Father Robert Cilinski, and Father Jerome Fasano were the concelebrants. Father Fasano estimated that during Father Cilinski's 59 years in the priesthood, he would have celebrated 22,000 Masses, baptized 5,000 babies and officiated at 1,000 weddings.

The St. Andrew and Clare Council of the Knights of Columbus was renamed the Father Julius Cilinski Council, and St. Andrew the Apostle Parish renamed its playground and sports field in Father Cilinski's honor.

Father Julius J. Cilinski is interred at St. Mary's Cemetery, in Alexandria, Virginia.

[Knights of Columbus Council 10947](#)