

*Rev. Walter J. Ciszek, S.J.*

**PRAYER FOR A FAVOR  
THROUGH THE  
INTERCESSION OF  
FATHER WALTER CISZEK, S.J.**

Almighty God, we love, adore and praise You as our Creator and Loving Father. Look with compassion and mercy upon us. Hear our prayer in this time of special need and through the intercession of Father Walter Ciszek, grant the following favor if it is Your Holy Will.

*(Mention the Request)*

Most loving God, accept our gratitude for hearing this prayer. May the knowledge of the virtues and holiness of Father Walter be recognized and known to provide a lasting example to draw sinners to reconciliation and to lead souls to sanctity.

For You are our God and we are Your people and we glorify You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

*Please inform the Prayer League of any special favors from Father Walter Ciszek.*

## *With God and Father Ciszek in Rome*

On June 10, 2013, after a hiatus of nearly fifteen years and nearly twenty years to the day that I first visited, I returned to Rome. International travel is always interesting and this trip was no different. I shared a shuttle from the airport to the center of the City of Rome with an Iranian doctor. He spoke English and it had been his first trip to Rome. He must have sensed that I knew where I was going (not sure I had that sense!) so we began a conversation after disembarking our aircraft and making our way through customs and, after he bought me a cappuccino, we shared the cost of the taxi into the center of town. I'm sure the State Department of the United States and the Foreign Ministry of Iran would not have approved of our conversation. It ranged from politics, the relations between our respective countries, religion, and the ancient cultures from which we both sprang—Rome and Persia. As we were entering the walls of the ancient city, my interlocutor was taking pains to tell me how much more glorious the ancient Persian monuments in Tehran were compared to Rome. Of course I disagreed, and perhaps risking an international incident, proclaimed the glory of the Eternal City. It was all very polite, but we were hardened in our positions. As we left each other, we wished each other well and made our way to our respective destinations.

Meeting this gentleman was a rather auspicious beginning for my Roman pilgrimage. Indeed, I think a bit of the influence of Fr. Ciszek was at work in my interaction with him. This was not an Iranian, or a Muslim, or even a doctor. This was a fellow man sharing his experiences, ideas, and his convictions with me. His interaction was one of openness and kindness. Indeed, neither of our convictions about ultimate things changed, but I saw him as someone made in God's image and likeness and therefore worthy of respect. Whatever the chasm of the philosophical, political and religious positions between the two of us, I was reminded of Fr. Ciszek's words: "You cannot love God and hate what He loves."

This trip to Rome was in essence about the love of God—in particular the love of God as shown by one of his saints. I was invited by Fr. Marc Lindeijer, SJ to the Jesuit Curia in Rome to conduct research with him in support of the Cause of Canonization of Fr. Ciszek. This was one of the great honors of my life. The research that we conducted was largely sifting through documents showing Fr. Ciszek's kindness and love for all people and how he embodied, to a heroic degree, the virtues. Letters, personal notes, retreat notes, provided a spiritual testament of sorts. In addition, we looked at historical materials about Fr. Ciszek and had many discussions as to Father's spirituality and message.

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# prayer hotline

We ask members of the Prayer League and/or the readers of this newsletter to pray for the success of a film project about the life of Father Walter Cizek, that all the financial, legal, and technical difficulties may be overcome for the production of a successful and useful film.

**DECEASED:** Marjorie Barres

**HEALTH:** Joseph Campbell, Mrs. Alfons Sobolesky, Alfred Kielbasa, Yolanda DeSantis, Peter Esposito

**SPECIAL INTENTIONS:** Bishop John Barres, Msgr. Ronald Bocian, Josephine Zmuda, Austin Les

**MEMORIAL DONATIONS:** In Memory of Leona Kolonsky req. by Pat Voscauge & Leo Treshock.

In Memory of Leona Kolonsky req. by Marion Andrews.

In Memory of Leona Kolonsky req. by Bob & Liz Schlack.

In Memory of Thomas Aquinas Coyle req. by Mr. & Mrs. Paul Domalakes.

