



The Alaskan Shepherd



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Some give by going to the Missions

Some go by giving to the Missions

Without both there are no Missions

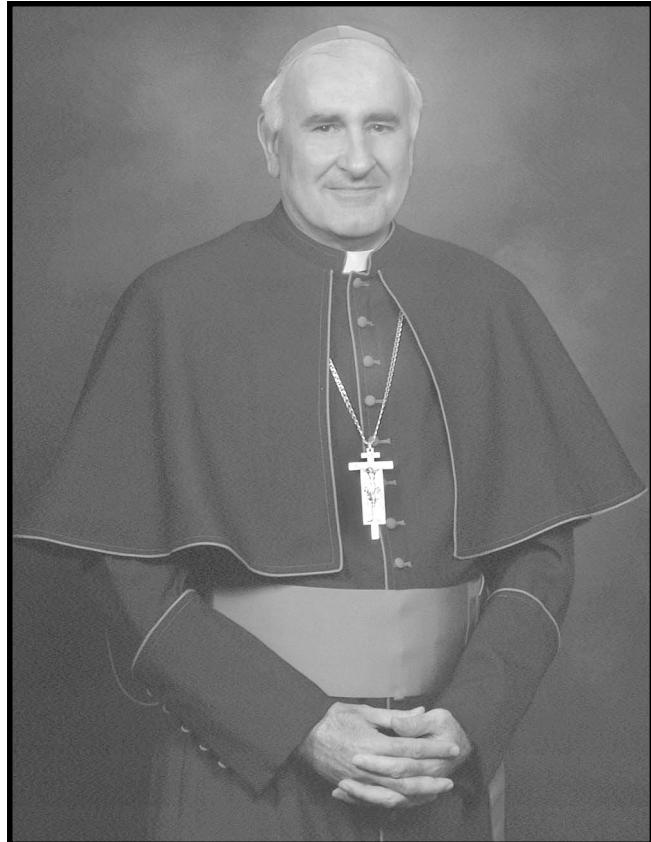
CALLED TO BE AN ALASKAN SHEPHERD: BISHOP DONALD J. KETTLER

He could not have known that some 32 years after he was ordained a priest, he would receive a phone call asking him to answer a call to the Episcopacy and, of all places, to Fairbanks Alaska! During the six hours he was given to arrive at a decision, Monsignor Donald J. Kettler went through an array of emotions. He considered the challenges of the office and, after a lot of praying—"about five hours and 59 minutes of it"—he agreed to accept the arduous position of being the fourth Catholic Bishop to head the Diocese of Fairbanks.

The 409,849-square mile Diocese of Fairbanks, with just 17,000 Catholics, was established in 1962. Up to the time it was "orphaned" by the sudden death of Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., on August 6, 2000, it was headed by members of the Society of Jesus. Bishop Kettler is the first non-Jesuit bishop of this northern Alaskan diocese. Of his appointment, Bishop Robert Carlson, bishop of Sioux Falls, had this to say:

"It is a great appointment. He has a missionary spirit, a missionary heart. He has, I believe, the talents and the characteristics that the bishop of Fairbanks has to have. The Diocese is receiving a wonderful shepherd...and I concur with the confidence the Holy Father obviously has in appointing him as Bishop of Fairbanks. He has terrific experience in a variety of diocesan leadership roles—from education to stewardship to canon law to ecumenism. He has been well loved at every parish where he has served. I have greatly appreciated the chance to share priesthood with him in the Diocese, and I look forward to continuing to work with him as a brother bishop. Clearly, being appointed as bishop to Northern Alaska has some unique challenges. But one of his greatest strengths is his ability to listen and work with people. Together with the priests, religious and all the people of the Diocese of Fairbanks, they will do great things."

