



Father John Harth

September 8, 1950 - April 16, 2026

Father John Harth was born September 8, 1950, in Mendota, Illinois. He died at the age of 75 on April 16, 2026 in Saint Francis Medical Center in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, following a brief illness, fortified with sacraments and surrounded by family and friends. He was preceded in death by his Father, Otto Harth and his Mother, Agnes (Bildhauer) Harth, and his brother Robert Harth. He is survived by his brother, Mel Harth of Mendota, Illinois, nephew, Jeff Harth of Maine, nieces Vickie Harth, Kellie (Harth) Bucci and nephew Phil Harth of Illinois, and eleven great (and great-great) nieces and nephews.

Father Harth graduated (high school) from Saint Bede Academy, Peru, IL, in 1968. He went on to attend Illinois Valley Community College and Eastern Illinois University.

He attended the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus Ohio, and was ordained February 27, 1987, by the Most Reverend John J. Leibrecht, Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau in Saint Augustine Catholic Church in Kelso, Missouri.

Father John began his first assignment for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau as Associate Pastor of St. Mary Parish in Joplin, Missouri, on February 27, 1987. In August of 1988 he was assigned as pastor at St. Elizabeth of Hungary parish in El Dorado Springs and St. Peter the Apostle

mission church in Stockton. His next assignment began in August 1991, where he served as pastor at St. Canera Parish in Neosho and Nativity of Our Lord Mission in Noel for 10 years. On August 17, 2000, Father Harth moved to the east side of the diocese to take up responsibilities as pastor of Guardian Angel Parish in Oran. In July of 2008, Father John became the pastor of Immaculate Conception in Jackson until his retirement on July 1, 2020. During his years at Immaculate Conception, he served as pastor of St. John Parish in Leopold and St. Anthony Mission in Glennon from 2008-2010. He also served as Parochial Administrator for one year at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Fredericktown in 2016.

He served as a priest of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau for 39 years. In addition to his pastoral assignments, he served as Chaplain of Notre Dame Regional High School in Cape Girardeau, the Diocesan Communications Advisory Board. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus Bishop Timon Council #6405 as well as a dedicated member of Immaculate Conception Assembly #2099 as a Fourth Degree Knight of Columbus.

Before becoming a priest, and born with a voice made for the airwaves, Fr. John enjoyed a career as a television/radio broadcaster. As a high school sophomore in 1965, Fr. John worked at hometown radio station, WGLC in Mendota, IL. He went on to work at several radio and TV stations in his home state of Illinois and in New Jersey. Later he moved to southeast Missouri to take a position as news and sports director at KGMO-radio in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, then spent seven years at KFVS-TV, in Cape Girardeau, before entering the seminary in the early 1980's.

Father Harth has also been an emergency services priest chaplain since 1987. He served as Public Relations officer for the International Conference of Police Chaplains (ICPC), where he earned the top certification with ICPC as a

Fellow Chaplain and was the Editor of the ICPC Journal for many years.

As a priest chaplain he volunteered for the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the Cape Girardeau County Chaplains Unit, the Bollinger and Scott County Sheriff's offices, the Kelso and Oran, Missouri, Police Departments, Jackson, Fire/Rescue and the Cape Girardeau County Emergency Management Agency. He also served as a priest chaplain for the Secret Service in their Southeast Missouri jurisdiction. He found it very gratifying to minister to police officers, emergency personnel and firefighters for many years in southeast Missouri.

Visitation will be 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at Ford & Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. Parish Prayers and Knights of Columbus Council #6405 Rosary will follow at 7:00 pm Tuesday at the funeral home.

Funeral Mass will be 11:00 am Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Jackson, Missouri with the Bishop Edward M. Rice officiating.

Additional visitations will be 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm Friday, April 24, 2026 and 9:00 am to 11:00 am Saturday, April 25, 2026 at St. Peter & Paul Catholic Church in Peterstown, Illinois.

Funeral Mass will follow at 11:00 am Saturday, April 25, 2026 at the church.

Burial will be at St. Peter & Paul Catholic Church Cemetery in Peterstown, Illinois.

Memorial contributions may be given to Immaculate Conception Catholic

Church Building Fund, 208 S. Hope St., Jackson, MO 63755.

Online condolences may be made at www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com or notes of condolence may be mailed to: The Harth Family, 1501 W. Main Street, Mendota, IL 61342.

Ford & Sons Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements in Cape Girardeau, Missouri and Wasmer Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements in Peterstown, Illinois.

Cemetery Details

St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church Cemetery

Peterstown, IL

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 21. 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Ford and Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel
1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd.
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Parish Prayers

APR 21. 7:00 PM - 7:30 PM (CT)

Ford and Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel
1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd.
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Rosary

APR 21. 7:30 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Ford and Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel
1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd.
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Funeral Mass

APR **22**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Immaculate Conception Catholic Church
208 S. Hope
Jackson, MO 63755

Tribute Wall

CD

“ Rest in peace, my longtime friend. You found your true calling, but to the detriment of radio.

