

Fr. Bonaventure celebrates last mass in Dover Sunday

Fr. Bonaventure Stefun of St. Joseph's Church said he will remember his Dover ministry as "six wonderful years" as he prepares to assume a new position as head of the Pittsburgh province of the Capuchins' Third Order, a lay auxiliary of the Franciscan Order.

The priest will be honored at a reception following the 6 p.m. service today. Sunday services will be his last in Dover. Friday he and his nephew, Rev. Emmett Schuler, will leave for a trip to Alaska planned as the closing event of his 25th year as a Capuchin.

"The thrust of the Catholic Church after Vatican II is at the parish level," noted Fr. Bonaventure. "I was fortunate to have a chance to experience parish ministry."

Fr. Marvin Justi, also a Capuchin-Franciscan, will succeed Fr. Bonaventure July 1. He previously served in Shawnee, Kan., where he and four others built a parish from scratch. A reception for the new priest will be held July 2.

"There wasn't any one great accomplishment," said Fr. Bonaventure of his Dover ministry, which began June 30, 1971. "Day-by-day growth took place, which proved that the risen Lord was present among us," he added.

Fr. Bonaventure pointed to a gradual change in his parishioners' outlook about God as evidence of the growth. "Six years ago, the many parishioners used to talk about a punishing God, but now they relate to the merciful God of love," he said.

HE HAS BEEN president of the Dover Ministerial Assn. and a member of the city's Citizens Advisory Committee, which recommends allocation of

Community Development funds. He has worked in counseling and guidance programs for the Tuscarawas Valley Comprehensive Mental Health Center.

Fr. Bonaventure is chairman of the committee working with the Dover board of education on the legalities of religious matters in the public schools. "This job is especially important to me," he said.

His work in religious and community affairs prompted Fr. Bonaventure to recommend several changes, starting with St. Joseph's Church. He said he would like to see more color and beauty in the sanctuary, "perhaps a mosaic of the risen Lord or a tapestry of salvation history." He also recommended

conversion of the communion railing into communion stations.

"Dover-New Philadelphia is a great area," said Fr. Bonaventure. "There's still too much wasted competition between the two towns and both put too much stress on sports," he added.

He urged greater support for the theatre, especially "Trumpet in the Land," and the Tuscarawas County Philharmonic Orchestra. "I hope the entire county will continue to grow in these superior forms of life," said Fr. Bonaventure.

AN EDITOR, teacher and chaplain in Pittsburgh for 15 years before coming to Dover, Fr. Bonaventure said he will have a clearer understanding of his new duties after a meeting in August between heads of the four Capuchin provinces in the U.S. and their superiors from Rome. One of his tasks will be updating and revitalizing the lay group, which he sees as the way to provide ongoing leadership for persons involved in retreats, cursillos and encounters along with all parishioners seeking spiritual improvement.

One of the priest's final tasks was administering with several parishioners the pastoral test to Brother Rich Zelik prior to his ordination. Attended by theologians and superiors from Pittsburgh and St. Fidelis Seminary, it covered his 18 months of work in Dover. Brother Zelik will be ordained Aug. 27 in Pittsburgh.

Fr. Bonaventure plans to return to St. Joseph's in September to show slides of his Alaskan tour to the Confraternity of Christian Mothers. "I hope that I don't go all that way and then find that I left the most beautiful scenes back in Tuscarawas County," he remarked.



FR. BONAVENTURE STEFUN