

Rev. Walter J. Cizek, 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 Cizek, 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 Cizek.

Father Walter Cizek Day Mass celebrated

BY JOHN E. USALIS

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Father Walter J. Cizek, S.J. was a "master teacher" to others on how God has a plan for everyone, according to the Rev. Jeffrey Walsh, the guest homilist at the 30th annual Father Walter Cizek Day Mass celebrated on Sunday in Divine Mercy Roman Catholic Parish, St. Casimir worship site.

St. Casimir is the native parish of Cizek, whose cause for canonization as a saint is being investigated.

The main celebrant was Monsignor Ronald C. Bocian, pastor and president of the Father Walter Cizek Prayer League Board of Directors. Walsh, a priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Scranton and the host of a radio broadcast about Father Cizek called "A Priest of God's Providence," was a concelebrant. He is the pastor of the Church of St. John the Apostle in East Stroudsburg.

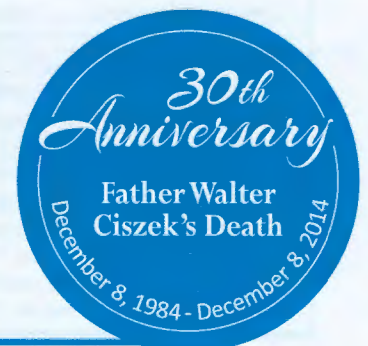
Other concelebrants were the Rev. Johnson Kochuparambil, assistant pastor of Divine Mercy Church, who also serves in the parish's Hispanic ministry, and Monsignor Myron Grabowsky, pastor of St. Michael Ukrainian Catholic Church, Shenandoah, and St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, Saint Clair.

Sisters from the Community of the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal traveled from Bronx, New York, to attend the Mass. Sister

Lucille Cutrone, CFR, community servant (superior) of the order, has a devotion to Cizek. *continued on page 3*



Father Walsh's entire homily on Page 4



prayer hotline

We ask you to pray for the success of a film project about the life of Father Walter Ciszek, that all the financial, legal, and technical difficulties may be overcome for the production of a successful and useful film.

DECEASED: Susan Obert, Dom Amato, Eleanor Hoffman, Marie Genetti

MEMORIAL DONATION: Co-workers and Friends of Dom Amato

SPECIAL INTENTIONS:

Anne Coyle, Florence and Frank Wolman, John, Emily, Alicia, Brendon, William, John, Joseph, Elizabeth, Caroline, Kieron, Ryan, Gidon

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 Ciszek; and for all who need our prayers.



It is with much sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Kathleen A. Palubinsky, Esquire on November 19, 2014. Kathy was a board member of The Father Walter Ciszek Prayer League. She will be sadly missed!



We are now on Facebook!
www.facebook.com/FatherWalterCiszek

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

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

With Advent the ecclesiastical year begins in the Western churches. During this time we the faithful are admonished to prepare ourselves worthily to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord’s coming into the world as the incarnate God of love, thus to make our souls fitting abodes for the Redeemer coming in Holy Communion and through grace, and thereby to make ourselves ready for His final coming as judge, at death and at the end of the world.

The Lord came into the world to show his love for us. From one of Fr. Ciszek’s 1983 Christmas cards, we read how he applied this to us: “He comes in splendor, the King who is our peace; the whole world longs to see Him. May the Lord’s coming bring you His every blessing, grace, love, peace and joy on the day of His birth and always. Love and Prayers--Fr. Walter.”

Jesus continues to come to us in the present moment in the sacrament of the Eucharist and other encounters with grace. The Eucharist is a source of strength and joy. In *He Leadeth Me* Father Ciszek comments on the joy he felt in his first celebration of the Mass as a priest: “I remember the thrill of my first Mass after the day of ordination, the privilege of performing with my own two hands the re-enactment of Calvary, my joy at the thought that I had been chosen from among men for the things that were of God and could at last fulfill the command that Christ had given to his disciples at the Last Supper: Do this in memory of me.”

Father Ciszek was deprived of that spiritual food that was the source of his strength during those long five years in Lubianka. He comments: “I was deprived of that spiritual food and the reality of that communion. I turned to God in prayer, made frequent acts of spiritual communion throughout the day, but I literally hungered to be able to receive him once again... In those days of torment and stress, of darkness and humiliation, I knew I desperately needed that source of strength that the bread of life might have provided—and I could not have it.” (*He Leadeth Me*, p. 138)

And the final phase of Advent is in the future, the final coming of the judge whom we will ask the question: “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?” Over the course of his years in Lubianka, in the prison camps, and in Siberia Father Ciszek saw the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, those in prison, and he ministered to them as best he could. Advent could be found in every day of his life and it revealed to him and to us the most important meaning of time: “...Every moment of our life has a purpose, that every action of ours, no matter how dull or routine it may seem in itself, has a dignity and worth beyond human understanding.” (*He Leadeth Me*, p. 215)

"We have a great devotion to Father Walter Cisek. He was my spiritual director and a lot of his teachings have been passed down to us," Sister Lucille said. The religious order was established in 1988 under the auspices of John Cardinal O'Connor of New York, with Father Andrew Apostoli, CFR, as founding father.