Bishop Kettler, as was Bishop Kaniecki, is also a pilot. In the Diocese of Fairbanks, flying is a necessary part of life due to the widespread lack of roads. Alaska has about



(Photos by Joyce McKenzie)

six times as many pilots and fourteen times as many aircraft per capita as the rest of the United States. One in every 58 Alaskans—is a registered pilot. Regarding Fairbanks and flying, the Bishop says, "*I visited here a few years ago and I felt attracted to it. The last couple of years I've been learning to fly—people would ask me 'Why?' I always answered, 'I don't know why, just for the fun of it.' Well, now I know why.*"

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Diocesan Home Page:
<http://www.cbna.info>



Bishop-elect Kettler poses with members of his family, at the Evening Prayer Service, at Sacred Heart Cathedral on August 21, 2002. (Left to right--Bishop Kettler, mother Marguerite, brother Jim and Sister in law Vicki, his niece Sarah, and nephew Joe.

Bishop Kettler, a Minneapolis native, grew up in a home on the north side of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where his mother, Marguerite, still lives. His father, Joe, a federal meat inspector, did much of his work at the John Morrell & Co. plant. He died in 1998. His brother Jim lives with his family in Dana Point, California, while his sister Beth Fallgren lives with her family in Sturgis, South Dakota, and sister Kathleen Morrissey lives with her family in Brandon, South Dakota.

Bishop Kettler, a graduate of St. John's University and Seminary, in Collegeville, Minnesota, was ordained to the priesthood on May 29, 1970. The seminary community at Saint John's seeks to promote, in men studying for the Roman Catholic priesthood, a love and understanding of the mission and ministry in rural America. Through ordination, a priest has a special responsibility to teach, to sanctify, and to lead. Bishop Kettler's resumé speaks volumes of these qualities.

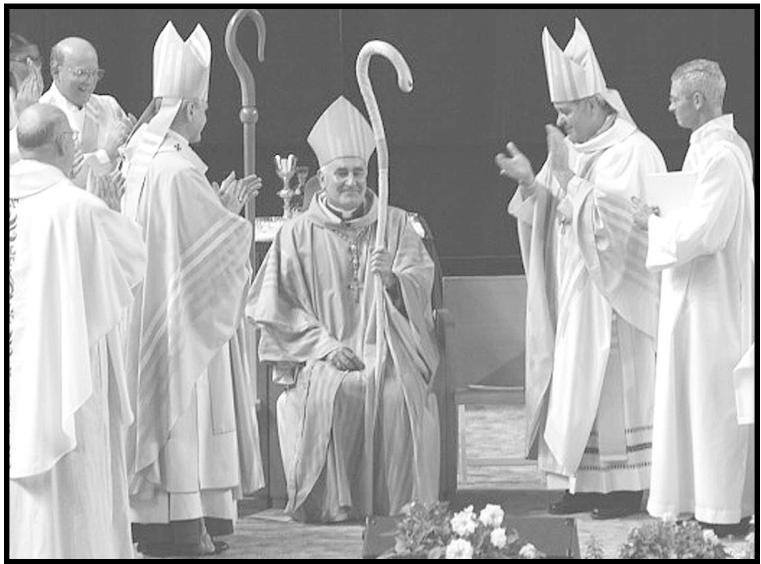
Besides serving as pastor of Christ the King parish, Bishop Kettler also served as judicial vicar for the diocese

of Sioux Falls and celebrated a weekly TV Mass. His committee memberships include: Diocesan Finance Council, Stewardship Committee, Catholic Family Services Board of Directors and the Association of Christian Churches of South Dakota board of directors. He was also a board member of the Sioux Falls Catholic School System.

He served as an associate pastor in Aberdeen and Sioux Falls until 1979, coordinated the work of diocesan offices from 1979-81, earned his JCL (Licentiate in Canon Law) degree at Catholic University from 1981-83, was named judicial vicar in 1983, coordinated diocesan offices from 1984-87 and began as TV Mass presider in 1984 on KELO-TV.

Bishop Kettler served as rector of St. Joseph Cathedral in Sioux Falls from 1987-95 and as pastor of St. Lambert Parish, Sioux Falls from 1995-2000, and pastor of Christ the King parish up until his appointment, making him the third priest from the Sioux Falls diocese to be appointed bishop.

