



SSS Grapevine

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Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament
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Celebrating a Life Well-Lived for 96 Years – Father Roger C. Bourgeois SSS (1930-2026)



Father Roger died peacefully in his sleep on August 22, 2026. Born August 16, 1930, in Gardner, Massachusetts, to Clifford and Lena Bourgeois. He was the oldest of two; his brother Gene and his wife Carlie, and their son Gary, preceded Father Roger in death. He is the uncle of Debbie Behr and the great uncle of Micayla (*Sean*) Moore, Monica Behr, and Lauren Bourgeois Ross.

Father Roger professed vows in the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (SSS) on September 8, 1952, and was ordained a priest on September 21, 1957. Known for his meticulous attention to detail and care for the liturgy, community, parish, and personal friends, he served the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in the Philippines for 10 years as parochial vicar and novice director (1958-1968). Returning to the United States, he served as local superior of the Highland Heights SSS Community at Saint Paschal Baylon (SPB), Highland Heights, OH (1968-1971, 1999-2013). He served as parochial vicar several times: at Saint Frances de Sales, Parma, OH (1971-1974); Saint Paschal Baylon (1974-1982); Downtown Saint Joseph, San Antonio, Texas (1982-1987 and 1992-1994); and Saint Charles Borromeo, Albuquerque, New Mexico (1994-1999). He was pastor of Sacred Heart, Salt Lake City, Utah (1987-1992), and parochial vicar and chaplain of Saint Ann Shrine (2013 until his death). Father Roger also held other SSS leadership roles, including provincial vicar (2002-2006).

Saint Paschal Baylon Catholic Church hosted all the liturgies on Wednesday and Thursday,

August 26 and 27, 2026. Visitation was Wednesday, 4:00 pm-7:00 pm; Evening Prayer – Office of the Dead, on Wednesday, 4:00 pm; Vigil for the Deceased on Wednesday, 6:30 pm; Mass of Christian Burial on Thursday, 10:00 am; and the Rite of Committal at All Souls Cemetery, Chardon, OH, on Thursday, 1:00 pm.

Contributions in honor and memory of Father Roger Bourgeois SSS and his many years of service may be made to the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Highland Heights, OH 44143.

96 Years of Life! 74 years of vowed life.

69 years of ordained ministry!

Text of the Homily of Father John Thomas Lane SSS, Provincial

Today's readings remind us of the kind of man Father Roger was: a baptized Christian for 96 years, a religious of the Blessed Sacrament for almost 74 years, and a presbyter of God for almost 69.

Roger loved to be in conversation with everyone – and listen – and be in **every conversation with everyone**. Like the disciples bound for Emmaus, he would spend much time on the golf course, bowling alley, and tennis court, walking with one in a journey of faith and sport; he saw sports as a ministry of Christ's companionship, especially when he did not do well or lost! It always led to a meal – a meal that for him was just as Eucharistic as the Eucharist we celebrate around this table. At each of the tables and conversations of his life, he would try to manifest the risen Lord, present in their midst, hearts burning with that joy, love and care. All that exercise, he would say, is probably what kept him going – and all his friendships and special times with people would help him thrive. He would say, "Stay alive!" I always saw that as a saying that kept him alive for the journey of religious life and ministry.

Like Paul said in his letter to the Romans, Father Roger took his call very seriously as a Christian disciple, making sure his life was lived for others, trying to improve our religious life, parish life, the Shrine's life, and the city or place wherever he was. He offered himself and expected others to live for others and, especially in the tradition as a Blessed Sacrament religious, wanted his life and his fellow religious to live "their gift of self," seeing Christ living in him and in others, always living for other people.

Many people wrote to me about how his homilies were excellent (in these later years) and wished he knew how to use technology and save them into a meditation booklet. He worked on them for hours! Always new and fresh each day. He had a lot to say at times! It was

because he loved to read and learn! Avid at reading all the magazines he received, the newspaper, homily helps, anything he could do to improve. And yes, we all know he loved to say so much at times – but he listened, learned, and adapted.

He had many phrases and personality traits that we will never forget – and ways of dealing with his hearing loss, which was difficult for him: he wanted to know and be part of every conversation because he would also say, “I would like to contribute something while I still can.”

In one of the last homilies that we heard him give at our Provincial Chapter a few days ago, many of us commented on how we felt it was his best. He loved to personify the characters in the Gospels and took on the persona of the Canaanite woman, crying out for help, while Jesus extolled her faith. Roger said in that homily something that struck me about how he saw God and his life – and living so long, he could never understand why God would do that. He proclaimed in his regal voice:

Faith is not about demanding that God act according to our timetable. Faith is trusting God even when we do not immediately understand God’s ways. The Canaanite woman teaches us not to give up or change God’s mind, but to let our hearts grow in trust and perseverance. ... Through perseverance, we learn that God’s love is everlasting, and in our humble faith, we discover God’s mercy is greater than our fears and God’s timeline is wiser than our own.

Father Roger persevered in living a good life with us. Now, after celebrating a few 96th birthday parties, God’s timing drew Father Roger home – to the presence he prayed with each day in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

In the book of Maccabees, we remember Judas, who in a very noble way gave stewardship to God. In Judas’ service and stewardship, we hear that he did it in a very excellent and noble way, wanting the sacrifice to assist those who had gone to rest in godliness. We are here gathered in our stewardship, knowing that God has smiled upon Father Roger and said in the quiet of the night, “Well done, good and faithful servant, come share your Savior’s joy!”

And in the style of a Father Roger funeral homily, I quote back to him:

Thank you, God, for giving us Father Roger! Our hearts truly burned when we walked along the way with him. Thank you for giving him to us to see Christ manifested! We give him back to you with that same love and joy!



A beautiful day at All Souls Cemetery, Chardon, Ohio, for Father Roger Bourgeois' burial. Above are our burial plots and altar. Below *(to the left)* is Father Doctor John Keenan SSS, who led the Rite of Committal, and *(to the right)* graduates of Saint Paschal Baylon Catholic School, Highland Heights, Ohio, who now attend an area Catholic high school - Gilmour Academy and served as pallbearers.



New Co-Chaplains Named for Saint Ann Shrine

With the unexpected death of Father Roger Bourgeois SSS, who served as chaplain for the diocesan Shrine of Saint Ann at our province headquarters since 2013, the Very Reverend John Thomas Lane SSS named Brother Thomas Mella SSS and Father William Fickel SSS as the new co-chaplains for the shrine, effective immediately. Father Lane also met with Father Norman Pelletier SSS, one of the priests who presides at Mass during the week, for a consultation – and all three agreed this would be a wonderful step forward. All three will continue to serve in the shrine – two will lead the liturgies (*i.e., Mass, anointing of the sick, blessings, rosary, etc.*). We thank Brother Tom and Father Bill for their continued service in these new leadership roles.



Join the Eymard Pilgrimage – October 11-21, 2027



Experience an inspiring spiritual journey – join the 2027 Eymard Pilgrimage!

Our tour company will not put a package together without knowing whether we have 25 committed folks to join, given the expense and time required to prepare the information for our specialty trip – the Eymard Places are not in “high-tourist-places.” Based on a “roundabout” estimate, the trip would average \$5,000 per person, including airfare and double room occupancy, with a single-room add-on.

Please contact Father Lane by email at jtlanesss@gmail.com to add your name to the list and share your interest in going. We would love to have as many Aggregation members as possible to see, for the first time or another time, the historic sites of Saint Peter Julian Eymard in Paris, Marseilles (*where the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament began*), Lyon, La Mure, Grenoble, and much more!