



Father LeRoy J. Smith

August 25, 1935 - September 21, 2022

Father LeRoy J. Smith, age 87, of West Palm Beach, Florida, formerly of Brooklyn and Old Chatham, New York, passed away September 21, 2022, in Jupiter of natural causes. He was born in Brooklyn, New York on August 25, 1935, the son of LeRoy D. Smith and Mary E. (McCabe) Smith. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brothers Kenneth, Robert, and Owen, and sisters Mary Loretta and Ellen. Father Lee was a graduate of Brooklyn Prep and St. John's University; he attended Pope John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Massachusetts and was ordained by Bishop Francis J. Mugavero in 1978. Father Lee was an Associate Pastor at St. Savior Church, Brooklyn and served as a CETA Program Director and Military Ordinariate Development Officer. He returned to parish work as an Associate Pastor at Immaculate Conception, Long Island City; Port Chaplain for the Brooklyn Diocese; and Chaplain at the Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Lee was a regular presence in parishes up and down the Eastern Seaboard, especially in upstate New York, the New York City area, and Palm Beach County.

Father Lee is survived by his nephews Sean, Christopher, Thomas and Mark; nieces Jennifer and Danielle; great-nephews Owen, Lucas, Brendan, Aidan and Luca; great-nieces Gabrielle, Olivia, Caitlin, Francesca and Miya; and innumerable lifelong friends and acquaintances.

Father Lee's family has planned a wake from 4-7 pm on Sunday, September 25, at Taylor & Modeen Funeral Home in Jupiter. A funeral mass will be held at St Peter Catholic Church in Jupiter on Monday, September 26 at 11 am; for those unable to attend, the mass will be live-streamed on the church website and a link will be available afterwards from the family. A committal service at Our Lady Queen of Peace Cemetery in Royal Palm Beach, Florida follows the mass.

His family would like to thank the wonderful staff at the Trustbridge Foundation at the Jupiter Medical Center Pavilion for their hospice care of Father Lee.

Cemetery Details

Our Lady Queen of Peace

10941 Southern Blvd.
Royal Palm Beach, FL

Previous Events

Wake

SEP 25. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Taylor & Modeen Funeral Home
250 Center Street
Jupiter, FL 33458
(561) 744-2030
<https://www.taylorandmodeenflorida.com>

Funeral Mass

SEP 26. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Peter Catholic Church
1701 Indian Creek Parkway
Jupiter, FL 33458

Tribute Wall

CH

“ Remembering a wonderful, generous, and joyful 2nd cousin, filled with Christian love and a spirited and unique personality.

Chris Hunton

Christopher Hunton - September 20, 2024 at 06:16 PM



“ Father LeRoy J. Smith

October 22, 2023 at 10:17 AM

JG

“ 1 file added to the album Uncle's family photos



Jennifer Guglielmo - September 15, 2023 at 07:07 PM

JG

“ It's almost one year since my Uncle Lee passed away. I find myself thinking about him often -- his great laugh, his kindness, generosity, steadfast devotion to his family and friends, and how we began every conversation the same way. I'd sing out "Uncle Lee!!" and he'd sing out "Jennifah! Jennifah!" I'm grateful for all the light and love he brought to my life. I'll miss him forever. Love you Uncle Lee!

Jennifer Guglielmo - September 15, 2023 at 06:59 PM



“ *The link in the last message is a recording of Uncle Lees Funeral Mass*

Christopher Smith - October 12, 2022 at 06:15 AM

“ EULOGY (PART THREE)

Father Lee approached his faith and religious service with the same qualities and quirks he'd displayed in his business life. Among his papers, I found this passage highlighted. It speaks to Lee's wide-ranging curiosity and open-mindedness. It reads: "And so, the problem which any priest and religious must face is with whether there is a way of living with questions – radical questions which reach into the depth of his meaning – and yet remaining fearless about his choice of the priesthood and the religious life. In other words, can a man be totally given over to this life and yet calmly open to the pervasive ambiguities of its future?"