In Memory of Matthew Christian Bann req. by Trinity Academy Faculty.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Jane Paul.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Jim & Gina Bohorad.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Tomtishen Family.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Ron & Peggy Zimmerman.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Ed Clark.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Mary Wetzell.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Arlene & Ray Sachleben & Family.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Francis & Margaret McAndrew.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by John & Mary Ann Tancelosky.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Martina Nestor.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Lois Reichwein.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by John & Sally Bane.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Bob & Peggy Allen.

In Memory of Mary Rose Kleha req. by Roberto & Maxine Mauricio.

In Memory of Jack Arndts req. by Bob & Joanne Frank.

*For all whose names were previously on our list, but who are still in need of our prayers; for all those who have requested prayers of the League; for all prayer league members, for all those who are praying through the intercession of Father Walter Cizek; and for all who need our prayers.*

## “For/From the Friends of Walter Cizek, S.J.”

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*By Rev. Thomas J. Sable, S.J.*

### *God Whispers... awesome!*

Father Cizek in his book, *He Leadeth Me*, tells of the courage he found in prayer - a courage that eased the loneliness, the pain, the frustrations, the anguish, the fears, the despair of so many years in prison and labor camps. Prayer requires us to sit still. Sitting still or being silent is often frowned upon because Americans are taught to always be busy, to be doing something. As a result, I don't think people deal with their feelings in healthy ways, especially when it comes to loneliness. Rather than dealing with the cause of a feeling we distract ourselves by running out to the store to buy something, turning on the TV, or other forms of amusement or entertainment. It temporarily eases discomfort, but doesn't deal with the underlying issues.

Humans are social animals. We crave connection and companionship. It's natural and important. I think blogs and social media platforms foster amazing connections. I don't think these tools replace face-to-face communication. Meeting a friend for coffee is a much different experience than talking on Facebook or Twitter. Although the internet has connected many of us together, are we really connecting or are we becoming more lonely? We don't need a computer to get in contact with God, who is our greatest friend. God speaks in the silence of our hearts just as He did to Elijah the prophet on Mount Sinai: “Go out and stand before me on top of the mountain,” the Lord said to him. Then the Lord passed by and sent a furious wind that split the hills and shattered the rocks—but the Lord was not in the wind. The wind stopped blowing, and then there was an earthquake—but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire—but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the soft whisper of a voice. When Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, “Elijah, what are you doing here?”

Elijah had learned to hear the whisper of God, not by being “busy” or successful as a prophet. Why are we all in such a hurry? Do we really create a beautiful life if we're rushing from place to place? And if everyone is so busy, how do we create meaningful connections with each other?

Slow down, find a place to sit still to listen to the whisper of God. Take your time or just start to take your time. Rushing from place to place can be counterproductive. Being busy can sometimes erode our sense of purpose causing us to feel undervalued and lonely.

Days would begin with a cup of coffee and a breakfast of a roll and some butter or jam in the refectory of the Curia. Then to the library of the Postulator General's office. The work was spread over a table in the midst of two levels of stacks of books—largely red bound volumes—of the *Acta Sanctorum* of Jesuit Saints' causes. As I took my place that first day of work, I spied the volumes of the Acts of St. Robert Bellarmine's Cause directly across from where I was working!

Fr. Lindeijer and I decided that we would gather together those selections of Fr. Ciszek's writings that provided an insight to his spirituality and holiness. These writings would then be placed in context by our introductions and the recollections of his friends and spiritual directees. Fr. Lindeijer worked at his desk in his main office while I worked in the library. Around 10:15 each morning we would break for a cup of coffee in the little coffee lounge down the hall from his office. The warm Roman air would come in through the open window while the bustle of Romans and tourists could be heard outside. It was at these times that Father and I would speak of many things. Of course we spoke of Fr. Ciszek and our selection of his writings and materials, but we also spoke of European politics, Rome, the new pope and our respective families. After our all-too-brief coffee, we would head back to work until around noon, at which time we would repair to one of the house chapels with the other Jesuits for the midday Examen and prayers. After this, it was to the refectory for pranzo. This was the largest meal of the day and a chance to sit with some of the other Jesuits for discussion and relaxation. Fr. Lindeijer was very indulgent with his American guest whose facility with other languages extended only to ancient ones. The priests were very kind and, when the conversation was not in English, I could catch some of the conversation in Italian. After lunch and a bit of free time, we were back to work until late afternoon. I chose that hour to go to Mass at St. Peter's Basilica with free time for exploring Rome after that.

