



Reverend Jerome John Duke

August 9, 1942 - January 21, 2024

Reverend Jerome J. Duke, age 81, peacefully passed away on January 21, 2024 at Mount St. Joseph. Rev. Jerry was born on August 9, 1942 in Cleveland, OH to John and Katherine Duke, (both deceased).

Rev. Jerry attended Borromeo Seminary for 4 years and St. Mary's Seminary for 3 years prior to his ordination 60 years ago. Rev. Jerry is now at his assigned post at Spirit Ranch, his cabin. He enjoyed spending his pasttime praying on his mountain where Spirit Ranch is located. He was a priest at Christ the King Church in East Cleveland for many years. For over 30 years, he was pastor at St. Cyril & Methodius Church in Lakewood. He then went to Our Lady of Angels in Rocky River before retiring. Rev. Jerry was known to be a straight shooter. He retired to enjoy time at his cabin, and with family and friends. He will be greatly missed. He'll always be remembered by saying Grace, "Rubba dub dub, thanks for the grub, Yay God, Let's eat".

Rev. Jerry is survived by siblings, Carol Swartzwelder, Larry Duke, Betty Petranek, Andrew Duke, and Ronald (Cindy) Duke. His Nieces and nephews, Wanda (Jarryn Avery) Swartzwelder, Laura (Dan) Piltz, Eric (Raymond Rodriguez) Swartzwelder, Rose (Dennis) Kunc, John Duke, Tom (Michele) Crissey, Mary Crissey, Andrew (Tina) Crissey, Steven (Jennafer) Crissey, Chris Petranek, Tony Petranek, Jennifer (Mahdi) Kaabneh, Christy (Nick) Crow, Katie (Wes) Rowan, Nicole Duke and Jason (Leann) Duke, his many

great nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his sibling, Sue Crissey, and his niece, Pauline Crissey, and his nephew, Mike Crissey.

His visitation will be held Sunday, January 28, 2024 from 1-5 PM at Monreal Srnick Funerals & Cremations, 35400 Curtis Blvd., Eastlake.

Funeral Mass for Rev. Jerome Duke will be held at 11am Monday, January 29, 2024 at St. Mary Magdalene Church, 32114 Vine St., Willowick.

As an expression of sympathy and at the request of Father Jerry, you can donate to - Spirit Ranch for sole purpose of maintenance and upkeep for future generations.

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

JAN **29**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. Mary Magdalene Church
32114 Vine St.
Willowick, OH 44095

Tribute Wall

PS

“*Fr. Duke was truly a Cleveland legend and a community pillar at SS. Cyril and Methodius. His stirring and relatable homilies, which he delivered with his characteristic booming voice and good (sometimes self-deprecating) humor, attracted crowds of Catholics from all over Lakewood (especially Birdtown and the East End) as well as Cleveland's West Side. In fact, when Fr. Duke was doing Mass, you knew it was going to be well-attended (even the early Sunday morning Masses). His homilies were not only relatable to his parishioners, but also socially relevant, attacking selfishness, greed, war, injustice, and consumerism in society (his biting criticism on the culture of "what's in it for me?" especially comes to mind). I especially fondly remember one of his great Christmas eve homilies, where he read Leo Tolstoy's short story "Where Love Is, God Is" (on Christmas eve, he would often read such homilies from a rocking chair).*

Overall, the man truly lived Christ's mission, as well as the Christian faith and community service more generally, with his thick white beard, trademark Stetson hat and cowboy boots, love for Slovak-style stuffed cabbage, and penchant for baking multitudes of apple pies. He embodied everything that characterized the best of Cleveland and Birdtown: tough, ethnic, and "tell-it-like-it-is" working class (sometimes he liked to liken himself to Yosemite Sam). He will be greatly missed by many Clevelanders, but his legacy will forever live on in all the people who he touched.

RIP Fr. Duke and, to quote another Cleveland legend, Bob Hope, "thanks for the memories."

*Cheers,
Pietro A. Shakarian*

Pietro A. Shakarian - January 29, 2024 at 04:35 AM

CS

“ Oh Fr. Duke - I am so pleased that we were able to visit so often recently at Mt. St. Joseph! It was so good to catch up on those days when you were pastor and I was your chosen principal of SS C&M School.....so any good memories:)

You had such a wonderful influence on both the Shakarian family and on the lovely SS. Cyril & Methodius families. So many of us followed you when you left SS. C&M. Fr. Duke, you have earned a place in many hearts forever. Enjoy the face of God !

