



Deacon Donald E. Leach

July 6, 1955 - September 21, 2017

With great sadness, the family of Deacon Donald E. Leach of Canton announces his passing on Thursday, September 21, 2017 at the age of 62 after a courageous battle with cancer.

He is survived by his beloved wife Mary (née Ureel) of 37 years; his treasured children Michelle Leach, Christopher Leach, and Megan (Brian) McDonald; his siblings Robert (Kathy) Leach, Mary (David) Fulton, and Ruth Bloink; and his in-laws Karen Stranahan, Dianne Ureel, and Laurie (James) Hinman. He also leaves behind many nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends.

Don served 25 years as a police officer before retiring as Deputy Chief from the Ann Arbor Police Department in 2003. Don was ordained into the Permanent Diaconate of the Archdiocese of Detroit in 1994. He served at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Plymouth, Resurrection Parish in Canton, St Aloysius in Detroit, and most recently at St. Thomas a'Becket in Canton.

His family will remember him as a faithful servant and compassionate friend. He worked tirelessly to improve the lives of the least among us-- from the City of Detroit to the streets of Kampala, Uganda where he and Mary sponsor a shelter for homeless women. Don also spent over ten years building solidarity between the Church in Plymouth-Canton and Haciendita Uno, El Salvador. His friends, both near and far, always knew they could rely on Don for love and support in hard times-- support that would often consist of equal parts courageous honesty and tender care.

There will be a visitation at Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home, 46401 W. Ann

Arbor Road, Plymouth (between Sheldon and Beck) on Friday, September 29 from 2:00-9:00 PM. Catholic funeral liturgy will take place at St. Thomas a'Becket, 555 S. Lilley Road, Canton (between Cherry Hill and Palmer Road) on Saturday, September 30th at 11:00 AM. Visitation at the church to precede liturgy at 10:00 AM; luncheon to follow. In lieu of flowers, his family requests that donations be made to Bridging International Communities, a nonprofit founded by Don and his family, at www.bridge-communities.org. To share a memory, please use the Share a Memory tab on this web page.

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **29**. 2:00 PM - 9:00 PM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth
46401 Ann Arbor Road West
Plymouth, MI 48170
(734) 459-2250
plymouth@vermeulenfh.com

In state

SEP **30**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Thomas a'Becket Catholic Church
555 S. Lilley Road
Canton, MI 48188

Funeral Mass

SEP **30**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. Thomas a'Becket Catholic Church
555 S. Lilley Road
Canton, MI 48188

Tribute Wall



“ *Deacon Donald E. Leach*

December 07, 2023 at 05:11 AM



“ *Mary, this is Bob Morgan in St. Louis. I had been looking to contact you and Don only now to find he died 5 years ago. He was a special friend at Duns Scotus. Best man at my wedding. All I can offer is our prayers from Karen and myself.*

Robert Morgan - August 17, 2022 at 10:36 AM



“ *I am so sorry to hear of Deacon Don's passing. I live out of state now and had no idea he was ill. Deacon Don was a guardian angel here on Earth, and is certainly spreading his wings now. He helped me through a very dark and dangerous time in my life back in 1997 when he was at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church. He used his expertise as a former detective to help see me through to safety. He also steered my faith through those troubling times to much brighter days. I am now blessed with two beautiful children and a loving husband. Deacon Don played a major role in helping me get where I am today.*

Love, prayers and blessings to the Leach Family.

With Sympathy,

Becky deFrance

Becky DeFrance - October 05, 2017 at 09:30 PM

ML

*Thank you, Becky. We are so glad to hear that Don was able to help you through a rough time. So happy to hear of your lovely family.
Love.*

Mary Leach and Family

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:18 PM

JW

“ *I'm so sorry for your loss. Back when Don was at St. Al's we'd do the backpacking ministry together. He always had some amazing stories to tell. Your family is in my thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.*

Jerry Weis - October 03, 2017 at 06:20 PM

ML

Thank you, Jerry. Don always had great stories to tell!

*Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:19 PM

DL

“ *Over 20 years ago Deacon Don became my treasured friend and spiritual mentor. I am so blessed by the kindness, compassion, wisdom and love he has shared with me over the years. I have learned the true meaning of love for all people by his example and words. To Mary, Michelle, Chris and Megan my deepest sympathy. May God bring you comfort and peace during this difficult time. Love and prayers, Debbie Ley*

Debbie Ley - September 30, 2017 at 09:27 AM

ML

Thank you, Debbie. Don sure loved you, too!

*Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:21 PM

TP

“ Deacon Don was a true champion for seniors being displaced near St. Aloysius. It was a pleasure to work with him. He will be missed but his legacy lives on.

Peace to your family.

Tam Perry

Tam Perry - September 29, 2017 at 11:56 PM

ML

Thank you, Tam. Don so loved the senior citizens and was heartbroken that they were being displaced from their homes.

Love,

Mary Leach and Family

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:23 PM

ME

“ Deacon Don was an amazing kind and generous man who helped make a difference in the lives of the poor and homeless in Detroit. When he was at St. Aloysius, I helped him make new candles from melted down recycled church candles with proceeds going to benefit the poor and homeless programs. It was so rewarding because of Deacon Don!

My deepest sympathy and prayers to Mary and your family.

You are now an Angel in heaven watching over all of us!

Peace be with you,

Melissa Kellogg

Melissa - September 29, 2017 at 11:42 PM

ML

Yes, Melissa, Don is watching over us. Thank you for helping him with the candle ministry.

Love,

Mary Leach and Family

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:25 PM

MM

“ Deacon Don will always have a fond place in my heart. He was the one who helped baptize my two younger children (Mariella & Elijah) and welcomed them to our parish (AMEN to Kathi West’s memories!). Deacon Don held them up in the air to show them off as precious gifts and newest members of our Christian family. He inspired the whole Resurrection Parish community to face the big challenge of raising funds to start and help sustain the La Mora Clinic in El Salvador. My family and I had always enjoyed his homilies. He was a great communicator and shining example as a Good Samaritan. On many Sundays, he delivered powerful messages of God’s love, mercy and kindness! He taught us that it was our mission as Christians to spread the Gospel not only through words but actions. It was his devotion, passion, & charism that led many to be strong advocates for the poor, weak, homeless, and disenfranchised in our society, here in America and abroad. I learned from him that we are all our sisters & brothers’ keepers and neighbors. I am sure our Lord Jesus Christ is welcoming him with open arms, and giving our beloved Deacon Don a big hug!

Marlowe Ma & Family (Emmeline, Moriah, Mariella, Elijah and my in-laws: Elsa & Dom)

Marlowe Ma - September 29, 2017 at 03:00 PM

JE

Thank you for his service and fellowship at OLG... God be with Deacon Don's family.

Jeanine - October 06, 2017 at 02:19 PM

ML

*Thank you, Marlowe, for your kind words about Don and his ministry.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:27 PM

GJ

“ I worked with Don for many years. We had many conversations together during our shifts. He was straightforward, calm and honest which is sorely missing in this world. He was a person who cared. I have thought of him often over the years. God is calling the faithful.
Gary Gifford jr.

Gary Gifford jr - September 25, 2017 at 03:59 PM

ML

Thanks, Gary. Don enjoyed working with you and calling you his friend.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:28 PM

DE

“ Dear Mary & kids:

Barb and I are so touched by Don's passing and so very sad to miss his funeral on Saturday, while we are at the Diaconal Convocation in Boyne. We loved Don, We were blessed by Don in so many ways. And I learned a ton from Don that could not have been taught without being right there, looking him in the face.

You may know that he's the one who squared off in front of me in 1997, thumped me on the solar plexus, and said, "Bob, you ought to be a Deacon!" He must have learned that kind of technique in law enforcement. After I go into diaconal formation, he was my Deacon-mentor for 3 years and then he was my internship-supervisor at Resurrection Parish. What a Francis-man! What a heart! I thank God for Don

Mary, we also thank God for your durable, durable love as his wife. Your beloved was both the Pillsbury Doughboy, in sheer tenderness, and then stubborn like a turnip, in having his own mind. Ah well, Jesus know full well how to scoop Don into his arms. It's where he was always headed. May the grace and peace of Christ cover all the Leach family.

*All our Love,
Deacon Bob and Barb Ervin*

Dcn. Bob Ervin - September 25, 2017 at 01:40 PM

ML

Thank you, Bob. Your description of Don is spot on! He loved you and Barb very much and I do, too!

*Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:31 PM

CG

“ I'm so blessed to have known Deacon Don. My time in Italy was made special by the St Francis of Assisi cross he blessed and gave to me. I have it in my bedroom and look at it daily and think of him in prayer. My heart, love and prayers go to Mary and his children.

Camille Grayson - September 25, 2017 at 01:04 PM

ML

Thank you, Camille. It was a wonderful trip to Italy. So glad we shared it with you.

*Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:32 PM

LC

“ At one of the La Clair Family Reunions (his Mom sister to my father-in-law) I just HAD to joke about him being a deacon and police officer. So, I said we are to call him Detective Deacon Don! No Liz, doesn't work, I'm a lieutenant. I had told him but, that just doesn't roll off the tongue as well. :-) So glad he put up with that.

Liz La Clair - September 25, 2017 at 12:19 PM

ML

Yes, Don had a wonderful sense of humor.

*Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:33 PM

GH

“ I was so honored to have worked with Deacon Don at OLGC several years ago. I will forever remember our morning coffee chats and the wisdom he shared about life, relationships and serving the Lord. Rest in peace, dear servant! My deepest condolences to the family.

Gretchen Hennen - September 25, 2017 at 12:02 PM

ML

Thank you, Gretchen. I know Don enjoyed working with you.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:34 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Deacon Donald E. Leach.



September 24, 2017 at 08:45 PM

JM

“ Our deepest sympathy to Mary, Chris, Michelle, Brian and Megan McDonald. Such a great man. I read a post that talked about him being "Deacon the Beacon". He truly was a light that helped many and filled many hearts with live. Our family will miss him deeply. He fought this battle hard. Now he is no longer in pain and looking upon his family. He will be in their hearts always. John, Joan, Patrick and Ketturah McDonald.



john and Joan McDonald - September 24, 2017 at 06:01 PM

ML

Thank you, McDonald Family! I just wish we had more time together. We appreciate all of your support during this difficult time.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:36 PM

AM

“ *A wonderful and faithful man to our Father and his family. He brought hope and peace to many. He will be missed. Steve and Audrey Monaghan*



Audrey Monaghan - September 24, 2017 at 04:29 PM

ML

Thank you, Steve and Audrey.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:37 PM

SR

“ *I became acquainted with Deacon Don when he served at OLG. He was a bright light and a shining example of a Christian servant. He inspired and served so many. A true brave, bold and fearless man with the biggest heart. The world is a better place with having him a part of it. My sincere condolences for your loss. He is now home with his beloved Lord and Savior...he is watching over his family...and so many others that he held dearly in his heart. God bless you all.*

Stacy Romine - September 24, 2017 at 10:45 AM

ML

*Thank you for your kind words, Stacy.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:38 PM

JE

“ *So very sad for the loss of this wonderful servant. He was a servant to so many in his immediate community and to the women in Uganda who he provided a new life for. What a passion for helping those less fortunate. My deep sympathy is sent to Mary, his children and entire family. Prayers for strength are sent. Jackie Evola*

Jacqueline Evola - September 24, 2017 at 10:24 AM

ML

*Thank you, Jackie!
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:39 PM

JM

“ *I truly wish I had copies of his sermons. They were always the best!!!
We will miss him but will also celebrate his eternal reward!*

Jeanne Michelini

Jeanne Michelini - September 24, 2017 at 07:21 AM

ML

*Sorry, Jeanne, but he never wrote his sermons down. They came from his heart, soul and mind.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:41 PM

SS

“ Meeting Don and talking with you both at the SJ5K a couple years ago was such a pleasure. I could truly feel the love between you, of your family and of God. Don has touched many lives in the most positive of ways. May his legacy and all those wonderful memories keep him alive in your hearts until you meet again one day.

Much love and prayers to you all from the Samulski family

Sharon Samulski - September 23, 2017 at 10:04 PM

ML

*Thank you, Sharon. We so enjoyed walking with you!
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:42 PM

KW

“ We were so saddened to hear of the loss of Deacon Don. Please know that Deacon Don holds a special place in our memories of Resurrection Parish. Last night we shared some of our favorite Deacon Don stories, including the way he would hold newly baptized babies aloft and parade them around the church with a huge smile on his face. On one occasion there were two babies and he hoisted one in each arm over his head to the applause of the parish. We'll never forget his passionate homilies -- they always challenged us to be better Christians -- and his devotion to the poor and homeless of Detroit and El Salvador. We are inspired by his conviction and all that he accomplished to help build the Kingdom. Prayers and blessings for the Leach family now and in the days to come.