With few exceptions, this was the usual daily "ordo" that I and Fr. Lindeijer kept during the research, editing, and writing that would eventually become the forthcoming book *With God in America: Selections from the Writings of Fr. Walter J. Ciszek*,

S.J. This book came about through the prayers and support of many, especially Mrs. Joanne Wright who interviewed countless witnesses and friends of Fr. Ciszek for purposes of providing recollections contained in the book. We went back and forth about inclusions in the book and selections to draw from. I must commend my Jesuit colleague for being the driving force and the brilliance behind the organization of material and its presentation.

Reading Fr. Ciszek's personal letters and retreat reflections, among other items, truly gave me an insight into the man. As we mention in the prayer for a favor through his intercession, "his kindness to all people" is indeed evident with all whom he came in contact. I thought of this during the quiet times when I traversed the city of Rome as I passed the places where Fr. Ciszek stayed and studied while there in the 1930s: the Bellarmino, the Russicum, the Gregorian. I thought of the tough Polish guy from Shenandoah traversing these same streets; a man who must have been a joy to be with during those years prior to his passion in Russia. I could imagine in my mind's eye Frs. Ciszek, Novikov (Nestrov) and Moskwa (Makar) playing practical jokes, eating pasta, and being deep in prayer. On one of my final days, Fr. Lindeijer and I visited the Basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls, the site of Fr. Ciszek's first Mass after ordination. I was rather pensive in this place, thinking of Fr. Ciszek back in the thirties as a young priest and the enthusiasm that filled him for the missionary work entrusted to him by God and the Church. This was a holy place because Christ was there—but also because it was the site of saints, not least of which the first time Walter Ciszek brought Christ sacramentally and physically upon the earth.

On the final day of my research trip and pilgrimage, I made my way from my lodgings to the main entrance of the Jesuit Curia. As I did, I passed a heroic sized statue of St. Ignatius Loyola. The words on the base of the statue struck me as I passed, and I couldn't help but think of Fr. Ciszek, one of Ignatius's faithful sons: *Ite inflammate omnia* ("Go set all aflame!"). Indeed, Fr. Ciszek set the world aflame—in the hearts of all he met. He set them aflame with the love of Christ. And that is the particular mission of the saint.

# Tired of Winter? It was very cold in Norilsk

BY: JOHN E. USALIS

“Every moment of our life has a purpose, that every action of ours, no matter how dull or routine or trivial it may seem in itself, has a dignity and a worth beyond human understanding... For it means that no moment can be wasted, no opportunity missed, since each has a purpose in man’s life, each has a purpose in God’s plan. Think of your day, today or yesterday. Think of the work you did, the people you met, moment by moment. What did it mean to you- and might it have meant for God? Is the question too simple to answer, or are we just afraid to ask it for fear of the answer we must give?” — Father Walter J. Ciszek

A lot of people know about Father Walter, though I’m sure there are a few who are reading this column and may not know. Here’s a short synopsis.

Born in Shenandoah on Nov. 4, 1904, Walter Joseph Ciszek entered the Polish minor seminary in 1921 at Orchard Lake, Mich., and on Sept. 7, 1928, entered the religious order of the Society of Jesus, commonly known as the Jesuits. He was ordained in 1937 as the first American Jesuit in the Byzantine Rite.

Having volunteered to answer the call of Pope Pius XI for missionaries in Russia, Father Ciszek entered Russia in 1939 and was arrested as a Vatican spy in 1941, spent six years in the infamous Lubianka prison in Moscow, much of the time in solitary confinement. In 1947, he was declared legally dead in the United States. In 1953, he was sent to work in the mines for two years. When his 15-year hard labor sentence was completed in 1955, he was freed with restrictions to Norilsk, the northernmost city in Siberia.