"We pray that the church will recognize him (Cisek) officially for his saintly life," reader Cynthia Nowak said as Mass began.

Cisek was born Nov. 4, 1904, in Shenandoah. He was ordained in 1937 as the first American Jesuit in the Byzantine Catholic Rite. He secretly entered the Soviet Union in 1939 as a missionary priest and was arrested in 1941 as a Vatican spy. After 23 years as a prisoner in the Soviet Union, he was released and returned to the United States. He died Dec. 8, 1984. His cause for canonization began in the Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic and was later transferred to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown. His cause has reached the stage that it is currently being reviewed at the Vatican. The cause is promoted by the Father Walter Cisek Prayer League, which is donating \$5,000 to the Allentown Diocese to defray expenses associated with the cause.

Walsh never met Father Cisek in person, but through Cisek's books, "With God in Russia" and "He Leadeth Me," he has come to know the possible future saint.

"My connection with Father Cisek began in earnest in 2006 when I was stationed at Transfiguration Church in West Hazleton," Walsh said during the homily. "Realizing how close Shenandoah was, I decided to make my first pilgrimage to see for myself the hometown of Father Walter Cisek. I was warmly welcomed by the Bernardine Sisters and had time to look at pictures and pray in the chapel. Something special was happening — I was gaining a new spiritual mentor and friend. I ended up reading and rereading his books and felt drawn to go back several other times to Shenandoah.

During a Lenten season, Walsh decided to write a radio drama based on Cisek's life and finished it on Good Friday.

"It was a very fruitful Lent. Giving up potato chips would have been easy compared to the hours of torment piecing together a snapshot of Father Cisek's amazing life that would do him justice," he said.

Walsh had a friend with a recording studio, and after a few hours the radio drama, "Priest of God's Providence," was completed.

"I never had a moment of hesitation about the title. To me, Father Cisek is without a doubt the master teacher of this core theological truth of our Faith — God has a plan," Walsh said.

The drama was recorded on a compact disc and through the bishop it was distributed to all priests and deacons in the Scranton Diocese. It is available through the prayer league for \$10.

"I have given it to many people and ask them to keep passing it along to others. I view it as just one other way to evangelize a truly inspirational story of faith and hopefully add a few more devotees to God's providence and to Father's cause," Walsh said.

Near the end of Mass, Grabowsky conducted a Panakhyda, which is a requiem or memorial service in the Eastern Rite Catholic and Orthodox churches.

Most of the music was provided by members of the St. Cecilia Choir of St. Casimir Church and choir members from Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Roman Catholic Church, Mahanoy City.

Students of Trinity Academy in the Father Walter J. Cisek Education Center, Shenandoah, also sang during the Mass.

After Mass, everyone was invited by Bocian to the church hall for food and fellowship. Walsh stopped in and enjoyed the food and conversation. The prayer league sold books, prayer cards, CDs and other items, with the money used for the canonization cause. The Byzantine Carmelite monastery that Father Cisek had helped found in Sugarloaf near Hazleton had homemade white and other breads on sale.

Father Ciszek Day Mass

Rev. Jeffrey Walsh's Homily

October 19, 2014

I am honored and humbled to be invited to preach the homily at this year's Fr. Ciszek Day celebration of the Holy Mass. I want to thank Msgr. for his hospitality and all who had anything to do with the planning of this mass. My name is Fr. Walsh, hailing from your neighbor to the north – the Diocese of Scranton. I was born and raised in Scranton and after 20 years in the priesthood, currently find myself happily serving as the Pastor of St. John's Church in East Stroudsburg – I am a "Pocono Padre".

My connection with Fr. Ciszek, began in earnest in 2006 when I was stationed at Transfiguration Church in West Hazleton. One day, realizing how close Shenandoah was, I decided to make my first pilgrimage to see for myself the home town of Father Walter Ciszek. So, I hopped on my bicycle and peddled down the back way into town. As I was warmly welcomed by the Bernandine Sisters and had time to spend looking at pictures and praying in the chapel, I knew something special was happening. I was gaining a new spiritual mentor and friend. I ended up reading and re-reading his books and felt drawn to go back several other times to "Shen-doe". When the season of Lent arrived, I decided, instead of giving up potato chips, I would do something constructive. I set out to write a radio drama based on the life of Fr. Ciszek, which would include corny sound effects. I figured, if the old radio shows like "The Green Lantern" and "The Shadow" could do it, so could I.