- Berj and Carol Shakarian and family

Carol Shakarian - January 28, 2024 at 03:23 PM

GM

“ *When we think of Father Duke it is as if we were part of his own large extended family, and he was certainly part of ours! Maybe it was that affinity for a large family that he embraced ours so readily. We are one of a multitude of families his ministry touched deeply and profoundly. Father Duke knew us as students at St Cyril and Methodius where he was an inspirational priest shepherding youth with altar boy camps for fathers and sons in Vermont and Spirit Ranch when it was little more than a natural sacred piece of heaven nestled in the deep woods of PA. He counseled us through challenges, humored us constantly with his sometimes quirky sense of humor, inspired us as an expert and memorable homilist. He buried our parents/ grandparents, baptized and confirmed us, and celebrated our weddings. We in turn helped to build Spirit Ranch with a cadre of mostly men and boys appreciative of his care and concern for his parish and his parishioners, and his passionate vision for Spirit Ranch to become a place of wonder, spiritual awakening, camaraderie, and peacefulness for youth seeking answers, friendship, and a safe haven. We think of the man as comfortable in vestments for the Easter Vigil, as in jeans, boots, poncho, and leather hat... w/ a cigar on the porch of the cabin where he always seemed most at peace. Fr. Duke was a man's man, sometimes defiant, always righteous. Ours is one loss shared by multitudes. We mourn with his family and know the grief of losing this beloved brother, friend, and Saint who walked among us. With love, the Hastings, McKinnon, McGrath, Wentz, Brieck, Asbury, and Walling families.*

greg mcgrath - January 28, 2024 at 11:08 AM

JD

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



John Deininger - January 28, 2024 at 09:08 AM

JH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



John Harris - January 27, 2024 at 09:03 PM

JH

Fr. Duke presiding at my wedding

John Harris - January 27, 2024 at 09:05 PM

PD

“ *Thank you Fr. Jerry for 62 years of great memories of our friendship, our faith, our families, our fun and our sorrows. You were a special friend who taught by words and actions that I will always remember. God bless you as you now rest in His peace after a well lived life of service. AMDG my friend!*

Paul Deitrick - January 27, 2024 at 04:31 PM

RK

“ My wife Marilyn and I wanted to express our deepest Sympathy to the Family and Friends of Father Duke. We were very pleased to have Father marry us in 1988. My late brother Jim, and I had served many Masses for Father when we were both much younger. Father has done so much to keep SS C&M operating as a successful Parish over those many years he spent at our Church as both a Priest and Pastor. Father made every Event and Holy Day at the Parish a Special Day. We all have very fond memories of his Christmas and Easter Services and the Apple Walnut Pies that he baked for our Holiday Bake Sales. We were very glad that he was able to finally Retire and spend some Golden Years at his own Cabin in the woods of Pennsylvania. He certainly had earned it. My God Bless and keep you close. Marilyn & Ron Kulikowski Lakewood, Ohio

ronald m. Kulikowski - January 27, 2024 at 02:28 PM



“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Reverend Jerome John Duke.



January 27, 2024 at 11:44 AM

TF

“ The Collins and Heller families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Reverend Jerome John Duke.

The Collins and Heller families - January 27, 2024 at 11:44 AM

KR

“ *Katie L Rowan lit a candle in memory of Reverend Jerome John Duke*



Katie L Rowan - January 27, 2024 at 01:38 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memory Video



Monreal Srnick Funerals & Cremations - January 26, 2024 at 04:14 PM

PD

“ *Sometime in the mid 60's. Wally Hyclak, Frank Flauto, Jerry Duke, Paul Deitrick on vacation at Old Orchard Beach, Maine. We laughed the whole time and brought back live lobsters.*



Paul Deitrick - January 26, 2024 at 11:59 AM

LK

“ *Lisa K. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Reverend Jerome John Duke.*

Lisa K. - January 26, 2024 at 01:02 AM

KS

“ Karla S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Reverend Jerome John Duke.

Karla S. - January 24, 2024 at 11:25 PM

DM

“ Father Duke was always an inspiration to me. When I think of God I think of him. He was truly a Man of God! He baptized me, did my first Communion and my Confirmation. RIP Father Duke.

Donna Malave - January 24, 2024 at 10:06 PM

RS

“ I will never forget Fr Duke taking off his cowboy hat and saying the prayers at my father's graveside. I was assigned to Sts Cyril and Methodious for my field education. Jerry's down to earth approach to ministry made an impression on me. Staying at the cabin in PA. Attending 40 hours devotion and dinner with the priests. Many more memories. Welcome good servant into paradise.