It can get very, very cold in Norilsk. I can already hear you asking, “How cold?” The WeatherSpark website (weatherspark.com) gives some statistics. We’ll start with the “warm season,” which lasts from June 10 to Sept. 3 with an average daily high temperature above 49°F. The hottest day of the year is July 13, with an average high of 64°F and low of 50°F.

The “cold season,” which should be called the “extremely frigid season,” lasts from Nov. 16 to March 17 with an average daily high temperature below 5°F. The coldest day of the year is Feb. 12, with an average low of -22°F and high of -10°F.

The website also states that the length of the day varies significantly over the course of the year. The shortest day is Dec. 21 with 0:00 hours of daylight; the longest day is June 20 with 24:00 hours of daylight.

Due to its extreme latitude, Norilsk experiences polar day (also known as the “Midnight Sun”) during summer and polar night during winter. The precise start and end dates of polar day and night vary from year to year and depend on the precise location and elevation of the observer, and the local topography.

In summer, the sun is continuously above the horizon for 64 days, from May 20 to July 23.

In winter, the sun is continuously below the horizon for 45 days, from Nov. 29 to Jan. 13. In other words, for about 45 days, it’s dark. Norilsk is definitely not a tourist resort.

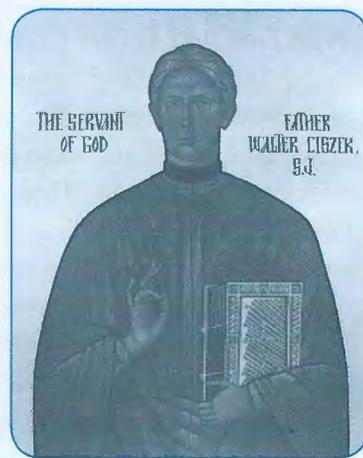
Father Ciszek, along with those who lived in the area, either by choice or by government banishment, had a very tough life. Can you imagine living during the winter with no sunlight and the warmest it will get won’t make it to 5 degrees above zero? Living in structures that I’m sure were not insulated to any semblance of modern standards? Yes, it also gets very cold in Alaska and northern Canada, but at least it’s your choice to stay or leave. Father Ciszek and the others didn’t have a choice in the “workers paradise” of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union).

I never met Father Ciszek. I wish I would have, but I do get to know him through the people who did know him and who tell stories of what he was like.

Here is a link to The Word Among Us website with a 2010 article about Father Ciszek, which is entitled, “The Priest Who Died Three Times,” written by Louise Perrotta. Give it a read. The link is [http://wau.org/archives/article/the\\_priest\\_who\\_died\\_three\\_times/](http://wau.org/archives/article/the_priest_who_died_three_times/)

Here’s another quote from Father Ciszek:

“Across that threshold I had been afraid to cross, things suddenly seemed so very simple. There was but a single vision, God, who was all in all; there was but one will that directed all things, God’s will. I had only to see it, to discern it in every circumstance in which I found myself, and let myself be ruled by it. God is in all things, sustains all things, directs all things. To discern this in every situation and circumstance, to see His will in all things, was to accept each circumstance and situation and let oneself be borne along in perfect confidence and trust. Nothing could separate me from Him, because He was in all things. No danger could threaten me, no fear could shake me, except the fear of losing sight of Him. The future, hidden as it was, was hidden in His will and therefore acceptable to me no matter what it might bring. The past, with all its failures, was not forgotten; it remained to remind me of the weakness of human nature and the folly of putting any faith in self. But it no longer depressed me. I looked no longer to self to guide me, relied on it no longer in any way, so it could not again fail me. By renouncing, finally and completely, all control of my life and future destiny, I was relieved as a consequence of all responsibility. I was freed thereby from anxiety and worry, from every tension, and could float serenely upon the tide of God’s sustaining providence in perfect peace of soul.”