Kathi West - September 23, 2017 at 09:44 PM

ML

*Thank you, Kathi, for sharing your memories of Don.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:45 PM

JC

“ *So sad to hear of Deacon Don's passing. My thoughts and prayers for his wife and family. Deacon Don was instrumental in keeping me in the church years ago, I will be forever grateful. God Bless You, Deacon Don...*

Joan Cummins - September 23, 2017 at 08:23 PM

ML

*Thank you, Joan, for sharing how Don ministered to you.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:46 PM

CH

“ *So very sorry Mrs Leach. Thinking of you at this difficult time.
The Heckman Family*

Christine Heckman - September 23, 2017 at 08:06 PM

ML

*Thank you, Heckman Family!
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:47 PM



Kathleen
Carsten
Ofs

“ *It was and continues to be an honor to say that I worked with Don at St Aloysius Neighborhood Services in Downtown Detroit. His brilliance nurtured change. His love for the poor inspired hope. His ability to share his brokenness strengthened the frightened. His faith and trust in God healed those he served. I miss you Don. I loved your wonderful facial expressions--they made me laugh when things were sometimes too serious at St Al's. Thank you for all your love and support you gave to Michael and me. We are blessed to have your homily videotaped from our marriage in May 2015--it was awesome. And one more important memory. You and I are melanoma partners--supporting each when diagnoses came our way. When you came to say goodbye at St Al's the first Sunday after Easter and announced your diagnosis, we were able to hold each other for a short time after Mass. As we embraced I said to you, "my melanoma partner"-- you whispered to me, "Kathy, don't follow me." Know Don you are loved and missed!*

Kathleen Carsten Ofs - September 23, 2017 at 08:01 PM

ML

Thank you, Kathy, for sharing your memories with us. Don loved working with you and Mike. He was honored to be a part of your wedding.

*Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:50 PM

JR

“ So very sorry to hear of Deacon Don's passing. He was truly a visionary and honorable man, and did so much for so many people. I'm sharing this photo of him from our parish staff Christmas "White Elephant Gift Exchange," possibly in 2002. I think he may have ended up taking home the great gift he brought!



Janet Rost - September 23, 2017 at 04:26 PM

ML

Thank you, Janet. What a great photo! Don loved to laugh and have fun!

*Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:51 PM

DW

“ *Mary, my deepest condolences to you and your family - I am so glad I had an opportunity to know him. We will all miss Don; may he rest in peace.*

Deacon Jim Ward - September 23, 2017 at 03:44 PM

ML

*Thank you, Jim.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:52 PM

AB

“ *My sincerest condolences to the family of Deacon Don. May you find comfort in God’s promise of eternal life. May perpetual light shine upon him. He served the Lord with all his heart and did so much good for others at OLG, St Aloysius, Detroit and his giving abroad to those less fortunate.*



Anita Berger - September 23, 2017 at 03:33 PM

ML

*Thank you for your kind words, Anita.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:53 PM

AR

“ *I met Don as the leader of one of his delegations to El Salvador, and I feel so blessed to have known him here. What a caring, dedicated, fun, and gentle individual. His life stands as a testimony to what we can all do by simply taking advantage of the opportunities life gives us to care for one another. I know he touched so many here in El Salvador and elsewhere, myself included. I am so sad to learn of his passing but comforted to know he made the absolute most of the time he was given here. If there is any way I can support the family from here in El Salvador please let me know. Love and peace to you all. -Allison Ramirez*

Allison Ramirez - September 23, 2017 at 03:31 PM

ML

*Thank you, Allison. How Don loved his El Salvador family.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:55 PM

CH

“ My husband, Charles, and I didn't know Don. We met him once at the wedding of mutual friend's daughter. From all I have been told about this man and his family, they are truly God's servants! God bless you at this difficult time of saying Goodbye (for now.). You will see him again. 🙏
Chuck and Nancy Hooper

charles and nancy hooper - September 23, 2017 at 01:55 PM

ML

Thank you, Chuck and Nancy.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:55 PM

CH

“ Charles And Nancy Hooper lit a candle in memory of Deacon Donald E. Leach



charles and nancy hooper - September 23, 2017 at 01:47 PM

KS

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Kathy Saradarian - September 23, 2017 at 12:44 PM

ML

*Love the photos, Kathy!
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:57 PM

KS

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



Kathy Saradarian - September 23, 2017 at 12:41 PM



“ *I send my heartfelt condolences to the family, my friend, my soldier, my dad, the only human being I have ever met has gone forever, never to see him again, it's really painful, words can't explain what it feels.*

You are the reason for what I am today and you will always be part of life. Love Don.

May your soul rest in peace my dearest.

Nassolo Jojo - September 23, 2017 at 11:00 AM

ML

*Thank you, dear.
Love,
Mary Leach and Family*

Mary Leach - October 24, 2017 at 07:57 PM