With the help of God's grace, I finished the writing part on Good Friday. It was a very fruitful Lent. Giving up the chips would have been easy compared to the hours of torment piecing together a snapshot of Fr. Ciszek's amazing life that would do him justice. I was blessed to have a friend (Dan Simrell) with a radio studio who also, Providentially, could fake a pretty good Russian accent. A few other people helped do the character voices, including my Dad, and after a few hours of recording and editing, voila, "Priest of God's Providence" was born. I never had a moment of hesitation about the title. To me, Fr. Ciszek is

without a doubt, the master teacher of this core theological truth of our faith – God has a plan!

Once the CD was produced and copied, I was pleasantly surprised when my bishop at the time, Bishop Martino, asked me to order enough for every priest and deacon in the Diocese of Scranton. It has been available through the Fr. Walter Ciszek Prayer League and I have given it to many people and asked them to keep passing it along to others. I view it as just one other way to evangelize a truly inspirational story of faith and hopefully add a few more devotee's to God's Providence and to Father's cause. In addition to the CD, I have given retreats and conferences based on "With God in Russia" and "He Leadeth Me" and always find it helpful to give anyone struggling with life, a copy of the "Surrender Prayer". In the span of 2 years in the late 2000's, I presided at the last mass of 4 different parishes that were closed in our diocese, and the last thing I did at each of the final liturgies was invite people to kneel and pray Father's "Surrender Prayer". There were many tears, but somehow that smiling face on the other side of the prayer card from a man who knew the meaning of surrendering to God's will, brought us consolation.

Even now, beyond the honeymoon phase of my interest in the life of Fr. Ciszek, I am still enthralled by the stories of people who once knew him or met him. I love reading the stories found in the Prayer League quarterly, and listening to some of my brother priests who once knew him. One of my priest friends gave me a picture of an icon of Jesus that Fr. Ciszek signed on the back. I keep that picture next to my bed. My favorite story is from Msgr. John Esseff who recalled meeting Father shortly after his arrival back in the U.S. He said he was expecting to meet a weak, frail and beaten down man, understandably so after the ordeal of his captivity. Instead, he said, he met a man with a gleam in his eye and forearms like Popeye! I have been to Father's grave in Wernersville

continued on page 6



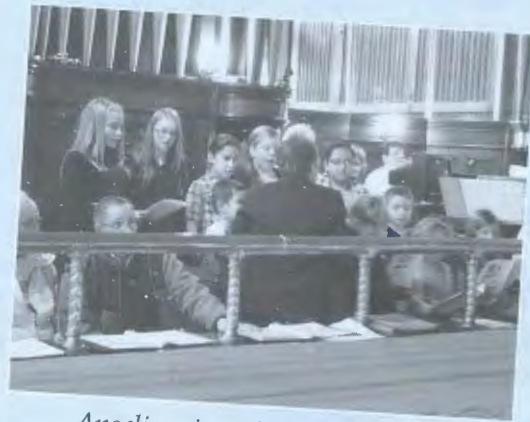
Sister Doris greeting people after mass



Church hall gathering after Mass



Sister from the Community of the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal



Angelic voices of Trinity Academy



Cantors during the Panakhyda



Msgr. Bocian meeting Friends of Father Walter



The wonderful choir



Msgr. Grabowsky conducting a Panakhyda



Sister Lucille and Sister presenting gifts



Father Walsh with his parents Nancy and Jerry Walsh

2 or 3 times since 2006 and found it amazing to be standing above the human remains of such a remarkable priest, and walk the same hallowed halls of the Jesuit retreat house. Regardless of whether I am listening or reading or simply meditating on the life of Fr. Cizek, I always feel comforted and strengthened. It is as if he is communicating the same peaceful resolve and interior fortitude that marked his soul.

I guess that I, probably like you, feel the same about Fr. Cizek as St. Paul felt about the Thessalonians in today's second reading: "We keep thanking God for all of you and we remember you in our prayers, for we constantly are mindful before our God and Father of the way you are proving your faith, and laboring in love, and showing constancy in hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." There are a million good lessons to learn from the life of Fr. Cizek, and we probably all have our favorite story that accompanies the lesson, but today I would like to share with you the two main lessons I have been taught by my friend Wally. Each lesson, providentially, neatly fits in with today's gospel from Matthew. Jesus gets himself out of jam and brilliantly averts the trap set by the Pharisee's question regarding the paying of the temple tax. Jesus said; "... give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, but give to God what is God's".

