



—Leader and Press staff Photo
With the new title of Monsignor, the Very Rev. John H. Westhues, chancellor of the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Diocese, recalls with a smile his first unsuspected visit to Springfield.

Westhues Now Entitled to Monsignorship

Diocese Chancellor Recalls First Visit to Springfield

By MARY C. RETCHIE

The first time John H. Westhues was in Springfield he left in a couple of hours sharing the burdens of defeat.

That was in the fall of 1939 when he was a senior at St. Peter's High School in Jefferson City and played end on the football team which was shellacked to the tune of 40-0 by Springfield Senior High.

When he returned 17 years later, in November of 1956, it was as the Very Rev. John H. Westhues, assigned as Bishop Charles H. Helmig's chancellor of the newly created Springfield-Cape Girardeau Catholic Diocese.

Just recently the 55-year-old priest was cited for honors by Pope Pius XII and was made a Papal Chamberlain with the title of Very Rev. Monsignor—an honorary title of distinction granted to certain members of the Catholic clergy in the United States as a mark of recognition for their service to the Church.

Monsignor Westhues, who properly may be so addressed, seems to prefer the more humble designation of "Father Westhues" as the nameplate on his office desk still reads. He also has indicated that he does not wish to have a special service of formal elevation to the monsignorship, according to a fellow priest.

Shortly after Bishop Helmig's installation by Archbishop Joseph F. Ritter of St. Louis the chancery office was set up here in the Landers Building with the Rev. Westhues in charge. It is in the chancery that official business of a diocese is transacted and recorded. The chancellor is invested to act for the bishop, especially in cases of ecclesiastical law and in this field the Rev. Westhues has specialized.

His father is Judge Henry J. Westhues of the Missouri Supreme Court, a position to which he was appointed in 1934 for a 10-year tenure, after having served as a commissioner of the court. The elder Westhues is a graduate of St. Louis University Law School and is a former Circuit Court Judge. His parents came to this country from Germany when he was four years old and settled in Howard County.

The Rev. Westhues' mother is the former Marie Boer of Jefferson City, where his father began the practice of law in 1912. He is the only son in a family of six sisters, two of whom are in the religious life. They are Sister Francis Cabrini of the Sisters of Charity and Sister Joan Cor of the Maryknoll Sisters.

After graduation from St. Peter's in 1940, John Westhues attended St. Benedict's undergraduate seminary in Atchison, Kan., and then studied for six years at Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis. There

the seminarian had four years of theology. He was ordained in the Kenrick Chapel on April 4, 1948, by Arch Bishop Ritter.

For 4½ years he served as assistant to the late Msgr. Daniel J. Dalley in Sacred Heart Parish in Poplar Bluff. Then in September, 1952, the archbishop sent him home for further studies, at St. John Lateran's University where he concentrated on canonical law. His ecclesiastical training there extended for two years with a respite in the intervening summer.

After serving for a month as a teacher in a summer school at Rhineland for children of Catholic servicemen as an assistant to the chaplain from the Frankfort Air Force Base, the young priest had an opportunity to do some touring—and clocked some 10,000 miles.

This he did in company with the Rev. Thomas Cash of Nashville, who had been a classmate at Kenrick.

The young padres took in the Scandinavian countries, sometimes parking their little car and making plane flights to principal points of interest. They traveled in Germany, France, Holland and Belgium. At Calais they left their vehicle and ferried across the English Channel, entrained for London and from there went to Dublin and Edinburgh. Back to London they recrossed the channel and again in France visited famous Lourdes.

Their tour also took them to Spain and to Portugal where they made supplications at the Shrine of Fatima, then returned to Italy.

After more months of study, the Rev. Westhues returned to the St. Louis Archdiocese in July of 1954 and was assigned as an assistant at Immacolata Parish in Richmond Heights. It was during this period too that he served as assistant chancellor, archivist and master

of ceremonies of the Archdiocese, which provided the background commensurate with his fulltime duties as chancellor of the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Diocese, which spreads over 39 counties of southern Missouri.

With his appointment to the dignity and honor of the title of Monsignor he is entitled to wear special vestments. At ecclesiastical functions of importance, the new monsignor, along with others of that rank, will wear a purple cassock with red trimmings. Over this goes a rochet, a surplice-like garment trimmed in red. On top of this is worn a sleeveless cape called the mazzetta, which is the same material as the cassock.

To distinguish them from bishops the monsignors wear on their heads a black biretta topped with a purple pom-pom. A bishop's biretta is red.

The "house" cassock of a monsignor is black with a small shoulder-length cape and purple trimmings and buttons.

In his office Monsignor Westhues may be found working with pleasant efficiency in the customary black clerical suit.

In addition to his duties at the Chancery, the affable priest, who likes to hunt occasionally, is an assistant at St. Agnes Cathedral.

Andorra is a republic in the Pyrenees mountains which has 5000 people and an area of 191 square miles. Sheep raising is the principal occupation.