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**Thank you for the gift you are in my life  
Love, Father Walter**

## **THIS IS YOUR LIFE FATHER WALTER WERBICKI**

Father Walter was born on February 12, 1930 in Toronto Ontario to Marion and Katherine Werbicki, their first child.

Father Walter was admitted to Queen Mary Hospital with a diagnosis of tuberculosis at age six. His parents were very poor so they were unable to visit him often as they needed to depend on public transportation. He remembers the boys in his ward would wad up paper and they would play floor hockey. While in the hospital there was no schooling provided. He remembers seeing children dying. His sister, Mary, was age three when he was admitted and by the time he was discharged four years later a new baby sister had arrived, his sister Stella. On December 31, 1940 Father Walter was discharged from the hospital and was closely monitored.

The next Sunday after his discharge he attended liturgy at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church with his family. His pastor, Monsignor Kamenecky was a wonderful role model. Father Walter was very moved by the way Monsignor Kamenecky celebrated the Byzantine liturgy and shortly thereafter decided he wanted to become a priest.

He told his mother of his decision and she told him that by the time he was a grown man he would change his mind. Father's mother wanted her son to become an attorney. However, as we know today, his desire to become a priest only strengthened, he never changed his mind. He prayed to become a loyal and holy priest and this June he will have served the Lord for 52 years.

Father Walter attended De La Sale High School and was taught by the Christian Brothers. He was a very good student and graduated with high honors. He applied to his Bishop, Bishop Borecky, for admission into studies for the priesthood. He was accepted and assigned to the Seminaire de Philosophie in Montreal Quebec, a Roman Rite Seminary. He studied at the Seminaire de Philosophie for two years and then went on to the Grand Seminaire, also in Montreal, for two more years of study.

He had to take one year off from his studies due to illness and then he was as assigned to St. Augustine Seminary in Toronto where he completed his studies.

He was ordained on June 30, 1957 by Bishop Isidore Borecky. Father Walter studied at Roman Rite Seminaries and taught himself the Byzantine Rite Liturgy. His first assignment was at St. Josaphat's Cathedral in Toronto where he was ordained. He served two separate assignments in Montreal, assigned to Windsor, then a pastor in Timons. Among other assignments Father Walter served as a chaplain at St. Pius IX High School in Montreal Quebec. This is the school where he received his ring as a gift from the students. The story behind the ring is a very special one. Please ask Father Walter to share it with you.

In the summer of 1973 Father Walter was asked to go to Houston, Texas for two months to help out there until a new priest was assigned. These two months extended to eight years.

In 1983, he was transferred to Lackawanna, N.Y. to serve as pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Lackawanna and St. Basil's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Lancaster, N. Y. He met Father Frank Barone (now deceased) in Lackawanna and sought permanent bi-ritual faculties in 1983 as Father Barone asked Father Walter to help him at St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church in Lackawanna. Father Barone was a chaplain at Wende Correctional Facility and he invited Father Walter to help there with reconciliation services and mass. This led Father Walter to a fulltime chaplain position at Lake View Correctional Facility. It will be two years in July since Father Walter retired from Lake View but he still has contact with many workers from the facility and they miss him as much as he misses them.

Because of the long drive to Brocton during the winter months he decided to seek residency in this area. In March of 1994 Father Walter moved into St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish as a priest in residence. He is still with us today.

Father Walter is a humble man, a man we have all come to love. As we celebrate 80 years of life with him and thank him for the gift of his priesthood to us, he will most likely reply "It is all of your prayers and your deep faith. I thank all of you with all my heart and soul for you have sustained me and my priesthood with your faith and prayers."

Father Walter has decided that St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is family for him and when the Lord calls him home he will be with all us at St. Mary's Cemetery.