Rev Edward Schwet - January 24, 2024 at 06:53 PM

DD

“ Please see the "Deitrick" photo album. Some great memories with Fr. Duke from these pictures.
Thanks for these and all the other fond memories Fr. Duke shared with the Deitrick and Brunner Families. We enjoyed many good times over the years together, so much so that Fr. Jerry became one with our families.
Fr. Jerry was at my parent's house when I left for Vietnam, and on that day he bestowed on me a blessing to keep me safe. I will never forget his thoughtfulness that day because that event gave some peace and comfort to my parents. Peace.

Donald Deitrick - January 24, 2024 at 11:18 AM

DD

“ 3 files added to the album Deitrick



Donald Deitrick - January 24, 2024 at 11:02 AM



“ Jerome and I were in the seminary at the same time. I've lost touch over the years. Rest in peace, Jerome. Ed Dietrich

Edward Dietrich - January 24, 2024 at 02:42 AM

DP

“ Fr. Duke touched many many lives over his fruitful years as a priest. I was one of those so blessed to have the opportunity to have him in my life, as well as, my family's lives dating back into the late 60's and early 70's. A few fond memories are when he was a part of Search with high school students, when he was the chaplain at St Edward High School in Lakewood, and when he was the support and friend to our family as he buried both my grandfather then grandmother from SS C&M. He was truly a compassionate, loving and understanding individual who epitomized the life of a true Christian. I am honored to have this opportunity to share with you what Fr. Duke said from the pulpit at my grandfather's funeral in 1982. To paraphrase he said 'it is okay to shed a selfish tear because he will be missed. But for him be happy because he now knows happiness like we can never imagine here on earth. And finally he will never totally be gone and we will keep him with us in our hearts if we continue to live those characteristics, those attributes we so admired about him throughout our own lives.'

Dr. Jeffery Przybysz - January 23, 2024 at 08:45 PM

JH

“ Fr. “Grizzlie Adam’s” Duke was a man of Gods green earth, whether it be forests, canyons, lakes, deserts, oceans or mountains. He loved them all. I will never forget our trips out West or to the South. I’m thankful he fulfilled his dream of Spirit Ranch which he shared with us but also enjoyed his solitude on the mountain. You will be missed my friend as you enjoy the reward that awaits you.

Joseph Hollo - January 23, 2024 at 06:48 PM

JH

“ Joseph H. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Reverend Jerome John Duke.

Joseph H. - January 23, 2024 at 06:25 PM

SM

“ Father Duke was and will be part of my life...and the live's of all of us at SS C&M. He was a positive role model when I needed one badly in life. A priest that was down to earth and you could talk too....God bless you Father on your journey home.

Steven J Montell - January 23, 2024 at 01:15 PM

JL

“ Father Duke blessed our little community so much at Highpoint Acres, graciously hosting us at his beautiful property that he loved so dear, leading us in prayer, and encouraging us with his kindness and humor. He will be much missed. James and Jenny LoBianco, Highpoint Acres.

Jenny LoBianco - January 23, 2024 at 12:36 PM

BK

“ Jerry and I arrived at Borromeo High School in our Junior year of High School at the same time and were in the same class through ordination. While I would say, we were not especially close, I appreciated his "dance to a different drummer." After ordination we lost track of each other, being at other ends of the Diocese of Cleveland, until I left the ministry to marry in 1985.

I have heard it said, "The priesthood is the greatest fraternity in the world." I would say, "Not so much." While Jerry will have the pomp and circumstance of an "ecclesiastical funeral," it was you, his family, who looked out for him toward the end of his life. I understand that you were involved in "rescuing him" several times when he became lost in PA. You eventually brought him back to the Cleveland area finding a pace in the long term care facility where he died. I commend you for your compassionate action.

While I am unable to attend the funeral and share my sympathy personally, I wanted you to know my appreciation of your efforts to help Jerry along the way. My faith tells me that "while his life is changed, it is not ended, and we will see him again.

Bob Krasen - January 23, 2024 at 12:09 PM

JC

“ A Quiet and dedicated servant. Shared discussions with Jerry parochial and spiritual in high school. I now have a saint for help in heaven. Prayers and love

jan Camera - January 23, 2024 at 10:27 AM

SJ

“ Steven J. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Reverend Jerome John Duke.

Steven J. - January 22, 2024 at 10:35 PM

BR

“ God Bless you Father Duke. We still live and miss you at SS Cyril and Methodius Church, you were one of us and we loved you. Thank you for caring. Rest in Peace. ❤️🙏🙏

Bob Ruebsteck



Bob Ruebsteck - January 22, 2024 at 09:40 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Reverend Jerome John Duke.



January 22, 2024 at 09:27 PM

TC

“ Tom & Jenni Chesnick planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Reverend Jerome John Duke.

Tom & Jenni Chesnick - January 22, 2024 at 09:27 PM