# Invading Russia with Christ's Love

BY: CLARA SARROCCO

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The Quonset hut stood at the far end of the football field. It was the same field where years before the Seven Blocks of Granite brought fame to Fordham University's football team and gave hope to a city and country struggling under the Great Depression. Those walking by the field now could have believed that the curved tin hut was a storage shed for the tools used by the grounds keepers. But on further scrutiny the passer-by would have noticed that there was no lock on the door and a small cross rested on its tin roof. As far as I knew it was called the Russian Center.

I had learned that the Catholic Church had many different rites but never actually experienced any but the Latin rite. I had a friend who was a Melkite Christian and a parishioner at The Church of the Virgin Mary in Brooklyn. Through her I attended my first Divine Liturgy and was completely enthralled.

I do not remember how I learned of the "Russian Center" but probably it was mentioned by a professor in one of my classes at Fordham University. I recalled that my seventh grade teacher, Sister Vera, had always talked about the suffering church behind the Iron Curtain and recommended books about God's underground. At the time I read every book I could find on the subject within my capabilities. Now I had the opportunity of participating in the culture which I had read so much about.

When I entered the "building" of the Center on a balmy Spring Sunday morning, I learned that it may have looked like a Quonset hut on the outside, but in reality on the inside it was a chapel. Having learned a little of the Eastern Rite rubrics, I followed the other worshipers in venerating the icon which stood at the entrance. The beautiful Divine Liturgy followed accompanied by the deep musical a capella tones of the Byzantine choir.

After that, I attended the Divine Liturgy whenever time would allow. Not knowing any Russian, I had learned some of the responses even though I could not understand the words. I just knew they were the right words and the One for whom they were meant would understand. I also sensed that the priest/celebrant was a holy man.

A small reception usually followed the Liturgy where coffee and kulich were served. There was a sign on the side of the room that said "Cloister - Do Not Enter." I gathered from this that the priest lived there in the Quonset hut next to his chapel. The regular parishioners always spoke to Father excitedly in Russian and he answered kindly and blessed them. When they left they always kissed his hands. I assumed that Father was Russian and spoke no English and the others were Russian émigrés who were grateful to have this

connection with their homeland. My position remained that of an observer.

Life eventually interfered and my attendance became more sporadic. The Russian Center seemed to have disappeared and it wasn't until later that I learned more about it. The holy priest was Father Walter Ciszek, S.J. and he and the Center had been relocated to the University of Scranton under the title of Center for Eastern Christian Studies. Its mission was to establish a Byzantine Catholic church in Russia once Communism fell. It was the Russian branch of the Jesuit order. Actually Father Walter Ciszek, S.J. was an American having been born in Shenandoah Pennsylvania on November 11, 1904, the feast of St. Martin, to a devout and large Polish immigrant family. He had spent a somewhat wild youth and to the great surprise of his family, decided to enter the seminary. His impetuosity led him to leave the seminary three years before ordination and apply to the Jesuit provincial on Fordham Road in the Bronx. In his own words Fr. Ciszek said: "... I had to be tough. I'd go at 3:30 in the morning to run around the lake on the seminary grounds, or go swimming in November when the lake was a little better than frozen." It was because he read the life of St. Stanislaus Kostka who defied his family and walked to Rome in 1567 to join the Jesuits that he was inspired to join the Jesuit order.

God made Walter Ciszek physically and mentally strong because He had a job for him to do. When the call came from Rome for priests to volunteer to study at the Russicum with the purpose of serving in the Russian missions, Walter Ciszek answered and was accepted. "It was almost like a direct call from God," he wrote. "... I was fully convinced that Russia was my destination. ... I firmly believe that God wants me there" he told his superiors. The Provincial concurred and sent him to Rome to begin his Russian studies.

Russia under Communist rule would not permit priests to travel directly there. The newly ordained Fr. Ciszek was sent to Albertyn, Poland to teach seminarians and serve as a parish priest. It was not Russia, but it was close. When Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, Father Ciszek convinced himself that technically this was now Russia. After the Nazi soldiers desecrated the church, destroyed the seminary library, and took over the college, the Jesuit mission was closed.

