

Rev. Allan F. Kirk: 1934 - 2006

By **Trevor Jensen, Tribune staff reporter**

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Rev. Allan F. Kirk was a jovial Jesuit priest more likely to inspire laughs than fear as a dean of discipline and teacher of Latin at St. Ignatius College Prep.

Father Kirk, 72, died on Wednesday, Aug. 9, of a heart attack in his room at the Jesuit Residence on the campus of Loyola University, said Jeremy Langford, a spokesman for the Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus. Father Kirk had served since 2001 as spiritual director, periodical librarian and switchboard operator at the Jesuit Residence.

He was dean of students at St. Ignatius on Chicago's Near West Side from 1971 until 1977, then taught at the school until 1990. He later served for 10 years as a chaplain at Loyola University Medical Center, Maywood.

At St. Ignatius, a highly competitive school known for the academic rigor expected of Jesuit institutions, Father Kirk was "a wonderful teacher who looked like Santa Claus," said Kathleen Macnamara, a 1993 graduate who had Father Kirk as a Latin teacher.

"Kids at Ignatius are sort of overachievers; he definitely worked to put you at ease," Macnamara said. "Kirk was definitely not one of the taskmaster, Jesuit-teacher types."

St. Ignatius was boys-only until 1980, but Father Kirk made girls feel comfortable by taking an ironic approach to the "old-boy" traditions and humor that still permeated the school, Macnamara said.

Father Kirk grew up in Chicago and attended Catholic grade schools before graduating from St. Ignatius in 1952. In high school he stood out for his intellect, according to a classmate.

"He was always in the brightest classes, but he never had any pretenses about being bright," said Rev. James Gschwend, who followed the path to Jesuit priesthood along with Father Kirk. "When I think of Allan, I think of someone who was just a nice person, bright, pleasant, jovial."

Gschwend preceded Father Kirk as dean of students at St. Ignatius. He said his successor probably was a more easygoing disciplinarian. "We have a reputation of being firm, just keeping good order," Gschwend said of Jesuit educators. "I would think he would have been easier."

Father Kirk entered the Milford Novitiate in Ohio when he was 18, getting a degree in Latin and philosophy. He later earned a master's degree in history from Loyola University and did advanced studies in counseling and guidance as well as philosophy.

He was ordained as a priest on June 10, 1965.

Before coming to St. Ignatius, he worked at Catholic high schools in Indianapolis and Cincinnati. Bill Verbryke, a student of his at St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati who is now a priest, said Father Kirk was a loyal Jesuit who took new assignments without a fuss.

"Father Kirk's closest surviving relative is a cousin, Rose Mary Bohn.

Services will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday in the chapel at All Saints Cemetery, 700 N. River Rd., Des Plaines.

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