



REV. PAUL JOSEPH BREZA

June 23, 1937 - April 7, 2025

Father Breza's funeral; and burial can be seen on McCormick Funeral Service, Caledonia, Facebook page.

https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?share_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fshare%2Fv%2F1BsEDqLdiA%2F&ref=watch_permalink&v=637830559152671&rdid=RLqUiM2eU7rzoHg1

Rev. Paul Joseph Breza

Rev Paul J. Breza, age 87, of Winona, died peacefully at Valley View Healthcare in Houston, MN, on April 7, 2025. He was born June 23, 1937, in Winona to Joseph and Alice (Pehler) Breza. Father attended St. Stanislaus Grade School and Cotter High School, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Winona from 1955-1959, and Saint Paul Seminary in Saint Paul Minnesota from 1959-1963. He was ordained at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Winona on June 1, 1963.

Father sometimes declared "I love to work." He loved to walk into the bluffs, hunting or not. He loved to row himself and his father to the places on the Mississippi where they knew the fish would bite.

He worked as an assistant and pastor, gradeschool and high school religion teacher across the Diocese: St. Stans-Winona, St. Columbanus-Blooming Prairie, Pacelli High School-Austin, St Francis of Assisi and Lourdes High

School-Rochester, St. John the Baptist and Loyola/Good Counsel -Mankato, Chaplain, St. Mary's College-Winona, St. Anthony-Altura, St. Aloysius-Elba, St. Peter-Hokah, St. Patrick-Brownsville, Cathedral-of the Sacred Heart-Winona and St. Joachim - Plainview.

For several years he sponsored "truck trips" that allowed his students to travel for \$1 a day for gas and \$1 a day for food. Those stories are still being shared.

He loved his childhood community in the East End of Winona, singing in the Polish Choir with his mother. (Where he also said his first Mass and was first assigned.) As the first and second generations from Poland began to age, he started to collect their stories and, with his mother, he wrote a Kashubian Language Dictionary. He organized a celebration of Polish Heritage to address the painful aspects of immigration and bias that many experienced. These efforts evolved into the Polish Museum, as well as a student exchange program with our Sister City, Bytow Poland. The city of Bytow took the rare step of making him an Honorary Citizen. He treasured his friends there.

In the same years he began to collect artifacts and photos of parishes that were closed. He understood that many parishioners treasured their parish and considered it "home". This evolved into a collection of religious articles from across the Diocese that he displayed for education and he sent some back to parishes. Perhaps his favorite work was the care of his apple orchard. In all these endeavors he recruited so many of us to volunteer and enjoy. And in this way he expanded his pastoral care.

In recent years he was less able physically and he mourned his ability to work hard, but appreciated the home care he received right in his orchard and treasured the many visitors. He enjoyed gifts from gardens, fishing trips and baking; mostly treasuring the stories of former students and parishioners. The

family is grateful for the kind and expert care he received at Valley View Health Care and Rehab in Houston, MN, for the last week of his life.

He is survived by his nieces and nephews, David Mrozek, Paula (Roger) Sandsness, Gary (Linda) Mrozek, Joe (Doreen) Mrozek, Maureen (Steve) Alms, Tom Mrozek, Russell Rice and Ted Rice; and many great nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters, Teresa (Robert) Mrozek and Marianne (Don) Rice Morrison; and brother, Thomas Breza.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be at 2 pm, Tuesday, April 15, at St. Stanislaus Basilica, 625 E. 4th St., Winona, with the Most Reverend Robert E. Barron, Bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester celebrating with the priests of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester concelebrating. Visitation will be from 11 am to 2 pm before the service at the church. Burial will be in St. Mary's Cemetery, Winona. The funeral will be livestreamed on McCormick Funeral Service, Caledonia, Facebook page.

Father was not a flowers guy but he suggested memorial donations to the Diocese of Winona-Rochester so that his brother priests would know he did not forget them and of course to the Polish Museum.

Condolences may be sent to: Father Paul Breza, McCormick Funeral Home, 205 E. Main St., Caledonia, MN 55921

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 15. 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM (CT)

St. Stanislaus Basilica
625 E. 4th Street
Winona, MN 55987

Mass of Christian Burial

APR 15. 2:00 PM (CT)

St. Stanislaus Basilica
625 E. 4th Street
Winona, MN 55987

Tribute Wall

ME

“ *Fr. Breza helped me to learn more of my heritage as a Kashubian descendant. At one time this was a foreign word to me. So, I thank him for starting the Polish Museum. Many of my elder relatives helped in creation of the museum, and at their events in past years. Jo Caldwell, Norbert and Gert Wicka. I have helped there too as a volunteer and board member at times. Let us hope this embracement of our humble heritage continues. RIP Fr. Breza, please continue to help in the survival of the story of Winona's Kashubian immigrants.*