Father Ciszek and his inventive friend, Father Makar, realized that this was the perfect time for them to "invade" Russia with Christ's love. The trains were filled with passengers, and the roads were swarming with refugees. With false papers they could easily volunteer to work in the factories in the Urals and enter Russia as workers. When the Jesuit superiors agreed, Father Walter Ciszek became Wladimir Martinovich Lypinski, a widower whose family had died in a German raid. He boarded boxcar 089725 with twenty-five people, an oil-drum stove, a slop bucket for a toilet and started on the fifteen hundred mile trip to Chusovoy in the Ural Mountains. The trip took two cold, trying weeks. The lack of food and water and the cold and discomfort were but a foretaste of what was to come. At the work camp, Father Ciszek worked

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as an unskilled laborer stacking logs from the river, knee-deep in water without gloves until his hand bled. Many of the workers were convinced atheists and Communists. It was very difficult to say Mass in the barracks and the work had to serve as his prayers. Just as he and the other workers in his brigade were about to be conscripted into the Army, the secret police surrounded the barracks and Fr. Ciszek as Wladmir Lypinski was arrested as a spy.

After several months of interrogation in local prisons, Fr. Ciszek learned that his true identity had been known all along. He was accused of being a spy for the Vatican and he was transferred to Lubianka in Moscow, the most dreaded of all gulags. Here he spent six years almost all of the time in solitary confinement in a tiny "room" with a window covered with tin, one bed and no chair. Sitting on the bed was not allowed, food was scarce and sometimes non-existent and interrogations were constant. The same questions were asked over and over again starting from the beginning and then over again starting from the end. The only human contact was the jailers who wore cloth shoes so their presence could not be anticipated. Father Ciszek used his Jesuit priestly training to conform his mind to prayer at various intervals of the day to help keep track of time and just to survive. Finally after years of daily and hourly answering the same questions over and over again, Father Ciszek realized the futility of trying to convince the interrogators of the truth and he just allowed them to think what they wanted to think. Too emotionally and physically spent, he signed a sheaf of about one hundred pages without reading them. Almost immediately, he regretted this act but it was too late. It could not be retracted. Back in his cell he went through a spiritual crisis, probably the severest moment in all of the six years of torture. It was at this darkest moment that he experienced a deep conversion. He knew in his heart that everything had to be left to the will of God, that His love would care for him and he would never be abandoned. He was sentenced to fifteen years at hard labor in Siberia north of the Arctic Circle for admitting to spying. He had spent six years in Lubianka almost all in solitary confinement.

Father Ciszek's Siberian destination was Norilsk north of the Arctic Circle. After weeks in overcrowded, freezing railroad boxcars he arrived at Norilsk in the stinging cold and snow. Priests were held in particular contempt by the authorities so he was placed in groups of the most hardened, dangerous thieves, deserters, and murderers. The work was brutal. They spent hours of intense labor usually fifteen hours a day, in coal mines with the constant danger of cave-ins and bitter cold. Father was then sent to work in construction and in ore processing plants constantly breathing in choking dust. Clothing was at a minimum despite the cold. They slept on boards. There was no water and very little heat in the barracks. During the long Arctic darkness the cold was unbearable with wind and snow drifts over five

feet high. When the long days of the Arctic summer arrived, the weather improved but the work days were longer because there was more daylight by which to work. Food consisted of some bread for breakfast with a little sugar. Supper was watery soup and maybe some fish bones. If the day's quota of work was not reached, the meager food rations were cut even further. The hunger drove the men to madness. They would lick the wooden bowls until only splinters remained. On one particular running march to the work site, Father lost his ill-fitting boot. He could not stop to retrieve it and had to continue in the freezing snow barefooted. Sometime later another prisoner returned his boot. He had been able to pick it up when the guard wasn't watching. It was a small act of kindness but it filled Father with gratitude beyond comprehension. Things which are usually taken for granted became moments of great joy inside the prison camp. He recounted that one day he spied a nest of newly hatched birds in the branches of a bare Siberian tree. The mother bird was feeding her hatchlings with care and he once again felt the need to live and love life.