One can only guess at the thoughts that raced through Monsignor Kettler's mind as he boarded a plane, June 6th, on his way to Fairbanks. That he was now Bishop-elect of Fairbanks would not be announced until Friday, June 7th, at 2AM—this in compliance with the Holy Father's official announcement from the Vatican in Rome.



Newly ordained Bishop Donald Kettler, sits in "the Chair of the Bishop," after receiving his miter, staff, and ring, at the Ordination Mass on August 22, 2002.

The Diocesan staff was called to a meeting that afternoon. There was much speculation as to why Bishop Michael W. Warfel, Bishop of Juneau, and, at the same time, also Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Fairbanks, had convened such a meeting. By Friday morning, the media embargo having been lifted, the Diocese knew of the appointment of Monsignor Donald J. Kettler, pastor of Christ the King Parish, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, as the fourth Bishop of the Fairbanks Diocese. With unparalleled excitement and tension the diocesan staff met at the Jesuit Fathers' residence in eager anticipation.

Gathered in the Jesuit recreation room, we immediately felt at ease with the 6'3" Monsignor. He smiled, laughed, joked and listened. He spent the majority of the afternoon focusing on the people he would soon be leading. He told us about his family and jokingly told us that his sister lives in Sturgis and owns a motorcycle shop! He spoke lovingly of his dear mother, Marguerite, expressing how difficult it would be to leave her but how fortunate he was to have family with her. We saw before us an extremely personable man, with an easy going laugh and a welcoming grin—we knew it would be easy to work for and with this shepherd. The Bishop endured a morning press conference, and an afternoon luncheon



Representing the three Roman Catholic Dioceses in Alaska: Bishop of Juneau, Michael W. Warfel, Bishop of Fairbanks, Donald J. Kettler, and Archbishop of Anchorage, Roger L. Schwietz, O.M.I., pose after the ordination.



"*Checker's the Clown*," tells a story of 'Star Wars' proportion to a giggling crowd of youngsters. He is being assisted by the bishop's niece Kristin, her family, and Bishop Kettler in the star role of Obi DON Kenobi!

on Friday and celebrated his first Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Saturday. He then returned to Christ the King parish to comfort his Sioux Fall parishioners, who had just found out that weekend that they were losing their beloved pastor.

Bishop Kettler next returned to Fairbanks in July, for a brief visit, his last before the time of his ordination on August 22. Fairbanks was still in full bloom, mosquitoes were tapering off, and the weather cool.

In addition to our routine obligation, at the Chancery, we had quickly become "communication central" for the ordination proceedings. The operation was impressive. Our little staff of 25 quickly organized into a team of committees and sub-committees, in charge of a variety of areas including lodging, transportation, hospitality, liturgy, entertainment and media, to name a few. We were rapidly filling page after page with out-of-town guests—many of them, requested assistance with lodging. A committee was engaged in arranging housing—the goal to accommodate as many visitors as possible, sparing them the cost of a hotel. Truly, the Catholic community was energized! Many offered to provide lodging, transportation and meals for bishops, priests, sisters, deacons, administrators and representatives from our bush parishes. We received calls and letters from Alaskan Shepherd contributors as far away as New York and Florida, who anticipated a visit to "the Great Land" and planned to travel there for the big event!

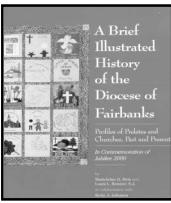
The ordination activities began Wednesday night, the 21st of August, with Evening Prayer at Sacred Heart Cathedral. The solemnity of the ceremony, which included the Blessing of the Pontifical Insignia, was preceded by beautiful music. The choir was composed of singers and musicians from several parishes. The pastor of the Cathedral, Father Ed Hartmann, welcomed the assembled. Bishop Warfel, on behalf of the Catholic community, warmly welcomed the Bishop-elect in an embrace and kiss of peace, saying, "People have waited a long time for a new bishop, two years and a couple of weeks since Bishop Michael Kaniecki's death

