

# Fr. Brundage serves missionary church in variety of ways

Lots of one-on-one ministry for priest on loan to Alaska

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Catholic Herald Staff

When Fr. Thomas Brundage first flew into Anchorage, Alaska, in March 1999, he knew this was where God was calling him to serve as a priest.

Asked by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to conduct an audit of the Anchorage tribunal, Fr. Brundage, along with two others, was sent to examine the archdiocese's procedures as a way to help then-Archbishop Francis T. Hurley retire from the archdiocese. Not an easy feat for the three-man team.

As pilots landed their plane, Fr. Brundage was struck with a peculiar thought as they wove carefully toward the tarmac.

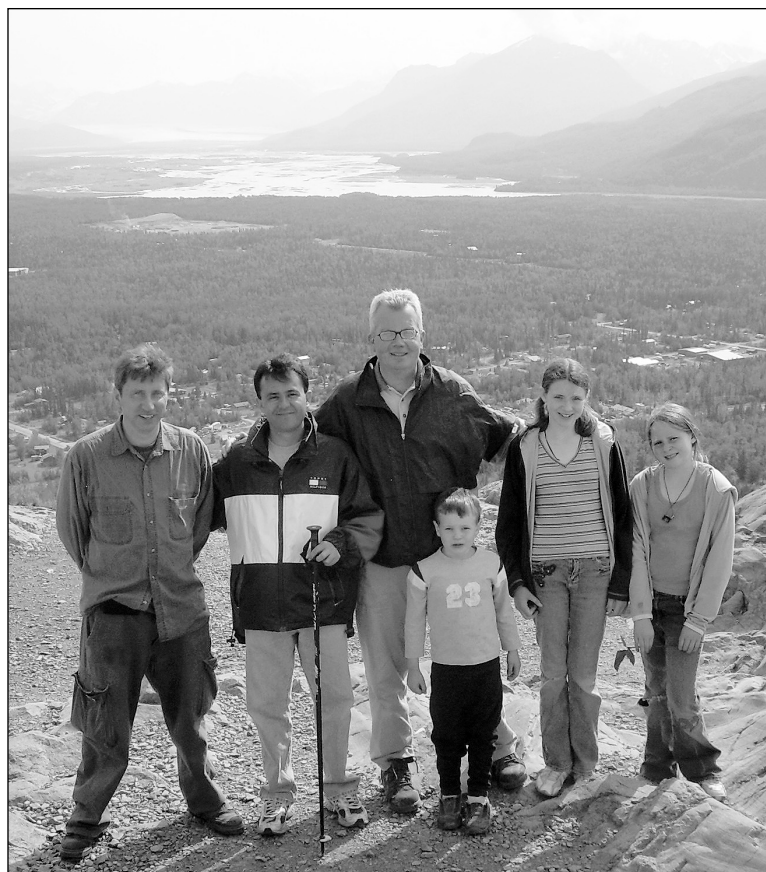
"The strangest thing happened," the Milwaukee native remembered. "The plane has to circle to get into Anchorage over the city. All of a sudden it was the first time in my life I had this overwhelming feeling that I was at home."

Seven years later, he was invited by Archbishop Roger L. Schwietz and given permission by Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, to serve there again.

"I think partially it's because the church is young and it's a missionary church, and it's a growing church," Fr. Brundage explained about why he's so taken with Alaska. "In the Rust Belt states – including Wisconsin – we're dealing with a lot of closing and a lot of merging of church institutions. As long as I've been involved, (the Archdiocese of Anchorage) has never closed or merged anything. We've added parishes the last couple of years, so there is something very exciting about being part of a church that is growing fairly rapidly."

### Just like 'Northern Exposure'

Years after he was assigned to the Archdiocese of Anchorage in 2006 as judicial vicar, canon lawyer, moderator of the curia and pastor of St. Michael Parish, Palmer, about 45 minutes northeast of Anchorage, and Holy Family Parish, Glennallen, about 250 miles outside of Anchorage, Fr. Brundage has but one lament



Fr. Tom Brundage, left to right, Jesus Cabrera, a judge in the Milwaukee archdiocesan tribunal, Fr. Don Hying, rector of Saint Francis Seminary and parishoners Joseph, Faith and Grace Davis pose for a photo while on a hike in Alaska in August 2008. The Milwaukee contingent are among the many visitors Fr. Brundage has entertained while serving in Alaska. (Submitted photo courtesy Fr. Tom Brundage)

when it comes to his time there.

"My one big regret about going out there four years ago was that I didn't keep a journal from day one. I just have had so many experiences. Like for instance, I watched the series 'Northern Exposure' before I went out there, and discovered that it actually was fairly accurate. There's somebody in my town who matches every single person in that show, and it's just so weird how that happened," he laughed about the town's resemblance to the popular television show that ran on CBS from 1990 to 1995.

Since his first visit, Fr. Brundage has discovered much not only about the state in which he serves, but also about himself. One of six children, he attended Marquette University High School and Marquette University. After attending Saint Francis de Sales Seminary, he was ordained May 20, 1988, at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Milwaukee, and served in two Milwaukee parishes – St. Gregory the Great (1988-1990); and SS. Peter and Paul (2001-2006).

He received his licentiate in canon law from The Catholic University of America in 1992, and then served as a judge in the tribunal for the next three years. In 1995, Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland appointed him judicial vicar for the archdiocese – a position in which he served until 2003. At that time, Archbishop Dolan appointed him associate publisher and executive editor of the Catholic Herald, where he served for more than two years.

### Future he never imagined

When asked how a Milwaukee East Sider could end up in what is commonly known as "The Last Frontier" – a state that only last year celebrated its 50th anniversary of statehood – Fr. Brundage admits it's a future he never imagined for himself. From snow-covered mountains to clear-water beaches, Fr. Brundage has adapted to all types of terrain.

"I do spend a lot of time in the truck, and you're allowed to use

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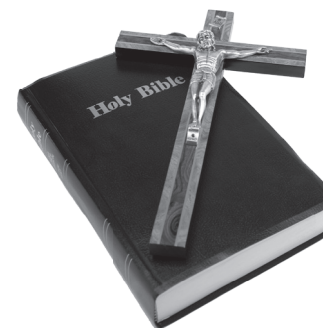
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Rev. Dieter Haas .....	1967
Rev. Al Lis.....	1986
Rev. Dan Murphy .....	1962
Rev. Don Quartana .....	1953
Rev. Mark Stangel.....	1965
Rev. Gene Winkler .....	1950

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