

# Priest Is Full-Time Chaplain

By SUZANNE SCOGGINS

"A priest is called on to do much more than to administer the sacraments," said the Rev. Joseph Kos of Community Hospital. "He is a resource person."

Father Kos, 38, began working full time at the hospital May 30, 1978, after completing chaplain training at Indiana-Purdue University, Indianapolis, and the I. U. Medical Center. He is the first full-time priest the hospital has hired, and, he said, an 80-hour week for him there is not unusual.

The priest's service to God and the community obviously is not based on five days of 8-to-5 work.

"There really is no time schedule," he says. "I just try to meet as many patients needs as requested. I'm on 24-hour-a-day call five days a week. I'll often get called at 2 or 3 in the morning. A usual day for me is leaving the hospital at 10 or 11 at night."

Father Kos said a typical day can be divided into three segments: Distribution of Communion in the morning, appointments with hospital personnel, and in the afternoon and evening patient visitation, especially patients slated for surgery.

He visits patients he feels need added support in the afternoon, skipping

lunch and instead taking a break during the patients' dinner hour. He again visits patients from 6:30 to nearly 9 p.m., giving him a chance to meet family members. "I'll often get to meet a wife, a daughter, a son, and they'll know I'm concerned about their loved one."

His last walk for the evening is through the emergency room, and if he is not needed there, he goes home.

"The emotional and spiritual factors of hospitalization are vital to the healing process," Father Kos said. "The chaplain has come to be involved in holistic medicine, when the needs of the whole person, body and soul, are considered in healing."

"If a patient is angry that God has struck him down, if he feels that no one loves or needs him, his progress may be slower. Loneliness, helplessness, anxiety, fears, guilt — all these come in to play with what I do."

He emphasized that there are many aspects to the role of a hospital chaplain. "People have a stereotyped image of a chaplain coming in and praying over you. I have to have the sensitivity to sum up what the person's needs are right now.

## PROFILES IN FAITH

"Sometimes a touch of the hand is what they need, not sermons. Awareness of the patient's feelings is important around here. Another big word is acceptance. I accept the person for who he is. Acceptance doesn't always mean agreement." He paused, then added, "That's Christian love and concern. That's chaplaincy."

The last year Father Kos has been assisted in his patient visitation by a retired priest from Christ the King parish, the Rev. George Stahl, who has multiple sclerosis and is confined to a wheel chair. Father Kos said the patients are helped immensely by Father Stahl, and that the older priest's work is widely appreciated at the hospital.

Twenty-two lay ministers from St. Pius X, Little Flower, St. Andrew, St. Philip Neri and St. Lawrence parishes have helped Father Kos administer Communion and visit patients the last year.

"They have been of invaluable help in seeing the close to 160 patients a day," Father Kos said. "The hospital (administration) has commented on several occasions that the lay ministers are an important part of the hospital. As far as I know, I am the only one in Indianapolis who has a program like

this with four lay ministers a day, seven days a week."

The priest gives the lay ministers 10 hours of clinical pastoral training before they begin working at the hospital.

Another program begun by Father Kos in February is daily religious telecasts. "It is rare, if not unique, in a public hospital," he noted. "It's effective Monday through Friday. Catholic Mass for the sick is shown at 9 a.m., and the rosary and benediction are at 4 p.m." Channel 3 on closed circuit television is used for the telecasts.

Father Kos, an Indianapolis native reared on the Eastside, went from Our Lady of Lourdes School to Sececina High School, where he graduated in 1958. He earned his bachelor's degree from St. Mary's College in Kentucky and was ordained in 1966 at St. Meinrad School Seminary.

He has served several local Catholic parishes, including St. Lawrence, Holy Spirit and Holy Trinity. He also taught religion five years at Sececina High School and six years at Ritter High School, while continuing his parish work.

He is a member of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education and the National Association of Catholic Chaplains. Father Kos said he feels chaplain certification is a positive addition to hospital policy.



The Rev. Joseph Kos and Linda Troxel, secretary for the chaplains office at Community Hospital, confer about a televised Mass. Father Kos describes Mrs. Troxel as his "right hand." — The NEWS Photo, Patty Espich.