It is in a sense of great joy to welcome you to this." During the procession, seminarians from Mount Angel—Robert Fath and Sean Thomson, lit the tapers of the clergy. They in turn lit the tapers of people in nearby pews. The Cathedral glowed with more than just candlelight that evening. As parishioners and guests turned to each other to continue the lighting ceremony throughout the 23 double-pew church, smiles were ignited as well. Children leaned widely out of the pews to catch a glimpse of the new bishop as each face echoed the sentiment—"Look—there he is!" The *Prayer of St. Francis* was sung by all, and, after a prayer of thanksgiving, the candles were extinguished. A series of warm welcomes by civic and ecumenical leaders followed. Fort Wainwright chaplain, Rev. David Dorner, welcomed Monsignor Kettler on behalf of the military community and invited him to say Mass at Fort Wainwright anytime—"especially during hunting season!" Soon the assembly joined in reciting Psalm 15 and Psalm 112. Then, after a reading and responsory, Bishop Warfel gave a homily that centered on Monsignor Kettler's new role as Bishop. Using the words of St. Peter, he told the new Bishop-elect, "*God's flock is in your midst; give it a shepherd's care. Those are important words. The task demands presence.*" Then gesturing to those in attendance, he added, "*They are your mission.*" Bishop Warfel concluded, "*A bishop meets God in the community he serves...as he guides and preaches the good news to the people and teaches them what it means to be holy. The people want a bishop who is part of the fiber and fabric of their life. You have demonstrated that in the few weeks you have been here. That's good!*"

The homily was followed by the blessing of the Pontifical Insignia: the Bishop's ring, miter and pastoral staff. After the concluding prayers, the priests, deacons, and invited clergy, processed out to the hymn—"Now Thank We All Our God." The Bishop-



Andrew & Matthew Walter get a close-up look at Bishop Kettler's ring at the "Meet the Bishop" party on August 23, 2002.



Copies of *A Brief Illustrated History* may be ordered from the Alaskan Shepherd, 1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks Alaska 99709-5199, for \$25.00 a copy. This includes shipping and handling.



The village of Alakanuk, presents Bishop Kettler with an Eskimo dictionary and invites him to visit. Left to right--Deacon Clyde Smith, Winnie & Deacon Dennis Sheldon, and Andy Angaiak.

elect greeted parishioners and guests in the vestibule—closing the Evening Prayer service.

The Ordination Mass was held at the Carlson Center the following day, August 22. Nearly 1000 people witnessed the joyful occasion of seeing Donald J. Kettler being consecrated the new Bishop of Fairbanks. The principal consecrator, Archbishop Roger L. Schwietz, O.M.I., of Anchorage, was assisted by Bishop Warfel and Bishop Robert J. Carlson of the Sioux Falls Diocese. Also present was the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States from Washington D.C., Most Reverend Gabriel Montalvo, who read the mandate from the Holy See for Monsignor Kettler's appointment as bishop. A total of 12 bishops, 54 priests, 16 sisters, 3 brothers, 16 deacons and 2 seminarians attended!

Hands were laid on the head of Monsignor Donald Kettler, in a solemn ceremony of succession, performed for nearly two thousand years. Then Archbishop Roger L. Schwietz intoned, as Monsignor Kettler knelt in front of the altar, "*Bless this chosen man and make him holy for his sacred duties.*" Eleven bishops silently followed Schwietz's lead and laid their hands on Monsignor Kettler's head. Archbishop Schwietz then opened the Book of Gospels over the head of the Bishop-elect, during a prayer of consecration. Monsignor Kettler was then robed in a linen gremial and anointed with chrism oil. After the presentation of the Book of Gospels, Archbishop Schwietz placed the ring on Kettler's right hand and said, "*Take this ring, the seal of your fidelity. With faith and love protect the bride of God, his holy Church.*" Schwietz then placed the miter on Kettler's head and the pastoral staff in his hand and said, "*Take this staff as a sign of your pastoral office: keep watch over the whole flock in which the Holy Spirit has appointed you to shepherd the Church of God.*" Archbishop Schwietz then invited the newly ordained bishop to sit in the Bishop's chair, and he himself moved over to the next chair. At that moment, many wiped their eyes and applauded, as Bishop Donald Kettler received the kiss of peace from all twelve bishops! He then descended the steps of the stage to extend the kiss of peace to his mother, Marguerite, and family. A joyful procession followed, as Bishop Kettler marched through the auditorium to give his first blessing as Bishop of Fairbanks.

