

# Diocese mourns death of Father Michael P. Scott

By Chris Donahue  
and James McEvoy  
Staff Writers

PERTH AMBOY — During his nearly 24 years as a priest, Father Michael P. Scott touched the lives of thousands of parishioners, first as a parochial vicar and then pastor.

He also embraced the Hispanic community and learned to speak Spanish. He inspired youth to follow Jesus.

And, for the past five years until his death Jan. 9 at the age of 53, Father Scott met the spiritual and pastoral needs of inmates as director, diocesan Office of Prison Ministry.

As a tribute to the rich tapestry that comprised his priesthood, those he served gathered to worship at his funeral Mass Jan. 15 at St. Mary Church, where he had preached as pastor from 1993 to 2005.

Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski served as principal celebrant of the funeral Mass. Father John B. Gordon, pastor of Our Lady of Hungary Parish and La Asuncion Parish, also in Perth Amboy, gave the homily.

A Mass of commemoration was celebrated at the same church Jan. 14. Bishop Emeritus Edward T. Hughes, who ordained Father Scott to the priesthood in 1987, served as principal celebrant. Father Joseph V. Romanoski, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, South Amboy, gave the homily.



Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski incenses the casket of Father Michael P. Scott during a funeral Mass at St. Mary Church, Perth Amboy. Father Scott served as pastor of St. Mary Parish from 1993 to 2005.

— Joanne Ward photo

ness and yet in truth he was the Don Quixote in so many of these adventures as I enjoyed the role of Sancho Panza," Father Gordon said.

"You could fill volumes and volumes of treasured times in the presence of this genu-

"John, I don't know what it is, but somehow the youth listen and I know they are in such need, I can't turn away."

Father Scott, he continued, "clearly trusted what we call grace and wanted only to find God in his priesthood, as

love or any great attachment to anything on this earth, he was still willing to let go in order to do what God wanted of him."

Father Romanoski also spoke about Father Scott's love for Perth Amboy and how he felt at home there.

"He loved this church, not the four walls, but the people that he was able to help," he added. "In spite of his great love of this parish, when he was asked to die to a parish priest life (for prison ministry), he was willing to say, 'Yes,' even though it broke his heart.

"Why? One word: obedience. He loved being connected to the parish, but he likewise blossomed where he was planted. I know he went where God wanted him, even if he didn't want to go.

"We would do well in imitating that obedience. We would do well by letting go of our own inhibitions when God is calling us and challenging us. As we die to ourselves, great things blossom around us."

Bishop Hughes said he was very grateful for the time Father Scott gave to the diocese. Noting Father Scott's friendship with Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, he added, "I believe he will be with Mother Teresa praising the Lord always."

After the funeral Mass, St. Mary parishioner Tara Romero described Father Scott as "a mentor and a father" to many youth in Perth Amboy.

"Before 1993 they barely used the gym. After he came it was filled constantly with kids," she said. "I went to St. Mary's School (South Amboy) and he was always

### Tireless Worker

Father Gordon, first speaking in English and then in Spanish, said he had many fond memories of Father Scott as a brother priest and friend.

In 1994, Father Scott, who knew and worked for Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, introduced Father Gordon to her when she visited Sacred Heart Basilica in Newark. The two priests also traveled together to see Pope John Paul II at Giants Stadium in 1995.

"I often wondered if anyone watching us would consider the man of La Mancha with my tall skinniness and his short stocky-

face, a genuine, faith-filled, no-nonsense father-figure of God. He loved you all. He lived to share that love because of faith."

He also reflected on the call Father Scott seemed to have for meeting the spiritual and pastoral needs of youth, which he considered "his vocation within his vocation."

"He said to me one night, after another full day of morning Mass, then parish planning, high school ministry, religious education classes and open gym scheduling,



**Father Michael P. Scott**

found God in his priesthood, as his spiritual awakening had taught him as a member of the Missionaries of Charity service team in the Bronx, N.Y."

Father Gordon also noted how the funeral Mass coincided with the fourth anniversary of the death of Father Scott's own father, Francis, and how faith deepened their relationship.

Bishop Bootkoski extended his thanks to the priests from the diocese for their presence and offered "our sincere condolences and prayers on this difficult parting to Father Scott's family, including his mother, and friends.

Noting the young men who came to honor Father Scott's memory, Bishop Bootkoski urged them to think about vocations "because there is a great need for priests to minister to God's people, not only here in Perth Amboy, but throughout the four counties of our diocese."

### Obedient Servant

In his homily, Father Romanoski said it was difficult to summarize the good times and the life of "a truly gifted and blessed priest."

"In the Gospel according to St. John," Father Romanoski added, "we hear Jesus saying that he is the way, the truth and the life. That is who Father Michael followed: Christ Jesus. He thirsted for that relationship, of being in perfect harmony with the will and direction that the savior set before him.

"When I think of Father Mike, I think of a man who only knew how to sacrifice, to give of himself and even with any great

faith, I went to St. Mary's School (South Amboy) and he was always saying Mass and I went to Cardinal McCarrick High, which was St. Mary's when I was there, and he would often come into my religion class."

### Varied Ministry

Father Scott was born in Jamaica, N.Y. He attended St. Pius X Elementary School and John F. Kennedy High School, both in Plainview, N.Y.

Father Scott earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Cathedral College, Douglaston, N.Y.; and a Master of Divinity degree at Holy Apostle Seminary, Cromwell, Conn.

Father Scott was ordained to the priesthood May 30, 1987, at St. Francis of Assisi Cathedral, Metuchen.

Father Scott's first priestly assignment was parochial vicar at Our Lady of Peace Parish, Fords. He then served as parochial vicar, then temporary administrator, at Holy Spirit Parish, Perth Amboy; and as parochial vicar at La Asunción Parish.

He also served as chaplain of St. Mary Regional High School, South Amboy, which later became Cardinal McCarrick High, and the Raritan Bay Council of Boy Scouts.

Father Scott also chaired the Perth Amboy Juvenile Justice Committee for 10 years.

Father Scott is survived by his mother, Catherine Scott; brothers Thomas, Glenn and Daniel; a sister, JoAnn; his niece, Jacklyn, as well as many grandchildren. Interment was at Resurrection Cemetery, Piscataway. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his name to local Society of Vincent De Paul chapters.

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