



FATHER AVILA

## Father Bettencourt e Avila

Bishop Daniel A. Cronin was principal celebrant of the Mass of Christian Burial offered Monday at St. Anthony's Church, East Falmouth, for Father Jose M. Bettencourt e Avila, 82, who died Nov. 3.

Father Avila retired in 1974 for reasons of health and thereafter made his home in Falmouth, also making visits to family members on his native island of Sao Jorge, Azores.

A native of Rosais, Sao Jorge, he was the son of the late Joao Maria Bettencourt e Avila and Rosa da Silveira Sanches e Avila. He prepared for the priesthood at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, where he received the degrees of bachelor of arts and lector in Sacred Scripture, both with highest honors. He was ordained June 14, 1930, by Bishop James E. Cassidy.

After serving as parochial vicar at St. Anthony's parish, Taunton, and Immaculate Conception parish, New Bedford, he was assigned in 1937 to graduate studies in American history at Harvard University and to courses leading to a master's degree at Catholic University.

Returning to parish ministry he was again parochial vicar at Immaculate Conception, New Bedford, then at Our Lady of Health, Fall River. In Fall River, Father Avila also taught at the former College of the Sacred Hearts.

In 1944 he was named pastor of St. Anthony's, East Falmouth, where, as a 1974 Anchor article recounts, he turned "a clean, neat and adequate church into something of artistic beauty," commissioning Henrique Medina, a noted Portuguese artist, to paint the scene of the Marian apparition at Fatima to be hung above the altar.

The beauty of the painting led to redecoration of the entire church and it "soon became well worth the tourist's stop and the growing pride of the parishioners."

Father Avila remained at East Falmouth until 1964, when he was appointed pastor at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, New Bedford. There he brought the parish to leadership of the diocese in contributions to the Catholic Charities Appeal and other diocesan endeavors.

He also served New Bedford's large Portuguese immigrant community through establishment of English as a Second Language and Americanization programs and development of a bilingual library.

Father Avila remained at our Lady of Mt. Carmel until retirement.

He is survived by three sisters, Maria Bettencourt e Avila Silva and Rosa Bettencourt e Avila Silveira of Stoughton and Maria Jose Avila Avelar of Sao Jorge; and two brothers, Antonio M. and Manuel M. Bettencourt e Avila of Sao Jorge.