



Obituary
Archdiocese of Baltimore
Reverend Richard Thomas Lawrence
December 3, 1942 – November 26, 2020

Reverend Richard Thomas Lawrence was born on December 3, 1942 in Baltimore, MD to Albert Eugene Lawrence and the former Dorothy Irene Moran. He was raised as the older of two children by devout Catholic parents. His father was a Treasury Department employee and his mother stayed home to care for the children. Both were active in parish affairs.

The Reverend George J. Larkin baptized Father Lawrence at Shrine of the Little Flower Church in Baltimore, MD on January 3, 1943. He was confirmed at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Pikesville, MD on May 18, 1952. He attended St. Charles Borromeo Parish Elementary school for grades 1-8 before attending Loyola High School in Towson. After graduation from high school, he attended Loyola College in Baltimore for two years before enrolling in St. Mary's College Seminary on Paca Street. He completed a degree in Philosophy before beginning theological studies at St. Mary's Seminary in Roland Park. He was awarded a degree in Sacred Theology at that institution. He was ordained to the diaconate on June 3, 1967 at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen. He was ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Baltimore at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen on May 18, 1968 by Cardinal Lawrence Sheehan, Archbishop of Baltimore. He celebrated his first Mass at St. Charles Borromeo parish on May 19, 1968.

After his diaconal ordination, Father Lawrence was appointed to serve as a deacon at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Baltimore City from June of 1967 through May of 1968. He was appointed an Associate Pastor at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Baltimore in June of 1968. He was appointed a part-time staff member of the Archdiocesan Urban Commission on September 17, 1969. He was appointed as Coordinator, Northeast Urban Area, Urban Commission on September 18, 1969. From June 6 through October 1, 1970, he served as Acting Assistant Director of the Archdiocesan Urban Commission. He was appointed as Temporary Administrator for St. Vincent DePaul Parish in Baltimore City on June 13, 1973. He was appointed pastor at the same parish on August 27, 1975. While remaining as pastor, he also served as the Director of Fiscal Affairs for the Archdiocese of Baltimore for a time beginning in March of 1977 and assisted in the installation of computers at the Catholic Center in the early 1980s. He continued in his

assignment as pastor at St. Vincent DePaul Parish until his retirement on February 27, 2017.

During his time in ministry, Father Lawrence went on to receive a Masters in Business Administration degree from Loyola College in Towson, MD in 1979. He also pursued further studies in Spirituality at Catholic University of America beginning in 1983 and was later granted a doctorate from that institution. He served as a member of the Archdiocesan Personnel Board and was the recipient of the Olier Medal from St. Mary's Seminary and University in Roland Park in 1998. He also served on a number of civic committees including the Housing Code Enforcement Advisory Commission for the City of Baltimore and the Committee to prepare a comprehensive Retail Credit Law for the State of Maryland.

Seminary classmate, Father Robert Leavitt, P.S.S. remembered that Father Lawrence was "...a kind of genius since things came easily to him..." including the study of Latin and Greek. He was a man that believed in continued education, including for himself. He had a "strong curiosity", according to Father Leavitt, that continued throughout his life and was reflected in the variety of volumes included in his personal library.

According to Father Leavitt, because of Father Lawrence's association with Father Joseph Connelly who had studied at the Gregorian University before returning to Baltimore, he had been exposed to what later became the liturgical norms of Vatican II. Father Connelly also protested racial segregation at the Gwynn Oaks Amusement Park this kind of example inspired Father Lawrence as he began his work in the Church. Father Leavitt also recalled that when Father Lawrence was given his first assignment as administrator of St. Vincent DePaul parish that he was told that unless he was able to lead the parish forward in a positive direction, it might have to be closed. It was a struggling parish that lacked funds and needed help in many areas.

Father Lawrence was a strong pastor, according to Father Leavitt and others, whose goal was to empower others. Father Lawrence said, "...the people should run the parish and it should have its mission in the community." Father Lawrence brought great energy to the parish and began attracting Catholics who worked in Baltimore City to become members of the parish community. Once they became members, they were challenged to be part of a committee or a ministry that put their commitment into action. Father Leavitt and longtime friend, Mr. Albert Reichelt, noted that Father Lawrence established parish consultative structures and strongly promoted the education of the laity through education. St. Vincent DePaul parish sent many of its parishioners to St. Marys Ecumenical Institute for graduate level theological education with the parish paying a third of the tuition costs for its members. Father Leavitt said Father Lawrence taught in that program and constantly encouraged the laity to obtain church related education. He fostered conversation, commitment and action in all his parishioners. He also actively supported the education of children, particularly those

who attended Sts. James and John School in Baltimore City by serving on the Board of Directors of the school and raising funds to support its ministry.

According to both men, Father Lawrence had a strong commitment to racial justice and to the poor throughout his ministry, whether he served as a seminarian or a pastor. According to Mr. Reichelt, when asked why he had such a strong commitment in these areas, Father Lawrence told the story of the wake for his maternal grandfather, tugboat captain Tom Moran. The wake took place at home in east Baltimore, and two black men came to the back door seeking to enter to pay their respects to "Captain Tom." When asked why they had come to the back door instead of the front like the rest of the mourners, the men said that it would not be "right," given how the neighbors would react. Father Lawrence's grandmother Dorothy insisted the men enter through the front door even though after that, her neighbors would not speak to her again. Father Lawrence said he was raised in a family that strongly supported civil rights for everyone.

That commitment to civil rights, according to Mr. Reichelt, was put into action throughout Father Lawrence's life and included his participation in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963. Father Lawrence, as pastor of St. Vincent DePaul Parish, was one of the founders of the Jonestown Planning Council that was created to deal with the issues of the poor that existed in the local community, as well as other issues. Over the years, Father Lawrence dealt with politicians and the police in an effort to find ways to help the poor and the disadvantaged who would want to stay at the park beside the parish.

Father Lawrence was a lifelong Orioles and Ravens fan. He enjoyed music of all kinds and supported the Baltimore Symphony. He would spend two weeks at Ocean City with his parents and younger brother (prior to their deaths) every summer and liked to float in the ocean there. He enjoyed his two cats, smoking his pipe, reading the New York Times and anything by Father Karl Rahner, SJ. He was particularly fond of playing board games, especially the "Battle of Midway." He was "eccentric" according to Father Leavitt, and could be both "very blunt" and "very charming". He was an excellent homilist and had a strong interest in Patristics throughout his life to the point that he read all the Councils of the Church fathers in Latin. He had a wonderful memory and was always interested in the broad expressions of religious faith.

Arrangements are as follows (see <http://www.stvchurch.org/> for more information about livestream links or in-person attendance requirements):

Visitation / Viewing

- **Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 7:00 PM**
Reception of the Body at Church

- **Friday, December 4**
Visitation throughout the day (limited in time and number of attendees)

Wake Service

- **Friday, December 4, 2020 at 7:00 PM with Fr. Joe Muth Presiding**

Funeral Mass

- **Saturday, December 5, 2020 at 11 AM at St. Vincent DePaul Church with Archbishop William E. Lori as celebrant with Fr. Bob Leavitt, homilist**

St. Vincent DePaul Church is at 120 Front Street, Baltimore, MD.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the St. Vincent DePaul Parish Historic Trust.

May he rest in peace.

Please pray for Father Lawrence and may all the faithfully departed rest in peace.

May the God grant him eternal rest.

Pray too for his family and friends who mourn his passing.

May the promise of our faith be a source of hope and consolation for them.