Chris Dettro - April 30 at 08:13 AM

CC

“ On behalf of all of the first responder, Chaplains, the Chaplains with the American Red Cross and the DSC group, and all the Sema Chaplain's for the state of Missouri, we want to thank God for the life and service of our brother who was a chaplain in season and out of season! As we have said before, in our Diocese, we stay busy busy with a lot of gifts to a lot of people but often the Catholic Chaplains do not really have an opportunity to meet each other and support each other and we are very Diverse geographically in MO. Thank you Father for your service! Red Ctoss / SEMA chaplains



Cathy Lewis (Chaplain) - April 23 at 01:20 PM



“ Fr John was a true family friend and we will miss him. Our youngest daughter was 6 years old when he pastored St Canera. She holds the distinction of being the first person to make him feel welcomed by hugging his knees after his first Mass with us. Fr John attended many of our girls ballgames and special events. They never forgot that and both asked him to officiate at their weddings many years later. He drove many miles to do that. We will miss his Christmas newsletters, emails, and lunches when he was on this side of the diocese. Oh, and love and prayers to you, Fr John. Rest in peace.

Judy Ceselski Holden - April 22 at 07:05 PM

JP

“ Jodie P. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Father John Harth.

Jodie P. - April 22 at 12:17 PM

LT

“ The first time I encountered Fr. John, I was taking Guardian Angel's Gold Candelabras out of the church and putting them in the back of my SUV, while I had my mind on the task at hand, something poked me in the back and someone said, "Hold it right there, you stealing those things?" When I turned around and explained I was just taking them to clean up for my neices' wedding, there was a big smile and a hearty laughter as he introduced himself as our new priest, Fr. John Harth. He has played a big role in my immediate family's life and wish I could laugh one more time with him and tell him that I would still make a D__N good priest!!!! We LOVE you Fr. JOHN!! Keep us a place open in heaven. Love, Greg and Lori Todt, Joe, Angela, Aubrie & Jordynn Rash, and Heath, Lexie, Lillie, Rorie & Declan Watkins

Lori TODT - April 21 at 09:37 PM

KH

“ .Rest in peace Father John. Always enjoyed his homilies. You never knew what to expect. He may come out singing The Gambler and would have a homily to match the ballad of Kenny Rogers. You never lost interest. His life before entering seminary was so interesting. He was so involved in a variety of ministering to prisoners, firemen, police, and a multitude of other organizations. I will remember him.

Karla Huck - April 21 at 06:42 PM

SR

“ *Father John was a very good man priest. I loved hearing stories about his nephews and nieces at his homilies. You could tell him he was so fond of his family. John had a special connection with my special-needs son, Hunter, he always made him feel welcome and show his pride for Hunter’s accomplishments. Sometimes bringing him to the front of church to tell everyone – like when he was the JHS homecoming king. He knew that Hunter loved attention and applause. Father came to Hunter’s big bday bashes, and always made a point to say hi when out, especially at the JHS football games. Hunter was sure to give him a big hug every time he saw him.*

May he rest in peace and know that he touched a lot of peoples lives your on earth.

Sandy Ross - April 21 at 06:37 PM

SR

Oops. That was supposed to say “man AND priest“

Sandy Ross - April 21 at 06:39 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Father John Harth.*



April 20 at 10:32 AM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Father John Harth.*



April 20 at 10:14 AM



“ *Prayers and deepest sympathy to the family of Fr. John Harth. His memories and encouraging, positive words will never be forgotten. Well done, good and faithful servant of God.*



Alphonse Jansen - April 18 at 11:17 AM

VD

“ *Father John, the sweet voice of God to us. He was one in a billion! I loved going to mass when he was at Guardian Angel. He spoke to each of us in his own special way. We all grinned to see who's pew he would stop at during his homily. (Never sit on the end 🙅) it didn't matter, he could reach the kiddos from anywhere. My special child who could not talk could sure find plenty noises to make in helping Father minister. He told her she could sing or talk whenever she wanted. And she took him at his word. I quit trying so hard to keep her quiet. Having been thru a tragic incident where Father was called in, I was trying to get a friend settled down. As I went to town to get her a soda, he took over and got her settled a lot, and then I told Debbie she needed her BP monitor Ed as she was with child. Father again jumped in to do the extra needed to save the baby and the mother. I'll never forget the help he gave her. So so many talks and quiet help with my foster children who loved him dearly. We will all miss him so very much. But restoring well knowing he is with his Heavenly Father. Please keep an arm around us and give the singing Korinne a hug. 💙💙🙏🙏*



Vicky Dannenmueller - April 17 at 10:20 PM

TB

“ *To the family and friends of Father John Harth I am so deeply sorry. Father John was one of my favorite priest when he served in Oregon Missouri. He will be truly missed by so many.*

Tim Beussink - April 17 at 09:29 PM

LM

“ I met Father John when he was a chaplain for the Jackson Police Department. He was. Such a nice man and he had so much integrity. He made a difference in my life and many others . I know Father John is walking those streets of Gold in heaven. He certainly deserves that honor. Prayers for his family and friends