Two great lessons I glean from the life of Fr. Cizek are 1 – How to deal with Adversity; and 2 – How to deal with Corruption. Father was himself brilliant in applying our Lord's teaching that certain things in this life are necessary to give to Caesar (the "World") but God must get what belongs to him as well. I love the line he used when asked about working as a communist government mechanic and even receiving an award for it. Father said something to the effect that the communist worker is motivated to work for the glory of man, whereas he as a Christian is motivated to work for the glory of God. In all the years of his work in Russia, whether in the camps or in civilian life, he rendered his work for the glory of God and we should not miss this point. This is a special part of his saintly character that is illuminated by God even more now because of what he did then!

And what exactly did he do in the course of those over 2 decades behind the iron curtain, where so many died and he lived? In a nut shell, he faced adversity and corruption on what appears to have been a daily basis. I say I "gleaned" the two great lessons of how Father dealt with adversity and corruption, because you have to read between the lines to see them. I say they are the two great lessons for me personally, because, although East Stroudsburg does not look like Moscow, Krasnoyarsk, Dudinka, Albertin or even Shenandoah, I find myself in need of a way of understanding the human drama right where I am. I can only marvel at how Father Cizek endured the adversity of hunger, cold, loneliness, rejection, abandonment, humiliation and the violence that was all around him! I have a long way to go before I can measure up to the way he dealt with the corruption of thieves, NKVD, fellow political prisoners and even the corruption he acknowledged in himself, that we all have in our fallen yet redeemed human nature.

Did you ever get to the point of feeling that an adversity or some form of corruption experienced in your life was leading you off a cliff? There are moments when evil seems to triumph over good. I wanted to make sure I put the story of Fr. Cizek's near emotional breakdown in the radio drama, because it illustrates the scriptural wisdom of how the weeds grow side by side with the wheat. There's Vladimir Lapinski, already exhausted and feeling low, looking out on the Siberian landscape, when he notices a bird feeding its young. He begins to feel a surge of hope and optimism, as if that bird was a metaphor for how the Father in heaven feeds us. All of a sudden, the fellow prisoner to whom he describes the tender scene and points out the bird, decides to take a sling shot and kill the bird for fun. Remember what happened next, Father Cizek said he felt his whole body tremble with anger and he fell into a deep depression that lasted for days. We are not talking about someone with an ivory tower vision of faith here! He knew real suffering – of body, mind and spirit.

Imagine being so hungry that you would

obsess about getting a little morsel of food that fell off someone else's plate? Imagine being cold when you woke up in the morning, all through the day, and lying down to sleep at night? Imagine looking at the same four walls of a prison cell, not for a few hours or a few days, but for a few years? Can you imagine what it must be like to anticipate a beating or torture? And can you imagine what it must be like to see people you know shot or stabbed and discarded as if they were no more than an animal? These are the questions that fascinate me. I know I could not measure up. It makes me realize how truly great the saints are! Father Cizek, like the prophet Isaiah in today's first reading, knew that there is only one God and there is no other. He relied and trusted in God and did not break. They say Christians need to be like steel more than iron – to bend, but not break.

In a life filled with adversity and corruption of what is good, Fr. Cizek had the heart of a true missionary, and how fitting it is to celebrate this Mass on "World Mission Sunday." Jesus was a missionary, sent by the Father. The Apostles were missionaries, sent by Jesus. Every Christian is a missionary, sent forth by virtue of their baptism. Father Cizek knew his mission the moment he heard the call for priests to serve in Russia, and was sent by the Church to be a living witness of the Gospel. He rigorously prepared himself and found out soon enough how every missionary is given a share of the cross to bear. His was a heavy cross. I always remember the first time I read With God in Russia. I couldn't put the book down. I kept thinking to myself, 'there is no way anyone could have survived what this man went through!' The key, it seems, is to not lose the sense of God's goodness, your goodness and the goodness of every person. Virtue is its own reward and God's glory is revealed in fidelity.

We have all been touched by the life of Fr. Cizek. I have the image in my mind of him sitting in that airplane as he swiftly departed Russia, looking down on the land and remembering the people, and blessing them as he headed home to America. We pray today that he now has his eternal place in the heavenly

homeland, and continues to look down on this beautiful earth and its people to bless us. And, receiving this blessing, may we rejoice in the triumph of Fr. Cizek's victory over adversity and corruption which, as we know, is really Christ's victory over sin and death!

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