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Monsignor Kenneth Gerathy, 84

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Led the effort to construct a new church in the 1990s

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. - Monsignor Kenneth A. Gerathy, 84, a former pastor of St. Christopher's R.C. Church in Grant City, where he led efforts to build a new church in the 1990s, died Monday in Our Lady of Consolation Residence in Riverdale, the Bronx.

Born in Manhattan, he attended the Cathedral College Preparatory Seminary in Manhattan. He received a master's in divinity degree from St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers.

Monsignor Gerathy was ordained on May 14, 1954. His first assignment was at St. Peter's Church in Poughkeepsie, where he served for two years and was parochial vicar. He was next assigned to the Nativity of Our Lady R.C. Church in the Bronx, where he also served as parochial vicar. That assignment was followed by one at St. John's Church, Goshen, N.Y.

As an assistant pastor, Monsignor Gerathy's first assignment on Staten Island was at Blessed Sacrament R.C. Church, West Brighton, where he served from 1960 to 1968. Those assignments were followed by assignments at St. Ann's R.C. Church in Dongan Hills and St. Margaret Mary R.C. Church in Midland Beach. Monsignor Gerathy served as parochial vicar at Blessed Sacrament, St. Ann's and St. Margaret Mary's. He was later assigned to St. Mary's R.C. Church in Port Chester, N.Y.

The monsignor's first assignment as pastor was to St. Joseph's R.C. Church in New Windsor, N.Y., where he served for six years.

During his career, he also served for 10 years as confessor to the students at Rice High School for Boys in Manhattan.

Monsignor Gerathy was assigned as pastor to St. Christopher's Church in July 1986, and was installed in October 1986. In an Aug. 16, 1986, edition of the Advance, in which he talked about returning to the Island after having been away for a time, he said he was happy to return to the borough, "Because I have spent most of my life as a priest on Staten Island, I am very happy to be back again. I am very happy serving the parishioners of Staten Island."

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Shortly after taking over as pastor in 1986, Monsignor Gerathy saw the need for a new church realizing the originally prefabricated structure built by Sears Roebuck to serve as a church would not meet the needs of his growing population.

The monsignor assembled a committee of 14 parishioners, ranging in age from young parents to senior citizens, to formulate plans for the new house of worship, which could carry the parish into the next century.

Mass was celebrated for the first time in the new church on Palm Sunday, March 23, 1991. Cardinal John J. O'Connor celebrated a mass of dedication on June 22, 1991.

In 1995, then Pope John Paul II named him a prelate of honor, which carries the honorary title of Monsignor. He was amongst the largest contingent of Catholic priests to be named monsignor on the Island in recent memory.

In addition, Monsignor Gerathy was part of a class of 50 young men who were ordained — a near-record size at the time — into the priesthood of the Archdiocese of New York in 1954. The men were ordained by then Cardinal Francis Spellman. Of that class, then Rev. Gerathy was among seven of his classmates who returned to serve on the Island including the late Monsignor John Sheehan, pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace Church, New Dorp, and the late Monsignor John Servodidio, pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Rosebank.

Monsignor Gerathy retired in September 2005.

Monsignor Gerathy was a former member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Among his many honors, Monsignor Gerathy was recognized by the Cross-Road Foundation and The United Parish Society of St. Ann's R.C. Church.

Monsignor Gerathy was known as a very generous person in terms of his time and his assets often helping out those less fortunate including assisting a school in the Bronx by paying tuition for needy students.

"The combination of his generosity and his spiritual guidance is something that will be truly missed," said Lawrence Gillick, executor of estate.

Surviving is his sister, Margery Ann Budniak.

The funeral will be Friday from the Hanley Funeral Home, New Dorp, with a mass at 11 a.m. in St. Christopher's Church. Burial will be in St. John's Cemetery, Queens.

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