

# James Corley, longtime SR priest, died of AIDS

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Staff Writer



The Rev. James Corley, who served 24 years of his priesthood in the Diocese of Santa Rosa, died Oct. 5 in Santa Rosa of AIDS. **Corley**, 49, had served as pastor of Our Lady, Queen of Peace Parish in Clearlake until last year.

**Corley**

Diocesan officials Monday acknowledged AIDS as the cause of **Corley's** death.

No public mention of AIDS had previously been made in deference to **Corley's** family, who live in Southern California, a diocese spokesman said.

His is the only known case of AIDS among the Catholic clergy of

the diocese, the Rev. Gerald Thomas said. **Corley's** death certificate states he had been ill with AIDS for four years.

"We see it as no different than the death of any priest," Thomas said. The concern within the diocese hierarchy "is the same for anybody who dies of AIDS," he said.

Thomas, a counselor to AIDS patients in the community, said it is not known how **Corley** contracted the acquired immune deficiency syndrome or how long the diocese had been aware of **Corley's** condition.

Thomas said the diocese plans no further investigation to determine if **Corley** may have spread the AIDS virus.

"Father **Corley** was loved and supported by the diocese, by the bishop and the priests. We have heard from many others who cared for him very much and for whom AIDS is not an issue," Thomas said

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REV. GERALD THOMAS

Monday. "Father **Corley** accepted this as his cross, if you will, and without complaint or anger, as he would be expected to because of his vocation.

"While he was ill, he found a great deal of courage and faith. Two weeks before his death, he

wanted very much to celebrate the anniversary of his priesthood and we did, with his family present, at great personal cost to him."

**Corley** died at 10 a.m. on Oct. 5 at the priests' residence at Resurrection Parish, with his mother at his bedside.

Compassion has been the diocesan response to **Corley's** illness, Thomas said, consistent with Bishop John T. Steinbock's presentation last year of the U.S. Bishops' document responding to the AIDS crisis.

Thomas said he believes the Roman Catholic Church deals realistically with the problem of AIDS among the clergy.

The bishop, who gave the homily at **Corley's** funeral, said **Corley's** continued ministerial activity "in the midst of great difficulty and suffering" had shown "what it means to witness to the Gospels: to let Christ's love and power shine through our human weakness."

Fluent in Spanish, **Corley** had been active in ministry to the Hispanic community during much of his priesthood. Until early this year, when he was too ill to continue, he worked out of his office at Casa San Felipe, the Hispanic pastoral center in Cotati, and celebrated Sunday liturgies for the Spanish-speaking in Calistoga and Yountville. Most recently, he assisted at Resurrection Parish in Santa Rosa.

A native of Ohio, he studied for the priesthood in Southern California and was ordained in Santa Rosa in 1966 at St. Eugene's Cathedral. He served as associate pastor at three parishes, St. Eugene's (1966-67); St. Bernard's, Eureka (1967-71); and Holy Spirit, Santa Rosa (1971-74). He was pastor of St. Anthony's, Mendocino (1974-77), administrator of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Windsor (1977-83) and then pastor in Clearlake until 1989.