During his first homily, Bishop Kettler spoke of his simple philosophy—that of faith, hope and love—which he jokingly admitted he stole from Scripture and adopted as his motto. The motto is now inscribed into his pastoral staff. *"Faith, hope and love. I think that is what God calls me to be and do,"* he said. *"Faith and trust in the Lord...Hope of doing something new and challenging...and, God loves us so much, we can share it with other people."*



Mary Demientieff tells a story about being a student at St. Mary's mission and working in the fish camp.

Bishop Kettler added that he has received all these virtues throughout his lifetime from God, his family, his brother priests, bishops and life experience. *"I loved being a priest and I loved being a pastor. I'll pray with you, I'll suffer with you...but only with your support, love and guidance."*

The variety of cultures was evident throughout the installation. Eskimo deacons Elmer Beans and Al Wasuli, participated in the procession and wafted incense with bird feathers. Chinonye Chukwu read a Gospel passage, in Siberian Yup'ik.

The smell of sweet incense permeated the arena during the two-hour Mass, which was rich in tradition, symbolism and music. Bishop Kettler's family, including his mother, presented the Eucharistic gifts. Communion was a glorious sight as Catholics received the Eucharist from the many priests stationed in every corner of the arena!

In closing, Bishop Carlson had this to say to the Diocese of Fairbanks, *"You will find him to be a gentle shepherd with an extraordinary talent. We shall miss him, especially his prayerful way and joyful spirit. You are receiving a wonderful new bishop. Take good care of him."*



This banner representation of the Arms of the Diocese of Fairbanks was created by the Scott Killian family of Healy, Alaska, and carried by Harold Esmailka in the Ordination Mass. It is richly symbolic of Alaska. The mountain is birch bark and between two beaded roses on a field of Gold moose hide, is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, symbol of the Fairbanks Cathedral and Seat of the Bishop of Fairbanks.

A reception followed, hosted by the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks, where pictures of a young Father Kettler and his past parishes were displayed. Guests were invited to enjoy sandwiches, fruit and three large cakes decorated with the sentiment of his motto: Faith, Hope and Love.

