



MEMBERS of Atkinson family listen intently as William E. Atkinson is ordained Saturday in St. Alice's Roman Catholic Church.

## Celebrates 1st mass

# Quadriplegic priest ordained

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he resumed studies at Villanova. He learned about the Papal dispensation in July, 1973.

Saturday's ordination ceremony took place within the mass. Father Atkinson celebrated the mass with Cardinal Kroll and 12 other priests present on the altar.

Mrs. Joan Alice Mullen, Father Atkinson's oldest sister, gave the first reading from the Epistles. James T. Glessner, a long-time friend, offered the second reading. Other family members participating in different aspects of the mass were Atkinson's sisters, Mrs. Mary Delasandro, Mrs. Betty Harvey and Patricia Atkinson, and a brother, Edward W. Atkinson. When Father Atkinson was

helped into his vestments, the chasuble (outer garment) covered the electric wheelchair he is confined to, almost concealing the apparatus.

"This was not a gift offered out of sympathy but a call to serve," Cardinal Kroll said. "When the petition was requested for a dispensation, it was well documented that candidate Atkinson was not just being consoled but capable of giving service of Christ to the church and to the people.

"There is no question he will require charitable assistance of his brothers but in this he has no choice," Cardinal Kroll said. "He has been ordained not to be served but to serve. By accepting what he must accept, Atkinson might achieve a life of service pleasing to God and helpful to men."

At the mass of thanksgiving Sunday, Father Atkinson's brother Al, a linebacker for the New York Jets professional football team, recited the first reading of the epistle and Norman McMahon, a close friend, said the second reading.

The liturgy for the mass was composed by Father Atkinson and was based on thanksgiving and the love that God has shown.

"The love you have shown me is a love that comes from God; a love that renews; a love that transforms and a love that ultimately unifies the people," he said.

Music at both the ordination and first mass was provided by two electric guitars, a bass and drums led by soloist Rev. Peter Donohue. The solemn

ceremonies were transformed by the musicians and singer into a lively celebration, at times moving the congregation to clap to the beat.

Following the first mass, a party was held at which a rock band and the De La Salle String Band performed, complete with mummars, in a surprise appearance for Father Atkinson at the Knights of Columbus, Springfield.

Father Atkinson will be ready for an assignment by the Personnel Board of the Order of Saint Augustine in about three months when he completes his studies. He has no preference as to his possible assignment.

"I don't want to close any doors by naming a preference. I would like to hear what the board would suggest," he explained.