In the midst of the terrible physical and emotional hardships, Father recounts that one of his greatest sufferings was not to be able to offer the sacrifice of the Mass. Eventually when it became known that he was a priest, the prisoners came to him for confession, for advice, for encouragement and for prayers. Somehow they were able to provide some bread and raisins to form wine and he was able to offer Mass surreptitiously for them and they could receive Communion. The danger of informants was always present. Desperate men do desperate things for the promise of a little more bread, but despite this he continued with his secret priestly life. He had his parish in the bleakest and darkest pits of suffering humanity. This ordeal went on for fifteen years minus a few months.

In the United States, Father's family and his brother Jesuits were convinced that he was dead. They offered Masses for the repose of his soul. When his sentence was completed he was released but still was not free. He was sent to Norilsk where he worked in a chemical factory, but had to register with the local police. It was at this time that he was able to contact his sisters for the first time. For them and for his brother Jesuits, it was a voice from the dead. Unknown to him, they began to work for his release - a very difficult task with many disappointments and failures. He had developed a congregation at Norilsk and at Easter midnight Mass there were hundreds of people present. The following Wednesday he was summoned by the KGB and told to leave within ten days. He was to go to Krasnoyarsk, and register there with the police. In Krasnoyarsk too he began to function as a priest. His congregation grew to over eight hundred and he performed marriages, baptisms and heard confessions sometimes for seventy-two hours without rest. Once again his activities were noticed and he was sent to Abakan where

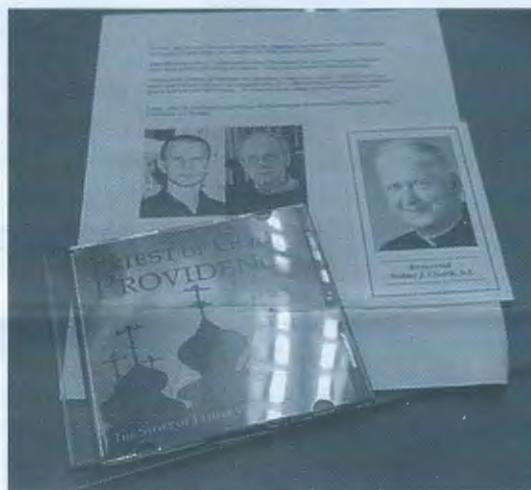
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# Sixth Grade Religious Class

## St. Matthew the Evangelist Church, Minersville, PA

Every week during class we have a Called to be Saints segment. The students select from our saint board any saints whose feast day is celebrated during that week and read about them. Each child has their own saint card they made the first day of class which includes their name, birthday and whatever they write about themselves. When it is their birthday, they read the card to us during our saint segment.

October 12, 2013 was 50 years since Father Cizek returned from Russia. During this class we added Father Cizek's picture to our Called to be Saints board. We listened to his story from Priest of God Providence CD and prayed the prayer for his canonization. We will continue to make this prayer part of our class prayer time.



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after registering with the police, he worked as an auto mechanic. Finally, after twenty-three years of exile and much bureaucratic delay, Father Cizek was repatriated to the United States. He was exchanged for a Russian spy captured in the US. His words as he left Russia were: "Suddenly, the plane gathered speed. I blessed myself, then turned to the window. . . . The plane swung up in a big circle; there were the spires of the Kremlin in the distance! Slowly, carefully, I made the sign of the cross over the land I was leaving."

All of this history was unknown to me. I just knew that I was attending a beautiful Divine Liturgy offered by a holy priest but I am very grateful that our paths crossed in ever so small a way. Father Cizek worked at Fordham University until the Russian Center moved to the University of Scranton and he went with it. He died on December 8, 1984 on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception after eighty years of a remarkable and holy life. Most of us will be in need of a miracle at sometime in our lives, maybe, just maybe, Father Walter will provide it. At present his Cause for Canonization is under process.

#### *References:*

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