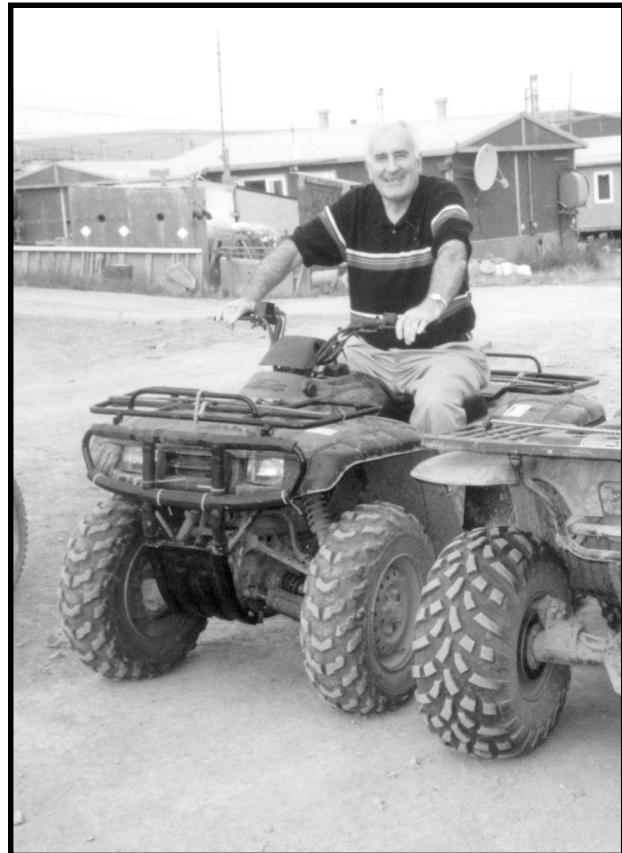
The next evening, all were invited to join with the Chancery Staff as we hosted a family festival called, "Meet the Bishop!" The party was held at the River's Edge Convention Center. The evening began with eating! The smell of hamburgers and picnic-type food filled the air. Meanwhile, D.J. Jim Matherly, played a variety of fun, family music. Throughout the evening he also recited South Dakota and Alaska Trivia—at which point guests were invited to wave Alaskan flags provided them. All were invited to bring a pie or cake for a "cake walk"—a popular event for young and old alike. As the food line dwindled, "Checkers the Clown," John Lentine, entertained the kids with magic tricks and involved them in skits. Bishop Kettler joined in on a hilarious "Star Wars" skit, in which he played the famous "Obi 'Don' Kenobi!" Guests were invited throughout the evening to share their talents between planned entertainment. Some of the impromptu talent included the alphabetical recitation of the 50 United States by Kathleen Allen. George Bowder, Director of Finance amused the crowd with the sounds of various farm animals. Father Tom Provinsal, S.J., pastor of Emmonak, gave a rendition of "Lord Won't You Buy Me A Mercedes Benz", Fr. Dick Case, S.J., chancellor of the diocese, sang the nostalgic "Paper Doll". And there was also the singing, to the considerable embarrassment of her family, of The Preamble of the Constitution, as she had learned it on "Schoolhouse Rock"—by, you guessed it, the writer of this story. A special presentation of gratitude was made to Father Case for "holding down the fort" and in appreciation of his strong, kind, and ever present leadership to the Chancery staff during our "orphaned" period. Joanne Olsen and her daughters performed Polynesian dancing and Family Life Director Madeline Nance and her quartet performed a musical number called "Staying Alive"—which referred to getting old—but encouraged hanging in there! The audience howled with laughter at this whimsical presentation! Children and adults sat spellbound as

Native elder, Mary Diementieff, and Susan Paskvan, shared stories of growing up in the missions and working in fish camps. The bishop could be seen throughout the evening, now sitting on the floor with the children, then visiting with the adults, then participating in a number of silly dances—including the Chicken dance, the Hokey Pokey and the Train! Bishop Kettler looked mildly concerned at one point, during the evening, as he watched his 89-year-old mother being twirled around the dance floor!

In an evening of entertainment and fun that began at 5:00 PM and ended at 10:30 PM, we welcomed our new Bishop Don Kettler with open arms and lots of laughs.

During the "wrap-up," Chancery staff members thanked the Bishop's family for coming to Alaska for the ordination events and promised to take good care of him. I spoke with Mrs. Kettler and assured her I would write often to tell her what her boy was up to! I added jokingly—"tell me what he's not allowed to do." Marguerite answered, as only a mother can, "He's not allowed to do anything!" The following day found the bishop, Father Case, and me, aboard the Bishop's Cessna 207, on an eight-day trip to visit some of the western Alaska coastal parishes. You wonder why the bishop would take such a trip after a week of exhausting ordination events, when surely he could use some time to relax. Our new Alaskan Shepherd answered simply that, "I cannot shepherd where I have not been." On that eight-day trip we visited 9 villages and celebrated Mass 12 times! We covered over 1800 miles. And to Mrs. Kettler, the bishop's mother, I add just this: I have some great pictures of your son riding a four-wheeler around Toksook Bay! Ah--but that is another story!

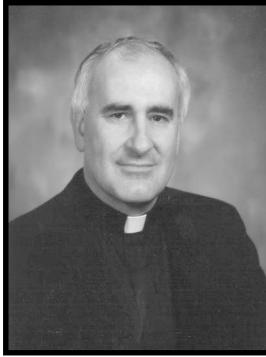
—Patty Walter



HOLY MASS

A special Mass is offered every day of the year for you in one of the Missions and for your intentions. Please keep us in your own prayers, that God may bless us and our work for Him.

If you notify us of change of address, it costs us nothing. If the Post Office notifies us, it costs us 37¢. Please help us save this cost. And sincere thanks to those of you who occasionally send us new stamps!



