

# Rev. Gerard A. Petta, MSA

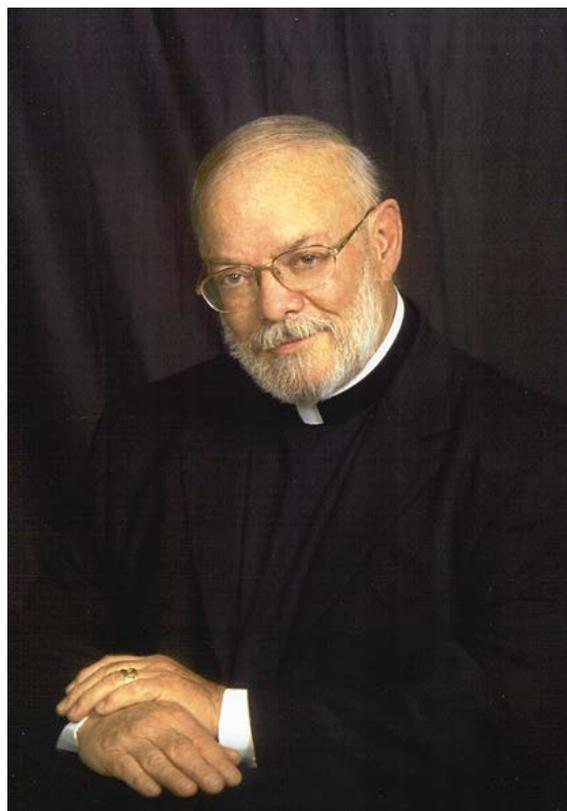
22 January 1939 – 24 August 2012

Rev. Gerard A. Petta, MSA, born and raised in Hyde Park, a section of Boston Massachusetts, celebrated his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Roman Catholic priest Aug. 22, 2009.

During his priesthood, Fr. Jerry, promoted, formed and accompanied the vocations of priests and laity, young and old, to the priesthood and to other ministries in the church as a member of the Society of the Missionaries of the Holy Apostles. “In my struggle over the past 35 years, I can honestly say my life has always been a joy,” noted Fr. Jerry, adding “I have never been bored; there has never been a dull moment.” He says that while things are not always understood “with patience and justice toward others, a deep sense of concern for others seems to emerge,” as well as “the intimate life God desires to have with each of us.”

At the age of 34, Fr. Jerry discovered God as a loving God and began to reflect on an interest he had for many years: that of being a priest. However, there was one question: Why now?

Mulling it over Fr. Jerry concluded: “I am an adult and I have something to say to adults.” After a while, this belief expanded. “I want to help men become good priests and I want the laity to take their rightful position in the church.” These convictions are as strong in his life today as they were in 1974.



At first, Fr. Jerry’s call to the priesthood did not seem to place him in the Society. Through prayer and much agony, he moved from a “No” to the Society toward a “Yes”. He recognized God’s first choice for him to grow in holiness was in the Society and he said “Yes.” Fr. Jerry often remarks “I was filled with a great joy that can never be fully explained, only remembered. This joy remains with me even today.”

Fr. Jerry often received God’s gifts of grace within his ministry. His advice to those who are listening: “Don’t be afraid. Instead, ask “What are you trying to teach me Lord. Allow the Lord to teach you.” He said that there are “so many gifts that God himself desires to share with you as you travel on your journey to Him.” Fr. Jerry emphasized that “God’s gifts will help you to understand that life is more than the obvious,” stating that “these gifts of grace will help each of us to recognize peace, self-giving, mercy, forgiveness, etc, when He is placed in front of us.”

Fr. Jerry’s “Yes” to God’s way, more than to “his own way” introduced him over the years to a variety of ministries, including as a contract chaplain with the army preparing couples for matrimony. He also assisted navy families with funerals. He had been the spiritual director for several lay associations, prayer groups and individuals, and had conducted scripture classes, retreats and days of recollection. In addition he heard many hours of confessions at the Basilica each week. In addition to his work for vocations, he provided a form of mentoring as a member of the Society. He had been a local Animator (not superior), Provincial Counselor, and Director of Formation for his province and as a Pastor in West Virginia.

Fr. Jerry developed a non-profit foundation and lay association to promote, form and accompany vocations of the laity in harmony with vocations of priests of the Society throughout the world including Canada, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil, Cameroon, Europe and the United States. Up until his death, Fr. Jerry celebrated Mass on Saturday at the Crypt Church located in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C., provided spiritual direction to the laity and their families, and assisted the community at St. Lawrence parish in Alexandria, VA.