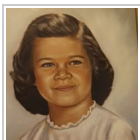


Marilyn Wicka Ezdon - September 11, 2025 at 12:24 AM

SP

“ *When I was 17, back in 1964, Father Breda was my teacher in preparation for confirmation. He was so nice and the best teacher! My dear friend took instruction with me and when we completed the course, we treated Father to a picnic in the park. I was married shortly after and moved to Iowa, so didn't see him afterwards. This was a memorable part of my life and I'm very blessed to have known such a beautiful soul!!*
Sherry Nako

Sherry Nako Prescott - May 08, 2025 at 05:14 PM



“ *Teresa Merriman Stedman lit a candle in memory of REV. PAUL JOSEPH BREZA*



Teresa Merriman Stedman - April 17, 2025 at 10:57 AM

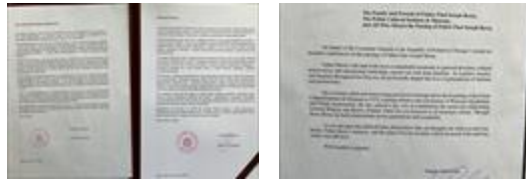


R.I.P. thank you Fr.Paul.

Teresa Merriman Stedman - April 17, 2025 at 10:59 AM

BB

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Beth Briese - April 16, 2025 at 05:01 PM

LM

“ *My memories of this amazing man began when he came to ND to visit the Palczewski families. One of my favorite times with him was when my husband and I attended a family reunion in Winona and he introduced us to the family. He was the only person we had ever met and he made us feel so welcome. We were so impressed that he facilitated a table for my Grandmother's family and her journey to ND. We toured the Polish museum with his guidance telling us about the history of so many exhibits. I will always treasure the annual Christmas correspondence and clippings etc he shared. Sending our condolences to his nieces and nephews and others who loved this dear soul.*

Linda Meyer - April 15, 2025 at 09:14 PM

C(

“ *Father Paul Breza is my first cousin, his mother (Alice Pehler) was my father’s sister. My father’s name is/was Gratian Aloysius Pehler, (date of death 11-17-1960, he is buried at St Mary’s Cemetery in Winona, Mn. Father Paul was a visitor at our farm at Bluffsiding, WI often. He also went fishing with my two brothers, Jim & John. May Father Paul rest in peace*



Carol (Kellner) - April 15, 2025 at 01:53 PM

BS

“ *I knew Breza for many years. Starting at Austin Pacelli to St. Mary’s and beyond. I was blessed to help Breza in getting the Polish Museum cleaned upped. Wrestling with large pipes, and helping to get rid of the Octopus furnace. To know my handprints are with his downstairs at the Museum is so special. Breza will forever be in my heart along with all the fond memories we had with him. Barb (Berge) Singsank*

Barb Singsank - April 15, 2025 at 12:05 PM

BB

“ *3 files added to the album Photos*



Beth Briese - April 14, 2025 at 06:21 PM

SK

“ I was an actor in the Polish film "Papa's House", sponsored by the Polish Museum and Rev. Breza. What a wonderful man he was. He gave me a book about my Polish family and wanted me to go with him on one of his trips to Poland. A beautiful soul, RIP. Steve Kiedrowski 608-406-5597

Steve Kiedrowski - April 14, 2025 at 04:38 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of REV. PAUL JOSEPH BREZA.



April 14, 2025 at 12:44 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of REV. PAUL JOSEPH BREZA.

April 14, 2025 at 12:44 PM

BB

“ 11 files added to the album Photos



Beth Briese - April 14, 2025 at 11:19 AM

BB

“ 4 files added to the album Fr. Breza



Beth Briese - April 14, 2025 at 11:13 AM

ST

“ My condolences for Fr Breza. May he rest in peace. A former classmate,
Jannette (Besek) Theisen

Sara Theisen - April 13, 2025 at 03:37 PM

SP

“ I was married by Father Paul June 25, 1976 in Bowman ND.
I was at the farm and wanted to be alone to think about the big day.
I walked for a couple of miles and was on top of a hill and Father Paul found me.
He talked about marriage and his words said it all.
He is a saint to me and will always remember him.

Stan Palczewski - April 13, 2025 at 03:32 PM

JM

“ I met Fr Paul in 2004 when I came to Winona as an interpreter with the first official delegation from Bytów, Poland. And I was honored to be there later as Fr Paul's interpreter whenever he visited Poland. Whilst being his interpreter I could see what a remarkable priest he was with buckets of wisdom and wit.

He was the one who made Winona and Bytów Sister Cities. He kept saying that the younger generation should be involved if we would like to maintain the friendship between our cities.

So he started a student exchange programme. I was honored to help him and I will do my best to continue it in his memory.

