

2003 Recipient of the J. J. Young Award



Rev. Mr. Chester S. Kazek



Chester S. Kazek was responsible for starting a Deacon training program for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and was ordained a Deacon on September 27, 1972 by Archbishop James P. Davis.

In 1977 in Los Alamos, New Mexico, his pastor, Fr. Ronald Bruckner asked him to look into ministering to the divorced, separated, and widowed. After a trip to Notre Dame and much reading and discussions with others, Chester and his wife, Margaret J. Kazek, started the first support group in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe for the separated, divorced, and widowed. Since then, they have helped start support groups in Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico, at three parishes in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and even helped get one started in Mesa and Phoenix, Arizona. They started a Region 13 chapter of the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics in mid-1980. Chester and Jane assisted at three regional conferences held in Colorado Springs, a retreat center south of Denver, and one in Albuquerque. Guest speakers included Fr. Jim Young, Sister Paula Ripple, and Virginia Clemente. Chester was a guest speaker at all of these conferences. He was also an invited speaker at two national conferences held at the University of Notre Dame.

In the mid-1980's, Chester, at the request of Archbishop Robert Sanchez, held two meetings for those estranged from the Church because of divorce. These meetings were held at the cathedral in Santa Fe and at Our Lady of Assumption Parish in Albuquerque. There were more than 500 attendees and many have returned to the Church.

More recently, Chester and his wife started another support group called "ANCHORS" at their home parish of Our Lady of Annunciation Parish in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Chet has also written a book titled *Support Groups for Those Who Have Lost a Loved One*. The Archdiocese published the book for local distribution. Chet is now revising the book and looking into having his book available nationally. It contains 11 of his lectures and a section on forming and maintaining a support group and a core group. It also has information on meeting types, problems, and social functions.

In the cover letter accompanying his photo, Chet asked if it would be acceptable to include Margaret because "I couldn't have done it without her." We are more than happy to oblige!

*The J. J. Young Award is presented annually in tribute to and in memory of **Fr. James J. Young, CSP**, whose pioneering ministry to reconcile separated and divorced Catholics led to the foundation of the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics in 1974. The award serves as a recognition and affirmation of another's service that directly affected the beginning, development, or expansion of pastoral care to separated, divorced, and remarried Catholic families. It also recognizes that service can be expressed in a variety of ways such as: support group ministry; program development; transformational leadership; research; teaching; outreach at the parish, (arch)diocesan, regional, national, and international levels; movements; organizations; writing; and others. The award strives to identify some critical contribution that directly benefitted the community of separated, divorced, and remarried Catholics and ministry to these families. While the original contribution may have been intended for a specific community, the award acknowledges that such service has impact for the larger community as well.*