

Church Member: Deacon Jerry 'Walked The Path And Invited Others To Walk With Him'

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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GLEN CARBON - Deacon Jerry as he was called - Jerry Cato - left behind a long legacy this past fall when he died at the age of 52.

Looking back on people who died in 2020 who forever left a mark, one would be Deacon Jerry of St. Cecilia Catholic Church in Glen Carbon. Mark Noe, a St. Cecilia member, said Deacon Jerry walked a path to Christ and invited others to walk with him. Noe and many others in the St. Cecilia congregation continue to miss and mourn him.

Jerry was a R.P. Lumber in Edwardsville employee for 26 years in sales. He was deacon with the Diocese of Springfield for more than 10 years. He was involved in many aspects of St. Cecilia's Church from Knights Of Columbus and many youth groups. He was also a one-time United States Army member.

Jerry was married in 1990 to his wife, Linda, and they had five children, 10 grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

When someone was having marital issues, often they turned to Deacon Jerry for counseling. He would listen as long as it took and always showed compassion and advice, however he always spoke the truth, no matter how difficult it was to comprehend.

Mark Noe, of St. Cecilia's Church, said Deacon Jerry was committed to the true Catholic faith, regardless of the consequences or persecutions he would face for those beliefs.

"Jerry valued all life unbelievably," Noe said. "He helped us see at the end of the day, we want the truth. We are talking about eternity here he would say, not something to make us feel better. One of the things I loved about him is he went every year with a group for the March For Life. He gave so much of himself to the church and he helped everyone in our parish grow in our faith. I also loved his great sense of humor and zest for life."

Noe continued: "Deacon Jerry's biggest parish commitment was with the children," Noe said. "He treated them all like they were his own children."

John Coulter, another St. Cecilia's Church member, said he worked with Deacon Jerry in Rite Of Christian Initiation Of Adults (RCA) and considered more like part of their family than just a friend.

"Jerry was almost like an icon of the church," Coulter said. "I can't state how much of an impact he had on us. I think about my daughters, they were both heavily involved in church activities in college and I think a big part goes back to Jerry and his influence."

Coulter said Deacon Jerry battled throat cancer for 18 months and it moved to his spine.

"A little over a week before he died, Jerry gave his last homily," Coulter said. "He served all the way up to the very end. The day after his last homily, he went into hospice. I think that speaks volumes about the man that he was. Jerry could certainly be serious but he also had a very funny side. He always tried to be a person to add a little levity to the conversation.

"We lost a friend, a spiritual director for the parish and lost so much more. It will be very difficult to replace him."

Noe closed with some final words about the beloved Jerry Cato: “If you were around Deacon Jerry, you just felt good,” Noe said. “He always found the good in people.”