Dear Father,

Our friendship lives on through the impact you've had on my life and the memories I hold in my heart, rest in peace

Joanna Malek

Joanna Malek - April 12, 2025 at 02:46 PM

BB

“ 119 files added to the album Photos



Beth Briese - April 12, 2025 at 11:56 AM

BB

“ 1 file added to the album Fr. Breza



Beth Briese - April 12, 2025 at 11:35 AM

BF

“ *I met Father Breza when I was researching my family history, and the museum was in its early stages. Our paths crossed many times after that. When I offered to donate a family heirloom to the museum, he said he was saying mass in Hokah, with the school children, and I could see him after mass. Attending mass that morning remains an unforgettable memory for me. He was this grandfatherly figure administering spiritually to these children like a father would care for his children. All I could think of was how lucky these children are. Father Breza walked the walk of Jesus.*
Barbara (Thoma) Fossen

Barbara (Thoma) Fossen - April 12, 2025 at 10:14 AM

TP

“ *The Mayor and people of Bytów, Poland purchased the Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses for the family of REV. PAUL JOSEPH BREZA.*



The Mayor and people of Bytów, Poland - April 12, 2025 at 07:48 AM

JH

“ *Father Breza was at Saint Mary's when I went to college there. He was awesome. He was funny, cut to the chase, and had a heart of gold. He was so nice to many of us students. He knew what was important and he took good care of us. Sending much love and gratitude that we crossed paths! Condolences to the Breza family. He was one of a kind!*
Jean Hollenstein class of 1984

Jean Hollenstein - April 11, 2025 at 09:15 PM

BG

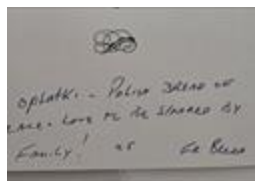
“ *Hi -- I worked in Campus Ministry for Breza my freshman year of college. There were a few of us who would pile into a car some weeknight, and drive out to Altura/Elba to find him. Those were fun visits. Likely as you clean up things now, you'll find stashes of Christmas cards that were never opened. We gave him a hard time about that! I wonder if he ever got caught up on his mail. Happy memories of knowing Breza.*

Barb Carlson Gorghuber

Barbara Gorghuber - April 11, 2025 at 03:10 PM

BK

“ *1 file added to the album Peace Album*



Barbara Hering King - April 11, 2025 at 02:32 PM

JH

“ *Father Paul was an inspiration to many in Winona and SE Minnesota. Over the years, we occasionally visited with him in Winona at the Polish Museum which he and key helpers outfitted from scratch. His congenial disposition was instrumental in expanding interest and support of the museum in the community.*

We were lucky enough to have him bless our marriage and celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary with us in Naples, Florida.

Father Paul will be missed.

Fair Winds Father Paul,

Joe & Bobbie Hering

Joe Hering - April 11, 2025 at 11:39 AM

MB

“ *Father Breza was very instrumental in me converting to the Catholic religion. We will never forget baptisms for our two boys when he came to our house for dinner and we would say grace before we ate with the traditional grace but then to include my protestant family, he would say,, now we will say the Methodist grace. When my dad passed away at Valley View also, Father Brezas dad was there too. When Father Breza heard of my dads passing, he came in to dads room and prayed with my mom and sister and I until dads pastor arrived. Forever grateful for this kind and carrying person! May he forever rest in peace.*

Mike Beckman - April 11, 2025 at 09:34 AM

KH

“ Kevin J Hering sent a virtual gift in memory of
REV. PAUL JOSEPH BREZA



Kevin J Hering - April 10, 2025 at 03:28 PM

KH

“ Father Paul brought together in our related family's life 135 Polish relatives for a new union/reunion at Winona's Polish museum for us Hering 's, originally from Winona & St. Paul to meet & celebrate with, many of which we had met for the 1st time later in our Hering siblings' our relatives' lives! What a memorable occasion and breakthrough accomplished by our beloved Fr. Paul Breza, a "humble servant" and a remarkable example of discipleship to all of us! May his example will always be remembered...

Kevin J Hering - April 10, 2025 at 03:26 PM

JP

“ Rest in peace Good Man. With shared love, Jerry Porter

Jerry L Porter - April 10, 2025 at 11:32 AM

DM

“ Father Paul was my dads favorite person and soon became our family's go to for everything Catholic ,I will never forget the day of his celebration to priesthood and the storm that came out of nowhere to blow everything away at his celebration picnic by the lake , maybe a little welcome from the lord.. Great guy, he will be missed

Dan Miller - April 10, 2025 at 11:17 AM

AM

“ *Fr. Breza was a wonderful priest. When our dad was dying, he was the only priest available in the area and drove from Hokah to Spring Grove on a very stormy, windy night to give last rights. He had never met our parents but my sister, Lorna, and I were part of his parish. He gave great comfort to my family that evening.*

