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studded tires, which makes traction much easier for the drive," Fr. Brundage explained about the winter weather.

"It's highly recommended to have the whole back of your truck with nothing but survival supplies. Basically, three days if you were to suddenly break down some place, you need to have enough to supply yourself for three days, so I have everything (I) need from logs for a fire, and sticks, and sleeping bags, a shot gun. You do need it," he laughed.

Anchorage is Alaska's largest city, and sits at the base of the Chugach Mountains along the coast of Cook Inlet, in the south-central part of the state. It is home to a population of 400,000 Alaskans, only a little more than 32,000 of whom are Catholics. There are eight parishes in the Anchorage area, and 13 parishes and missions in the rural parts of the archdiocese. Many are accessible only by airplane or boat since the road system in Alaska is rough, according to Fr. Brundage.

"The priesthood ministry is very different because we're more one-on-one with people," he said. "We do not have large staffs; we have a very small chancery, we have a very small paid staff at my parish, so it means I'm doing baptismal preparation. I have the couple and myself and the baby, we sit around a table and spend an hour or two talking about faith and baptism, and what it means, and then it makes the ceremony when it comes time to baptize the baby so much more personable, because I had a relationship with these people."

Severe weather conditions for most of the year also have an impact upon his work.

"(The parish in) Glennallen, which is my second parish, it's very much bush Alaska," he explained. "The conditions are very rough and it's a very small community, about 25 families in the church. But, there are people who would drive up to 70 miles just to go to church, so I'm very happy to do what I can over there."

Priest shortage poses problems

In addition to the tough terrain, the limited number of archdiocesan priests has posed problems.

"We only have 11 priests that actually belong to the archdio-



Fr. Tom Brundage hikes near the Knik Glacier on the northern edge of Alaska's Chugach mountains located just 50 miles north of Anchorage, Alaska. The priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee is on loan to the Archdiocese of Anchorage until 2011. (Submitted photo courtesy Fr. Tom Brundage)

ocese, (and) there are 30 who are actually serving in the archdiocese," he explained. "A Filipino priest, who is the pastor in the island of Kodiak, went back to the Philippines a couple of months ago to visit his family, and he didn't check his visa. He was not able to return to the United States for another six months, so it means that we have to shift people around."

According to Fr. Brundage, the biggest catechetical need he's discovered in Alaska is within the prison system. Palmer Correctional Center is a minimum and medium security prison in Palmer and is home to more than 550 inmates. At the request of Archbishop Schwietz, the priest looked for ways to bring Catholicism into the prison.

When he first tried to meet with prisoners, he received an "unwelcoming" response.

"The Alaskan penal system, just like the lower 48 (states), is by and large in the jowls of the Evangelicals," he explained. "They're the only game in there and it's been a huge thing to have a Catholic presence. There have been forces out there that have tried very hard to keep me out of there."

Transporting wine for Communion turned out to be a huge obstacle for Fr. Brundage.

"After being berated for 10 minutes by the second in command of the prison, I was able to later on show them that even on their Web page (it) lists the procedure for bringing in wine for those churches that use wine, and the founders of the Constitution would be turning over in their graves knowing that a denomination would have to change the way they worshiped that day, because of state officials."

After much discussion and apologies from state officials, he entered and celebrated Mass.

Is regular presence in prison

Fr. Brundage and his associate pastor, Fr. Nelson Marilag, celebrate weekly Mass at the prison, spend one-on-one time with prisoners, listen to confessions, pass out rosaries and reading materials, and, since last November, conduct a nightly Wednesday study group to explore Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body."

"We still run into some hostility in the prison system. For instance, the prison I go to has a religious program run by the Evangelical church called the TLC program, and it's an excellent program," he said, adding that many who take the program do not come back as repeat offenders. "But part of what they have to do is attend one church service a weekend, and I go out on Saturday morning and celebrate a Sunday Mass for the inmates, and I've been told that a Catholic Mass doesn't qualify as a church service, and I asked why and they said it was too short," he laughed.

"In the list of Corporal Works (of Mercy), there could be so many things on the list of Jesus; why would visiting prisoners be important?" he said, repeating a question once asked of him. "All of a sudden it was one of those times where I didn't even know that I knew the answer; it just seemed so obvious that when God put on flesh as Jesus Christ, he became a prisoner. He became a prisoner of the flesh. He bound himself to the flesh."

"People sometimes ask why this is important," he said regarding prison ministry. "Well, almost all these men will be on the streets again, and the best we can do to change their hearts and minds and patterns of

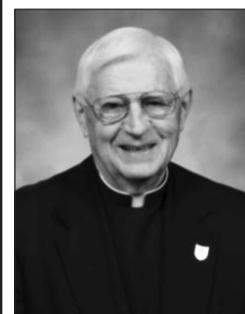
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WE ARE TRULY BLESSED TO HAVE YOUR
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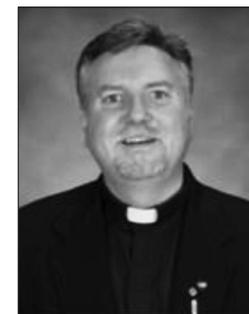
Fr. Mike Dineen

Thank you, Fr. Mike, for your dedication to Catholic Education and to Christ Child Academy.

We also appreciate everything you do for Immaculate Conception and SS. Cyril & Methodius Parishes.

Fr. Glenn Powers

May God bless you for all the wonderful ways you do his work each day at both Immaculate Conception and SS. Cyril & Methodius Parishes, as well as our parish school, Christ Child Academy. For giving so much of your time and so much of yourself, you are deeply appreciated. Thank you, Father!



Dear Father Gregg Chycinski,

The parishioners of Blessed Savior thank you for your pastoral presence in guiding us through three years of transition, encouraging our formation and faith-witnessing, and shepherding us on this journey.

*Your Faithful Flock of
Blessed Savior Catholic Church & School*

