

January 1, 2002

Father John P. Kowal



Father Kowal was born Sept. 16, 1932, in Boston, Mass. He was ordained for the Capuchin order on Oct. 28, 1957, at Falls Church, Va. He first served in western Kansas as a teacher at St. Francis High School in Victoria (1959-1965), then as assistant pastor at St. Joseph's, Hays, (1965-66), and then at St. Mary's, Ellis, (1966-67).

The former Army chaplain (1968-1981) twice received the Meritorious Service Award; twice was awarded a Bronze Star, and three times was awarded the Army Commendation Medal. He also received the Air Medal for Civic Action in Vietnam.

He spent Christmas of 1968 in Vietnam. "I started with midnight Mass; by that evening, I said about 15 Christmas Masses. Everything was programmed. I was transported by helicopter. Troops would be assembled when I got there. I'd say Mass for 200 troops at a time. Most were out in the fields.... Everybody was armed, prepared for anything. It was a very strange Christmas." (SKR Jan. 23, 1991)

In 1971, Father Kowal was incardinated in the diocese. He returned from his military chaplaincies and served as diocesan vicar for religious education (1981-84) and chaplain at St. Mary of the Plains College in Dodge City (1983-84). He served in the following pastorates: St. Rose of Lima, Great Bend, (1984-88); Mary, Queen of Peace, Ulysses, (1988-2000), and St. Bernadette, Johnson, (1989-2000).

He retired in Ulysses and died in his home Jan. 1, 2002. Bishop Gilmore presided at the funeral at Mary, Queen of Peace Church. Father Kowal was buried in Grant County Cemetery in Ulysses.