

# Padua's Brother Kaziu going home

## Franciscan friar, 91, retires to native Poland

A gentle soul is leaving a labor of love in Watkins Glen to return to his native Poland. There, he'll be reunited with a brother he hasn't seen in 60 years.

Brother Casimir Orleanski is a Franciscan friar who served the St. Anthony's Minor Seminary of Padua and Prep School for more than 40 years. Watkins Glen folks still refer to the former boy's school as "Padua," where boys who planned to enter the priesthood or

college received their high school education.

At 91, Orleanski's body is weakening, but his jaunty, almost childlike spirit and cherubic smile remain. A chat with "Kaziu," the nickname

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for Casimir, is like mainlining sunshine.

"Kaziu just likes people and he's loved by a lot of people," said Father Austin, guardian of St. Anthony's Friary, where Orleanski lives in a sparsely furnished room with an old "Big Ben" clock ticking away the minutes.

The friar's spirit has been tested often by a mean world. He left Poland in 1932 to be a missionary in China, where he learned nursing and served in a seminary.

Orleanski endured Japanese bombs in China during World War II while his mother had to jump through a window to avoid being shot by the Nazis who stole the family farm. Orleanski's father died before the war.

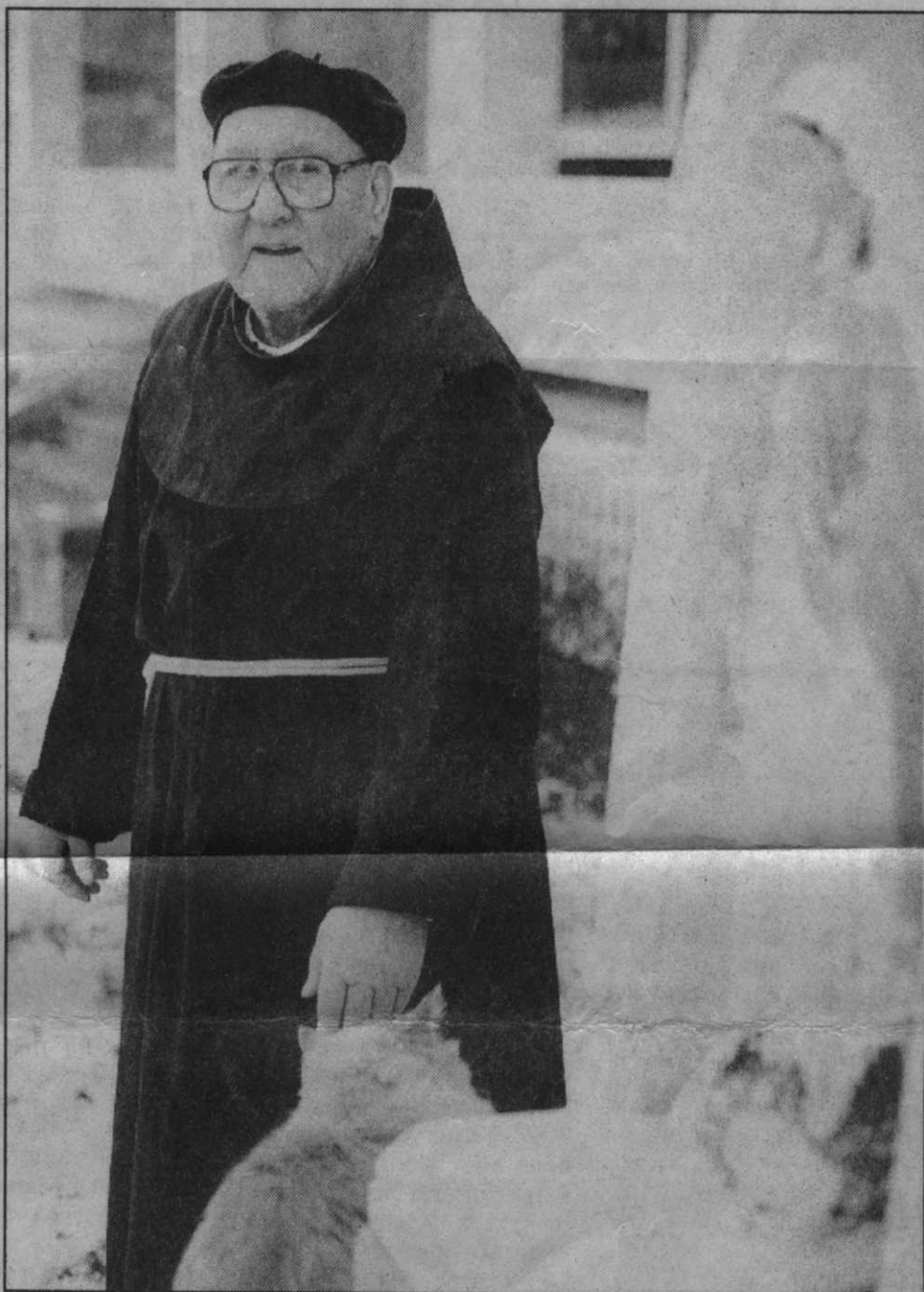
An example of the friar's courage was an incident in China as the Japanese bombers approached. The bishop ordered the seminary evacuated. Orleanski stayed behind with an elderly citizen who was too ill to be moved while the bombs fell around them.

In the morning, a returning Chinese priest embraced Orleanski. "You are a foreigner and you offered your life for a Chinese," the priest said. "I am a priest and I have run away. I am ashamed."

Sent to Padua in the late 1940s, Orleanski managed to go home in 1970. His eyes mist when he tells you that his mother died about two weeks before he arrived.

Orleanski was a father to the boys at Padua, said Father Austin. He woke them every morning, cut their hair on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and tended their hurts in the school infirmary.

If there was any doubt about his devotion to Padua, it was dispelled when he received a large settlement from an auto accident. He donated it all to a project to remodel the school's infirmary.



GARTH WADE/Star-Gazette

**BROTHER 'KAZIU:'** Brother Casimir Orleanski, a Franciscan friar, stands outside his home for more than 40 years, the now-crumbling St. Anthony's of Padua friary, a former seminary and boys' school. The 91-year-old friar, who is known by his nickname, Kaziu, is returning to his native Poland.

Orleanski also has served St. Mary's of the Lake Church in Watkins Glen. "Since before I was born," said the Rev. David Bonin, St. Mary's pastor. "He worked very hard for the church even at his age."

Orleanski stuffed bulletins, trimmed candles, set up for masses and baptisms, and counted the collection, Bonin said. "It will take a lot of people to take his place," the pastor said.

Perhaps Orleanski's departure is good in one respect. The once beautiful Padua is falling apart and that pains him. One building is falling down, others seem beyond repair.

And when Brother Kaziu leaves for home Sunday, part of Padua's heart will go with him.

Garth Wade is a Star-Gazette staff writer. His column appears Saturday.