

Deacon Rongione, 89, 'always had a good message'

By Maria Wiering

mwiering@CatholicReview.org

Deacon Frank Rongione Sr. died Aug. 27. He was 89. A longtime parishioner and permanent deacon at St. Ursula, Parkville, Deacon Rongione was known for well-researched preaching and leading adult faith formation courses.

He was ordained a deacon in 1987. Although he retired in 2005, he continued to be active in St. Ursula ministries until early summer, when his health began to fail.

With his wife, Theresa, Deacon Rongione had five children, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

He was retired from the Chessie System, a railroad holding company, at the time of his ordination, the Catholic Review reported in 1987. "Over the years I received many benefits I attributed to God's will, so I felt I had to give something back," he said at the time.

Father Stephen Hook, St. Ursula's pastor, said Deacon Rongione was "a gentle person, very faithful. He was a very good preacher. He always had a good message and was a good storyteller."

"He loved to be a deacon," he added. "He will certainly be missed by many people in the parish."

Deacon Rongione was diagnosed with lung cancer Aug. 18. His death "was a little bit of a shock for people; it was not expected," Father Hook said.

Monsignor James P. Farmer, pastor of St. John in Westminster, called Deacon Rongione "a very capable man" who was highly educated.

"He had a deep love of teaching the faith to others," he said. "He taught courses all year long at the parish on Scripture and other spiritual topics."

Monsignor Farmer was pastor of St. Ursula from 2006 to 2010, when Deacon Rongione "was retired in name only," he said.

He recalled the deacon preaching homilies with "a booming voice."

"He would just share with people his enthusiasm for the faith," Monsignor Farmer said. "His homilies were very thorough, very well researched (with an) emphasis on detail."

A funeral Mass was offered Sept. 2 at St. Ursula followed by internment at Dulaney Valley Memorial Gardens.

Deacon Rongione's death is "a tremendous loss because he just gave every ounce of

effort he had to people's spiritual welfare," Monsignor Farmer said. "He cared about people very deeply and he tried to share his love for Jesus with those around him."
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