

June 3, 1999

## Obituary

## Fr. Clarahan, former pastor, 74

WILMINGTON — Father Eugene F. Clarahan, pastor of four parishes during his 47 years as a priest, died May 26. He was 74.

Father Clarahan was pastor at St. Peter the Apostle in New Castle, Holy Cross in Dover, Good Shepherd in Perryville, Md., and St. Benedict in Ridgely, Md. He also served as chaplain to state institutions for eight years.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated May 29 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish. Burial was in All Saints Cemetery.

Born May 12, 1925, in Philadelphia, Father Clarahan was the son of Irish immigrants. After studies at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia and St. Mary's Seminary in Maryland, he was ordained May 1, 1952, at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Wilmington.

After being associate pastor at Corpus Christi Parish in Elsmere, he became chaplain for state institutions on June 28, 1960, with residence at St. Mary's Parish in Wilmington. He later was in residence at Holy Spirit Parish in New Castle.

His first pastorate was at St. Peter's in New Castle, where he served from 1968 to 1978. While at St. Peter's he was appointed as dean of the Southern New Castle-

Cecil Deanery. He also was named coordinator of the diocesan Department of Health Affairs and served on the Priests' Personnel Committee and as master of ceremonies.

Father Clarahan became pastor of Holy Cross in Dover in 1978, then was named pastor of Good Shepherd in 1983. He was pastor of St. Benedict's from 1987 to 1993.

Since 1997 he lived at Vianney House, the diocese's home for retired priests on the grounds of St. John the Beloved Parish in Wilmington.

Father Clarahan found himself in the news on May 13, 1981, when he and a tour group visited Rome. They were in St. Peter's Square when Pope John Paul II was shot. "Some of our people were able to reach out and touch him as he passed by" before the shooting, Father Clarahan later told a reporter. Less than two minutes later, the shots came. "Hundreds of pigeons flew into the air and the pope slumped



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down," Father Clarahan said.

Instead of panic, he said, the large crowd in the square turned to prayer and a "peaceful calm" settled over them.

"With the sirens sounding and helicopters overhead, we were bewildered while we prayed. There was no anger (against the assailant), just disbelief."

The attack cast a pall on his four group, Father Clarahan said, until an evening procession at Lourdes, France, where people prayed for the pope's health in eight languages. "It almost seemed like another Pentecost," he said.

Survivors include two brothers, John of Bridgeport, Pa. and Neil of Lewes, and two sisters, Theresa Vitulli of Treasure Island, Fla., and Sister Miriam Brigid Clarahan, S.S.J., of Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent in Wilmington.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Vianney House for Priests, Diocese of Wilmington, 905 Milltown Road, Wilmington 19808.