

Recent accession to the diocese archives:

# Father Emil Kapaun's chalice



MINING THE ARCHIVES

**Tim Wenzl**  
Archivist,  
Catholic Diocese  
of Dodge City

He died in a Communist prison camp after a heroic life as a battlefield and prison chaplain.



Photograph taken at Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis, l-r: Msgr. (later Archbishop) Ignatius J. Strecker, Father Emil Kapaun, Father John Vesecky, Father (later Monsignor) A.J. Preisner; Father George Schmidt, and Father Michael Lies. (photo from "The Story of Chaplain Kapaun" by Father Arthur Tonne, 1954.)

A chalice belonging to Father Emil Kapaun is an item of ecclesiastical patrimony now stored for safe keeping in the diocesan archives.

The chalice currently belongs to Father Charles Mazouch who recently told Bishop John B. Brungrardt that he will be donating it to the diocese. If Servant of God Father Emil Kapaun is canonized, the chalice will be considered a 2nd class relic, an article used by a saint.

Father Mazouch came by the chalice in 1986 when going through the personal effects of his great uncle, Father John Vesecky. Father Vesecky died of cancer on March 29, 1986.

"The administrator of his estate, (Father Arnold Weller), asked me to go along with him to go through his things," said Father Mazouch. "As we were going through his items we found this chalice and a paten wrapped in a purple cloth. On a piece of paper Father Vesecky had typed:

Father Emil Kapaun's chalice – given to Rev. John B. Vesecky for his personal use. After my death – this chalice may either be kept by my administrator or given to some Priest who will appreciate (sic) a chalice of this type & style – even though it is not of the "modernistic" and (to me) clumsy style. This is of "durable" metal & I am not convinced plastic is durable and permanent. /signed/ Rev. John B. Vesecky



Father Charles Mazouch holds the chalice once belonging to Father Emil Kapaun, whose cause for sainthood is being investigated.

Father Vesecky was a classmate of Father Emil Kapaun at Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis. They were among five priests ordained by Bishop Christen H. Winkelmann in St. John's Academy Chapel, Wichita, on June 9, 1940. The other priests were Father Harry Cabell, Father Aloysius Preisner, and Father Celestine Rohr, O.F.M. Cap.

There is a Timken relationship between Father Kapaun, Father Vesecky and Father Mazouch. Father Kapaun served as pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in Timken immediately before returning to the military as a chaplain during the Korean War. Both Fathers Vesecky and Mazouch are natives of and religious vocations of Holy Trinity Parish.

Father Kapaun served his country and the Church until May 23, 1951. He died in a Communist prison camp after a heroic life as a battlefield and prison chaplain. Father Kapaun was credited with saving a trapped unit of 50 wounded soldiers. Surrounded by Chinese, Father Kapaun gathered a dozen men capable of walking and took them out and surrendered. He told the Chinese that there were only wounded men in the command post and asked them to cease attacking.

Father Kapaun continued to minister to the soldiers as a prisoner of war. He insisted on going to work details so he could visit the men in other prison camps. A week before his death, Father Kapaun was stricken with dysentery and came down with pneumonia. He died in the camp hospital, and was buried in the camp cemetery in North Korea.

The Archdiocese for the Military requested that Father Kapaun be given the title "Servant of God" in 1993. The Diocese of Wichita formally opened the investigation for his cause for sainthood in 2008. Dr. Andrea Ambrosi, Postulator with the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, was in Wichita in September of 2013 to look over work compiled on the documentation of two alleged miracles attributed to the intercession of Father Emil Kapaun.

The title "Venerable" can be given to a Servant of God once the *Positio* (story/account) has been accepted by the Congregation for Saints as proof of his life of sanctity and heroic virtue. The title "Blessed" will be given after Father Kapaun is declared a martyr or after the *Positio* has been accepted and one miracle has been proven due to his intercession.



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