

Deacon Joseph Gabriele
In Memoriam
1926-2015

On Monday of this week, we celebrated the funeral liturgy of our beloved Deacon, Joseph Gabriele. The church was filled with Deacon Gabriele's family, friends, fellow parishioners, deacons, and priests, among whom were the following former pastors of St. Mary's: Fr. Robert Tucker, Fr. Larry Bock, and Fr. William Metzler. Bishop Christie Macaluso was also in attendance, bringing greetings from Archbishop Blair.

Deacon Gabriel's funeral, as well as his burial at St. Bernard's cemetery, was marked by powerful congregational singing and uplifting music (O would that we would sing like that every week!). While all of us were saddened at Deacon Gabriel's death, his funeral liturgy focused our attention on the central mystery of our faith—the Lord's death and resurrection, which is the promise of our own future resurrection, when we shall be raised to new life with Christ. It reminded us that God's love is stronger than death, and that the power of Christ's resurrection is more powerful than the power of death.

There are few things the church does better than her funeral liturgy. The words and actions of the funeral Mass are so powerful. They highlight and remind us of the deepest meaning of all that we believe as Catholics.

Deacon Gabriele spent most of his life in the Simsbury area where he taught and held many administrative posts in the public school system before becoming the principal of St. Mary's School in his retirement years. He was one of the first deacons ordained for the Archdiocese of Hartford and later became the head of the program for the formation of deacons for the Archdiocese. Most importantly for us, he served for many years as a deacon at St. Mary's Church, where he was known for his dynamic preaching and his love and concern for others.

Those who were privileged to know Deacon Gabriele could not but be impressed by his engaging personality, his ability to tell a good story, his devotion to his beloved wife Marilyn who pre-deceased him by only a few months, and his beautiful family of five daughters, and their families. To enter his home was to walk into a home of love and song where everyone was welcome, because everyone was treated as Christ.

On the day he died, as I anointed and said the prayers for the dying for him, he was lovingly surrounded by his five daughters (Mary Jo, Sarah, Beth, Joan, and Judith) who, after the administration of the sacrament of the sick, spontaneously joined in song to support their father on his final journey. It was a most blessed death; it was one of those moments that remind me why I am a priest.

During his last years at St. Mary's, Deacon Gabriele and his wife Marilyn regularly attended the 11:00 AM Mass, always sitting in the first pew in the south wing. Except for those days when they were seriously sick, they were present at Mass every weekend, no matter the weather, despite their failing health. What a wonderful example they were to us. How much we will miss them.

We pray for Deacon Gabriele and his family, filled with faith and trust that in Christ he is now reunited with his beloved wife Marilyn.

Father Matera