Ann Miles - April 09, 2025 at 05:26 PM

RS

“ *Od urodzenia mieszkam na Kaszubach (w Bytowie). Zawsze czułem się Kaszubą, ale dopiero gdy poznałem księdza Paula Brezę zrozumiałem co znaczy naprawdę być Kaszubą. Po latach, czytając kolejny raz piękną powieść Aleksandra Majkowskiego pt. „Życie i przygody Remusa” znalazłem w osobie księdza Paula literackiego bohatera - Remusa, który doskonale rozumiał Kaszubów, a przede wszystkim żyjąc wśród nich był prawdziwym budzicielem ducha Kaszubskiego. Podglądałem Go i uczyłem się od Niego, pomimo odległości, która nas dzieliła. Dziękuję Ci Ojczy Pawle za naszą znajomość i za Twoje dobro.*

Rysiek Sylka - April 09, 2025 at 05:12 PM

JT

I have lived in Kashubia (in Bytów) since I was born. I always felt Kashubian, but it was only when I met Father Paul Breza that I understood what it really meant to be a Kashubian. Years later, reading once again the beautiful novel by Aleksander Majkowski entitled "The Life and Adventures of Remus" I found in the person of Father Paul a literary hero - Remus, who perfectly understood the Kashubians, and above all, living among them was a true awakener of the Kashubian spirit. I watched Him and learned from Him, despite the distance that separated us. Thank you, Father Paul, for our knowledge and for your good.

Jeff Turkowski - April 14, 2025 at 11:48 AM

JK

“ I was in grade school when Father Breeza was in Blooming Prairie, he always found the time to check in on weekly CCD classes or stop on his walks yo tell a joke or riddle to you. Bless you Father for all you've done and the many lives you touched on your journey here on earth RIP. 🙏🙏
Jean Walsh Koziolk

Jean Walsh Koziolk - April 09, 2025 at 04:01 PM

KA

“ Father Breza was our favorite priest. So outgoing and fun! I'm from Blooming Prairie, MN. We were so sorry to see him go. I know he touched everyone he was around
R.I.P Father Breza
Karla Theuer Anderson

Karla Theuer Anderson - April 09, 2025 at 12:34 PM

LA

“ Father Breza was very special to our family. Sharyn worked with Father as Secretary at St. Peters Catholic Church in Hokah, MN which she enjoyed very much and got to know Father Breza as Pastor and Friend. When we, Leo and Sharyn Armstrong, moved to Roswell, NM with our 4 children, Father Breza was the first one to come out to visit driving his pickup and bringing his dog. Later we moved to Dexter, NM, 25 miles south of Roswell. Father came out to visit us again. Father was a great friend as well as Pastor. I think he thought it was kind of wild, us moving clear out to New Mexico and he wanted to make sure we were doing OK. When our Daughter Tara got married, she asked Father to say the mass and Merry her, which he said yes to and had his good friend drive him to NM to do the ceremony. God Bless you Father, and may your soul rest in peace. I am sure Heaven is cheering and blessing you right now.

Leo and Sharyn Armstrong - April 09, 2025 at 11:56 AM

TB

Father Paul Breza was a wonderful person, full of friendship, life, love wisdom. We spent some time in the apple orchard picking apples. Always picking up the apples on the ground first. Only then could we pick others. We will definitely miss him. He probably sharing memories with family and friends in heaven.

Tom & Mickey Bicek - April 12, 2025 at 11:32 AM

BB

I have never been more grateful for anything than I am for the opportunity to care for Father Paul and to meet so many wonderful people who love him and reached out in so many ways. There were cards and rides and offers of assistance from tilling his garden, pruning and mowing to fixing his orchard equipment. Kind offers to stay up nights with him at the end of his life. There were cookies and fish and smoked meats. There were visits from former students and parishioners, friends from Poland and new friends. To witness his enjoyment and peace was a blessing in my life. It is a comfort to belong in his wide circle of love and it will be a joy to gather with everyone, in person or in Spirit, to celebrate his life. Thank you Father Paul and thank you God for him.

Beth Briese - April 13, 2025 at 02:11 PM

BP

Fr. Breza was chaplain and/or Campus Ministry priest at Saint Mary's College during some parts of the 1970s (when I was a student!) and 1980s. He was, truly, one of a kind. A priest's priest. Nothing was more important to him than the person in front of him. He was very attentive to and fond of the Christian Brothers on campus. How fitting that he died on the same day as our Founder. Saint John Baptist de La Salle died on Good Friday, April 7, 1719. I am sure De La Salle was there to welcome him home. Happy, Blessed, Joyful Easter, Paul!

Brother Robert Smith, FSC, PhD - April 14, 2025 at 01:40 PM