



COMMUNIQUÉ

Funeral for Fr. John Walsh Nov. 16

Montreal, November 12, 2020 – The funeral for one of Montreal’s best-known Roman Catholic priests will be held Monday, November 16 at St. John Brébeuf Parish, where he had served as pastor for 10 years.

Fr. Raymond Lafontaine, the Episcopal Vicar for the English-speaking Faithful, will preside and preach at the 11 a.m. funeral mass at the LaSalle church; Fr. John Baxter, a lifelong friend and mentor, will concelebrate and offer a reflection.

Due to current restrictions limiting the number of persons in places of worship, participation is by invitation only; however the funeral liturgy will be live-streamed and can be followed at: <https://youtu.be/mu9ryFQ8tpk>

Given Fr. Walsh’s long involvement in inter-religious dialogue, there will also be an interfaith memorial service live-streamed on Saturday evening, Nov. 14, at 7 p.m. All are welcome to participate virtually <https://bit.ly/35IDPx7>

“Fr. John,” as he preferred to be known, was an Irish-Catholic Quebecer and a dyed-in-the-wool Montréalais who sought to make a difference wherever he went.

Throughout his 54 years of priestly ministry, he served at almost every level – in parishes, various chaplaincies, and at the helm of diocesan services – while blazing a trail that fostered harmony, understanding and service-to-others among all citizens of good will.

Ordained a priest in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, he directed his energies toward renewal within the Catholic Church, making every effort to demonstrate the link between ministry and the issues and concerns of everyday life.

In that spirit, he embraced the Church’s call for dialogue and collaboration with other Christian denominations and with non-Christian religions. He was a longtime participant in the Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Montreal and was the diocesan representative to the Canadian Ecumenical Centre.

His biblical formation, passion for learning and innovative disposition contributed to his reputation both as an engaging preacher and speaker as well as a pragmatic advocate for those in need. His 22-plus years of involvement with Nazareth House, which provides shelter and accompaniment for adults struggling with homelessness and mental health issues, attest to his commitment to and compassion for others.



A people person, he engaged effortlessly and in the same friendly, reassuring way with politicians and pundits, with the marginalized and with the movers and shakers.

Providentially, the circumstances of his untimely death Nov. 9 – en route to preach at the funeral of a friend – ensured that he received the Last Rites from fellow priest Fr. Lafontaine, who conferred the same blessing upon him as he had faithfully administered to countless others on their final journey to God.

The details of his ministry in God's service to others follow in the biography below.

Biography

Fr. John Emmett Walsh

Aug. 29, 1942 – Nov. 09, 2020

Fr. John Emmett Walsh, ordained a priest on May 21, 1966, celebrated his first Mass in his home parish of Holy Family in the Villeray district. His first full-time appointment was as curate at Resurrection of Our Lord, where he also served as chaplain at Bishop Whelan High School.

Then followed half a century of service and pastoral ministry that included a two-year mandate as curate at St. Veronica (1968-70) and as chaplain both at John XXIII High School and to the Christian Family Movement.

In 1977, following three years of biblical study, Fr. Walsh was appointed co-ordinator of the Christian Training Program, which prepared candidates for ordination as a permanent deacon or installation in the order of service. A year later, he was named parochial administrator of Holy Cross Parish, serving until 1982.

At the same time, he served full time as an assistant to Bishop Leonard Crowley at the Office for English-Language Affairs, Archdiocese of Montreal, from 1981 to 1986 and then on a part-time basis, from 1989 to 1994, responsible for vocations and the Christian Training Program.

From 1989 to 1996, he also served part-time as Episcopal Vicar for English-speaking Catholics in the Diocese of St-Jean-Longueuil.



In 1997, Fr. Walsh was appointed pastor of St. Monica Parish and, three years later, of St. John Brébeuf Parish, from where he retired in 2010.

Though he retired from full-time “active” ministry, Fr. Walsh pursued what he described was a busier life, and was known both for his ongoing advocacy for the homeless and the interfaith ties he forged between various religions and Christian denominations.

He was named to the Order of Canada in 2017. The Governor General’s citation noted that he is “a tireless supporter of various causes,” including his role as co-founder of the “PROCURE Walk of Courage, which raises awareness of and funds for the fight against prostate cancer.”

He was recently honoured Nov. 5 with the inauguration of a fourth home, John’s House, operated by the Nazareth Community, which assists men and women “who struggle with mental health issues, homelessness and addictions.” At the time of his death, Fr. Walsh was CEO of the charitable organization.

An author and former CJAD talk-show host of 15 years, Fr. Walsh launched his memoir, *God is Calling. Don’t Leave Him on Hold.*, at his golden jubilee in 2016.

An avid writer, painter and scholar, Fr. Walsh had recently returned to academia and was working on his PhD in Theology at Concordia.

He is predeceased by his parents, Emmett Sarsfield Walsh and Margaret Bridget Quinlan.

He leaves to mourn his older sister, Marlene Robitaille, and her children and their families: Deborah Graham (Larry) and children Joshua, Claire and Shannon; Raymond Robitaille (Carol) and children Rachel, Anna and Thomas; Michael Robitaille (Stacey) and children Matthew, Jacob and Julia; Laura Robitaille (Baldwin Brown) and children Ambrose and Taetum.

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Information:

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