

WWII veteran is diocese's oldest 'altar boy'



At 102 years young, Alexander Trybulski thinks there's a good chance he's the oldest "altar boy" in the Diocese of Saginaw.

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"He most certainly is," said senior priest and St. John Vianney sacramental minister Father Richard Jozwiak.

Once a month, the utility room at Wellspring Senior Living Campus in Saginaw Township is transformed into a little chapel and a priest from neighboring St. John Vianney Parish celebrates Mass for the residents.

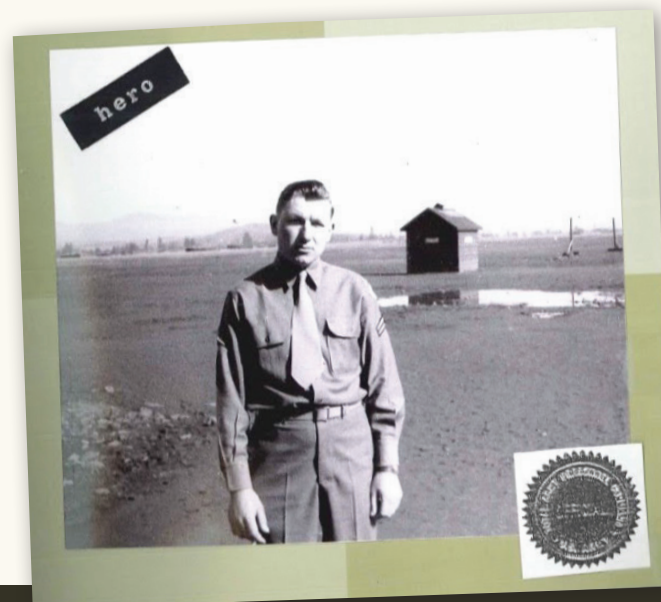
"We're going to name this room St. Alexander's Chapel," Father Jozwiak said with a grin.

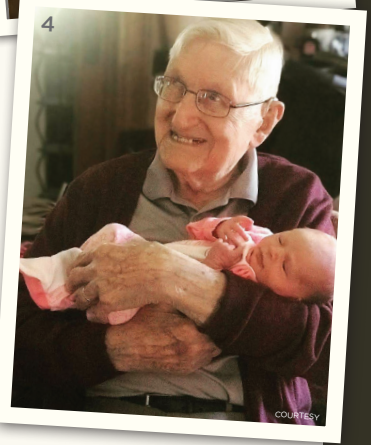
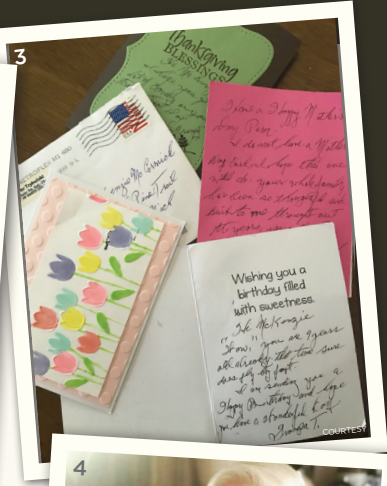
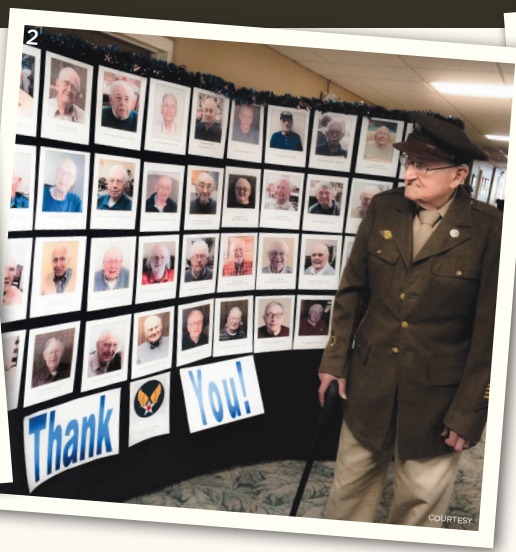
Alex, a decorated World War II veteran, was in his late 90s when he began serving Mass ... for the very first time in his life.

"I thought I would help out," Alex said.

"When I heard my grandpa was an altar server at Wellspring, my first thought was, 'Of course he is,'" said granddaughter Pam McCormick. "He was born to serve our country, he was born to help others and he was born to serve God."

“ *He was born to serve our country, he was born to help others and he was born to serve God.* **”**





Alex is responsible for bringing in a little altar on wheels and getting everything set up. When residents arrive for Mass, he makes sure they have their missalettes to follow along.

“He walks and lives his faith,” said commissioned lay minister Margaret Smekar, who helps organize St. John Vianney Parish’s outreach, including Masses and communion services at the center.

“I usually arrive about 30 minutes before Mass and Alex always has everything set up, already. He’s always the first one there,” Margaret said.

Alex served his country as an Army staff sergeant in the Philippines and Japan during World War II. During the war, he suffered a knee injury in a land-mine explosion, but recovered quickly and was sent back into battle. He witnessed the end of the war, but didn’t arrive home until six months after it had ended.

“My grandpa has always been a hero and role model for all of us,” Pam said. “His faith carried him through the ups and downs of his life. He taught us how to thank God every morning and thank God every night. He taught us how to pray, have faith and believe that with God, anything is possible.”

“I have great respect for him,” Margaret said. “Someone who has seen many challenges and changes in our world in 100 years ... and yet, smiles.”

Alex grew up in St. Casimir Parish in Saginaw. He and his late wife, Susan, had four daughters, three of whom are still living. Alex also has 10 grandchildren, 18 great grandchildren and two great, great grandchildren whom he enjoys sending handwritten notes throughout the year.

“He’s always writing letters to family members, and his birthday cards are always the first to arrive,” Pam said. “My 9-year-old daughter, McKenzie, loves receiving letters from him, as do the rest of the family members. My grandma had always written all of the cards or notes in the past, and we didn’t know what a wonderful communicator Grandpa is.”

In person, Alex is a man of very few words. However, the example of his life speaks volumes. His desire to give back and be involved in ministry – even at 102 years old – serves as an inspiration to all. †

1 and 2. Flag Day celebration in Alex Trybalski’s honor.

3. Handwritten letters to family members

4. Alex holding his great, great granddaughter for the first time.



5. Father Richard Jozwiak gives the homily during Mass at Wellspring Senior Living Campus on May 14.