Leasi K McIver - April 17 at 09:25 PM

CC

Thank you

Cathy Lewis (Chaplain) - April 23 at 01:21 PM

CC

Thank you

Cathy Lewis (Chaplain) - April 23 at 01:22 PM

PB

“ Pastor John, You were one in a million. We loved having You as our Pastor at IC n Jackson and will be truly missed. We were looking forward to seeing you at S.A.L.T. next month, but I know you'll be looking down on us. 🕊️🕊️ Paul & Joyce Burley

Paul & Joyce Burley - April 17 at 06:22 PM

VS

“ God bless Fr John Harth! I got to know him during his Seminary years when he helped with Camp Re-NEW-All. After his Ordination he continued to be involved as a Spiritual Director. He was wonderful moral support during those weeks and years. Fr John was loved and admired by many as is evident in his list of ministries. He will definitely be missed!

Virginia Sander - April 17 at 06:21 PM

RM

“ A voice and personality like John's can never be silenced but will remain in countless hearts forever. Definitely in mine. He wasn't a perfect man, but he was an honest and good man dedicated to providing spiritual comfort and encouragement. He loved his family deeply. I loved hearing about their many visits and adventures. How lucky we all were that God shared him with us for as long as He did. Rest now. The seeds you have sown and nourished here will continue to thrive.

RHONDA METHENY - April 17 at 04:59 PM

AC

“ I remember when Fr. John was first assigned to Immaculate Conception. I had moved to Jackson in June of 2004 to begin my career as a fledgling attorney. Right away, my mother told me I had to go and meet the parish priest. The first Mass I attended, I met Msgr. Eftink. I LOVED him! When he announced his retirement, I cried. I couldn't imagine who could possibly fill his shoes (and we all know how big those shoes were!) Msgr. Eftink baptized my husband into the Church and was so involved in his journey through his conversion. Fr. John was the perfect fit. He married us in the summer of 2010. Our wedding Mass was well attended and I always thought that many of our non-Catholic friends came just to see what this Fr. John guy was all about! I had told them so many stories about him and how he had a voice like no other. I worked for the Public Defender's Office and was at the Sheriff's Department very often. I would frequently run into him at the Jail and I saw first-hand the impression he had on our law enforcement officers in his ministry to them. My family and I have since moved back to my hometown in northwest Indiana. We returned to what I always thought of as my home parish, and I do love it there. But for the past 6 years, I have found myself thinking back on our times at Immaculate Conception and how it had genuinely been my second "home" parish. That was due in very large part to the impact Msgr. Eftink and Fr. John had on my life and the life of my family. I was so saddened to hear of his passing yesterday. The community has lost a truly great man. But our loss is Heaven's gain, and now I know I can still keep in touch with him by praying to him for his intercession. He remains deeply missed. May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace.

Amy (Metzinger) Commean

Amy Commean - April 17 at 03:51 PM

BM

“ *Father John Harth was ONE in a Million. His love of the Church, especially young people was prime in his ministry as a Priest. His down to earth manner made him relatable to so many people. He was always at Notre Dame and made it a point to encourage every student, teacher, coach and parent. He went to many games, concerts and plays and always commented on how great things were done. He always told me how wonderfully the students were prepared for the sacrament of reconciliation and he loved spending time with them, hearing confessions at the school. After hearing confessions he always stayed for Lunch and would visit with so many students especailly his kids from Guardian Angel and Immaculate Conception. On a personal note, I could tell Father John anything and he would offer advice and often told me to calm down and stop being so Italian. The diocese has lost a geat priest and mentor to so many and I have lost a wonderful friend and buddy. Pray for me, Father John I still need your help.*

*Love you,
Brother David*

Brother David Migliorino - April 17 at 02:09 PM

FB

Fr John was an amazing priest for our diocese for four decades, and a wonderful brother priest! May he rest in God's eternal peace and joy 😊

👍🙏❤️

Fr Vincent Bertrand - April 17 at 03:21 PM

JE

I'm a classmate from St Bede Academy. We both graduated high school in 1868 and saw each other at reunions and a funeral. Great guy.

Jack Ennenbach - April 20 at 01:08 PM

JL

Like Jack Ennebach, I, too, was a classmate at St. Bede. He and I were both from the Mendota area with Fr. John hailing from the southern metropolis of Peterstown and me from the northern "city" of Sublette.

We shared many wonderful times together, always filled with his hearty laugh.

I can simply say, "Well done, good and faithful servant".

John Lally - April 20 at 09:13 PM

JA

As a classmate at St. Bede, I got to know "John" and shared a lot of time together. We became friends and have stayed that way through all these years. At reunions, funerals and other get-togethers we have kept in touch. He was a great guy and served his "calling" well. He was a great shoulder to lean on and although he will surely be missed, he will get his final reward for being a faithful servant of GOd.

Jack Arkins - April 22 at 11:13 AM