Dear Co-missionaries in Christ,

The Fairbanks Diocese has a new bishop—and I am he! I cannot help but reflect upon God's sense of humor—calling me to the land of 60 below! Yet I am delighted and humbled to be here and anxious to serve the diocese in any manner the Lord sees fit to lead us.

With sincere gratitude, I thank you for your benevolence, for the multitude of prayers, support, sacrifices and wishes sent to this needy missionary diocese. Throughout the many years, it is only with God's grace and the goodness of our benefactors that have kept us on the trail, and on the wing. It is you who enable us to bring the Mass, Sacraments and ministries of the Church, to our flocks scattered far and wide throughout this vast missionary diocese. Where we go, you go; what we do, you do. We, for our part, will continue to remember you, all your dear ones, and all your concerns in our daily Masses and prayers. Know that every day of the year, at least one priest of this diocese offers his Mass for you and for your intentions.

The diocese has abundant reason to rejoice this year. Congratulations are due to the parish of St. Mark's University—celebrating its 25th anniversary.

On my recent visit to Nome, Alaska, I had the chance to congratulate Tom Busch and his team at KNOM. KNOM—the oldest USA Catholic radio station, having been on the air since 1971-- won, for the 7th straight year, another Gabriel Award!

Located on the southern coast of Norton Sound, St. Bernard Church in Stebbins, is now nearly complete. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the many local volunteers, who make the church dedication a reality this year. Without these devoted individuals, the overall project costs would reach beyond that which this missionary diocese could sustain.

I am pleased to announce that our own Father Louis L. Renner, S.J., has been selected by the state of Alaska to receive the 2002 Governor's Award for Friend of the Humanities for outstanding intellectual contributions to Alaska. Father Renner recently relocated to Gonzaga University in Spokane to undertake the writing of a work called, "Alaskana Catholica"—a history of Catholicism in Alaska. He writes from Spokane, "*During the holy season of Christmas, though far from Alaska, I will still feel particularly close to Alaska and to our Alaskan Shepherd benefactors and friends. I will remember them in a special way in my Christmas Masses.*"

This year 2002 has seen numerous staff changes in the diocese. Father Richard Case, S.J., deserves an ardent thank you for two years of selfless service and dedication as Diocesan Administrator. He has been appointed to the position of Diocesan Chancellor. Religious Education Director, Jerry Finkler, accepted a position within the Anchorage Archdiocese. Father Andrzej Maslanka and Father William Cardy, OFM, returned to Poland and to St. Louis, respectively, due to illness. Sister Agnes Anne Wilcox, SMSM, is now in New Zealand--on reassignment. Early this fall, Sister Marilyn Marx, SNJM, and Sister Marita Soucy, CSJ, relocated to Galena-a Koyukon Athabaskan Indian village on the middle Yukon to staff a Native Interior Ministry Study Center. For long years they served here in the Chancery as Chancellor and Stephen Ministry Director respectively. We will very much miss them, but they go with our best wishes and prayers for success in their new ministry. After twelve years of faithful service, as Alaskan Shepherd Office Manager, Patricia Welborn retired. She too will be greatly missed.

The Diocese experienced great sadness over the death of Father Rene Astruc, S.J., who died after a year-long struggle with cancer. We are saddened also at the death of Deacon Charlie Steve, who died in the fall of last year. He was known for his hard work and loving concern for his wife, Christine, and for their children.

I have been able to visit with many parishes and people throughout the diocese. In upcoming issues of the Alaskan Shepherd-- as you read of my visits and experiences here in the "Great Land"--know that I carry you along on each and every journey. My dear benefactors, you are often prayed for throughout this diocese—but especially on the visits I make to the mission villages—visits that you make possible by your magnanimity.

I hope for you all the joys, blessings and miracles of the Christmas season. I pray that your New Year, 2003, be filled with abundant graces and blessings of every kind.

My personal best wishes in Faith, Hope and Love,

Donald J. Kettler

Donald Kettler

Bishop of the Diocese of Fairbanks