

## **RECEIVING HOLY ORDERS ARCHDIOCESE ORDAINS POLISH-BORN PRELATE, WHO IS ASSIGNED TO HOLLYWOOD CHURCH AFTER SERVING AS DEACON AT ST. KATHARINE DREXEL IN WESTON**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

By all accounts, Fr. Andrew Pietraszko is charming, outgoing, caring, loves children and enjoys his ministry.

With those kinds of recommendations, the Polish-born, newly-ordained priest should do well as he takes on the reigns of Parochial Vicar at Hollywood's Saint Bernadette Roman Catholic Church.

"His sensitivity is quite unique and he is very gentle," explained Susan Hoffman of Weston, an active parishioner at Saint Katharine Drexel Catholic Church in Weston where Fr. Pietraszko served as a Deacon for the past eighteen months.

"My mother comes here for a month every Christmas," she said. "Father Andrew started talking to her just like she was a regular member here. We are from a Polish background and she just bonded with him. Now, he asks about her regularly."

Father Pietraszko, 31, was born in Bransk, Poland and studied philosophy and theology at a seminary there. Later, he studied theology at Saints Cyril and Methodius seminary in Orchard Lake, Michigan. In 1999, he was invited by the Archdiocese of Miami to continue his studies at the Saint Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach.

"He was assigned to our church while he was in seminary," explained Father Paul Edwards, the priest at Saint Katharine Drexel. "He has good personal skills, he is friendly and outgoing and he fits in well."

Outgoing is also how the priest was described by Mike Ciscal of Weston who is a parishioner at St. Katharine Drexel and works with the church's evangelistic cell ministry.

Praising the priest's leadership of Baptismal Retreats, Ciscal said that Pietraszko is very committed to his faith and lives people and children. "He is a people person and loves the church." Ciscal said.

Pietraszko's love of people has helped him to fit well into the Weston parish's multi-ethnic congregation that holds masses in both Spanish and English every weekend. "The Latin people love him, even though he doesn't speak a lot of Spanish," Ciscal affirmed. "They care as much about him as the Anglos do."

"Coming from a European background, and especially a country like Poland, he is able to understand the different cultures here," reflected Carl de Vaal of Weston who attends

Saint Katharine Drexel. “He fits in to the culture well and he is able to understand the differences between the Anglo and Latin cultures here.”

Ciscal said that Pietrazsko is studying Spanish.

“He is very good with children,” Hoffman said. “He works with them in a very gentle manner, yet makes sure that they are obedient.”

The priest is also known for his theological depth and interests. “Beside his people skills, he has a deep love for the Virgin Mary,” de Vaal reported. “He is one of the most Marian priests I have ever known.”

De Vaal said that he and his wife worked with Pietrazsko to plan monthly Rosaries for world peace.

Ordained along with Pietrazsko on May 10 were Jose N Alfaro who was born in El Salvador, Jose Alvarez who was born in Cuba, Jorge Luis Bello, also born in Cuba, Wilfredo Contreras who was born in the Dominican Republic and Jorge Luis Saenz Ramos who was born in Puerto Rico.

Pietrazsko has been assigned to the Hollywood church where he will probably serve as an associate pastor for several years. “Normally, newly ordained priests serve as associates for ten years before coming the pastor of a church,” Father Edwards explained. “Once a priest is ordained and assigned to a diocese, he remains in that area for the rest of his life. Fr. Pietrazsko is in Poland now to change his visa to a religious worker’s visa so he can work here permanently.”

Given the high praise that church members in Weston have for Father Pietrazsko, area residents will be praying that the priest obtains his visa quickly and, indeed, will remain in south Florida for the rest of his career.

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