

Deacon 'Monti' Montalto promoted respect for life, shared immense spirit

Retired Deacon Richard W. Montalto, whose bounding spirit enlivened the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the pro-life movement and his work in politics and the insurance business, died June 21 at age 81 at his home in New Freedom, Pa.

Known to many as "Deacon Monti," he followed his profession and faith to Baltimore, where he pursued the permanent diaconate at a time when, he said, it was not available in Pennsylvania. He was ordained for the archdiocese in 1987.

He developed a lasting friendship with Monsignor James P. Farmer, pastor of St. Thomas More in Baltimore, through their work in the pro-life movement.

"He was a man of enormous integrity, and service," Monsignor Farmer said. "His life was dedicated to service. He served his country, his family and the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

"He constantly was helping people, and had an extreme interest in making society better. If he saw something wrong when he was out and about, he would call an elected official and tell them, 'You had better fix this.' He had no fear."

In New Haven, Conn., Deacon Monti was raised at Sacred Heart Parish, where the parish school was led by the Sisters of Mercy, and graduated from Notre Dame High School, run by the Brothers of the Holy Cross.

He enlisted in the U.S. Army, and for two years served along the DMZ in South Korea. As an undergraduate at Boston College, he studied under the Jesuits and met Marie Monast, a nursing student.

"It took her five years to agree to marry me," Deacon Monti told the Review in an email exchange last autumn.

They married in 1966, and had three daughters and six grandchildren. He officiated at the weddings of two of his daughters, and baptized all of his grandchildren.

In the Baltimore Archdiocese, Deacon Monti served Holy Family Parish in Randallstown and St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Hampden. His spiritual advisor, he had told the Review, was Monsignor William A. Collins, who had served at Holy Family.

Deacon Monti was active on the archdiocesan Respect Life Committee, served on the board of directors of the Greater Baltimore Center for Pregnancy Concerns, and helped the Maryland Catholic Conference train pro-life candidates seeking state office.

Politics was in his blood. The son of a Connecticut town alderman, Deacon Monti made an unsuccessful run for the State Senate there directly out of college. In Maryland, he managed the upstart 1994 gubernatorial campaign of Republican candidate Ellen Sauerbrey.

“Anywhere you went in the state, people knew him,” Monsignor Farmer said.

Deacon Monti spent 18 years with a major insurance company, and later opened a small insurance business. His biography on missionofthe72.org, a tool of evangelization he founded, referenced the standards of the office with which he began his career.

“Our Senior VP was a daily communicant and our VP of Claims was also a Roman Catholic,” Deacon Monti wrote. “We didn’t pay for abortions, sterilizations, etc. because they weren’t a result of an unforeseen accident or sickness.”

After his work brought him to Baltimore, he pursued the permanent diaconate. In the archdiocese, he was part of an Emmaus prayer group that met on the first Monday of the month at the Shrine of St. Anthony in Ellicott City.

“At the end, he would come with an oxygen tank, and then in a wheelchair,” Monsignor Farmer said. “He’d be gasping for breath, but he’d still be talking. We’re going to miss him.”

Visitation will be at the Lemmon Funeral Home of Dulaney Valley, 10 West Padonia Road in Timonium, June 26, 3-5 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. A funeral Mass will be offered June 27 at 11 a.m. at Church of the Nativity in Timonium, where he had performed monthly baptisms.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made in Deacon Monti's name to Center for Pregnancy Concerns, 442 Eastern Boulevard, Essex, Md. 21221.