

Father Fagan awarded Champion for Life

The Rev. Joseph P. Fagan accepted the Champion for Life award from the St. Margaret's Parish Pro-Life Committee in a celebration on Nov. 3 at Doolan's Restaurant.

About 300 people gathered to honor Father Fagan at the 13th Annual Event, where he accepted the award with a speech and by reading a poem by P.J. O'Reilly.

Father Fagan has been a priest for 65 years. He has also been a defender of the life of the sick, elderly and unborn, in and out of the pulpit.

In his introduction, St. Catharine's and St. Margaret's Parish Monsignor Thomas Luebking looked back on Father Fagan's work in the Newark and Trenton dioceses.

Deacon Edward Jennings, the spiritual moderator of the parish's pro-life committee, presented the winners of the Respect Life Essay Contest. Alexander Gorka, a student at St. Rose High School, was on hand to read an excerpt from his essay, "My Understanding of Respect for Life from Conception to Natural Death."

Lauren Joyce, a graduate of St. Rose High School, was not able to attend due to college commitments. An excerpt from her winning essay, titled "Empty Chairs," was read by Mary Carroll Johansen of the pro-life committee.

Mary Reilly, a founding member of the committee, presented the Founders' Guardian of Life Award to several members of the parish.

Linda O'Brien, president of the committee, started the evening by acknowledging past winners in attendance. Father Edward O'Connor, a friend of Father Fagan's, provided the event's invocation and newly ordained Father Steven Piga of the parish concluded the dinner with the Benediction.

Father Fagan, a native of

Newark, also lived in South Orange and spent summers in Avon. He graduated from Blessed Sacrament School and St. Benedict's Prep. He then attended Seton Hall University and Immaculate Conception Seminary. Father Fagan was ordained in 1937 in St. Patrick's Pro-Cathedral in Newark by Bishop Thomas J. Walsh. His first assignment was the Christ the King Parish in Hoboken. He also served as an auxiliary Navy chaplain and moderator of the Newman Club at Stevens Institute of Technology.

Father Fagan became chaplain at the Benedictine Motherhouse in Elizabeth in 1949. While in Elizabeth he also taught at Benedictine Academy. In 1963 he was appointed pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Newark. Five years later he was appointed Pastor of the Church of the Little Flower in Berkeley Heights. That is also where he served as Chaplain of the Police and Fire Department. He remains their lifetime Chaplain. Father Fagan was a member of the Youth Committee and Board of Ethics Chairman of the Tri-Community Council of Ethics.

Father Fagan retired in 1977 and we named Pastor Emeritus of the Church of the Little Flower. During his retirement he was served as a weekend assistant to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Whiting, St. Catharine's and St. Margaret's Parish in Spring Lake, and St. Elizabeth's in Avon.

Father Fagan was one of four children of Joseph P. and Jane Crooke Fagan. His two siblings, Edward and Williams, are deceased. His sister Jane Hardie resides in Avon-by-the-Sea. He has three nephews: William Fagan of Lake Hoptacong, Howard Hardie of Avon and Richard Hardie of Wall. He has a niece, Jane Marie Bittner of Wall. He has also has four great nieces and three grand nephews.