In Father Lee's case, the answer is of course Yes. Father Lee embraced those ambiguities with energy, passion and a willingness to go anywhere and help anyone. Service was a given; faith something much more complicated and personal. Father Lee was a bit of a rebel, but always in unexpected ways. He traveled to Africa and South America to tend to the faithful there. He was the chaplain at the Seamen's Center on the New York waterfront, counseling and comforting sailors who worked the ships and found themselves far from home and family. He bought his nieces and nephews subscriptions to the Catholic Worker, the publication started by famed anarchist and activist Dorothy Day, dedicated to advancing workers' rights, civil rights, and other leftist causes. (My cousin Tom, a professor at George Washington University, still subscribes.) Tom thinks the subscriptions were a way of Lee signaling to us his admiration for outsiders, iconoclasts, and rebels and their push for something different, better, even a tad bit revolutionary. Remember, this is the same Uncle Lee who asked his nephew Mark to perform a rap tribute to him during his celebration of 25 years in the priesthood. Unusual for some, but not Father Lee. It was all part of the human experience, all of it of value. As he told my brother one time, "God doesn't make junk."

No recollection of Father Lee would be complete without a

reference to his sense of style. Lee was always well-dressed – he is being buried in his favorite pink sports coat and pocket square, hand painted belt and polished shoes. That sense of style was almost a compulsion. Lee was notorious for coming over for family dinners and straightening your pictures and lamp shades. It used to drive my father, his brother Ken, crazy, but Lee was unflappable. His houses in upstate New York and then here in Florida each reflected this overwhelming aesthetic. Each of his homes was an ongoing beautification and interior design project. When the project was complete, he moved on. My cousin Tom has suggested that if Lee had been born a little later, his side hustle could have been hosting some hit reality show, where he got to visit strangers' homes and offer remodeling tips. My brother says that he's sure that Lee has a place in Heaven – he just hopes that he doesn't try to redecorate it.

Father Lee, Uncle Lee, seamlessly combined all these aspects of his personality into his faith and his life. He passed peacefully in hospice, surrounded by several of his nieces and nephews, as well as his godson, Chris McShane, and caregiver Gisele.

In closing, I'd like to read another quote I found in Lee's papers. It's a reading from Ecclesiastes and appropriate to the moment.

“These were godly ones whose virtues have not been forgotten. Their wealth remains in their families, their heritage with their descendants. Through God's covenant with them their family endures, their posterity for their sake. And for all time their progeny will endure, their glory will never be blotted out. Their bodies are peacefully laid away, but their names live on and on. At gatherings their wisdom is retold, and the assembly proclaims their praise.”

Rest in peace, Uncle Lee.

“ EULOGY (PART TWO)

Uncle Lee was also a lifelong striver – the oldest son of an Irish Catholic Brooklyn family who dreamed of more, became more. I like to think that Lee’s time as a teenager in the Merchant Marine, when he and my father Kenneth would work the ships crossing between Brooklyn and Germany and England, helped widen his horizons and ambitions. After graduating from Brooklyn Prep and St. John’s University, Lee worked in banking (like both his parents), then joined Tony Kane and Associates as a Wall Street executive head-hunter. Lee’s twelve years in the business world are warmly recalled by Barbara Kane, Tony’s wife. She writes: “[Our] business relationship quickly developed and grew into a warm and meaningful personal relationship. This is not unusual with Lee for he adds an extra dimension to the lives of everyone he touches. Ours is a ‘service’ business, and Lee has taken that word quite literally for he has dedicated himself in his business to truly serving his fellow men in their career pursuits. His enormous success and outstanding reputation are no doubt based on the fact that he is unique in implementing service in its purest form. No one was ever too large or too small for Lee to spend time with, talk with, give encouragement to and in most cases materially help. He gave freely of himself and his friendship, and the usually impenetrable Wall Street and Banking communities abound with those who love him.”

Even after Uncle Lee had left Wall Street, his legend lived on. Lee always was helpful in lining up job interviews for friends and family – and let’s never forget, Lee valued his friends as family. Lee had friends and associates everywhere. My brother Christopher remembers many an interview downtown which would end with the executive on the other side of the desk asking, “So how do you know Lee Smith?” When Chris said he was Lee’s nephew, the answer was always: “When can you start?”

A few more observations about this period in Father Lee’s life. This was the swinging 60s, of course, and Lee was living at the epicenter

of the moment. There were skiing trips to Vail and sailing on yachts in the Caribbean. It was during these years that Lee bought his legendary Red Cottage in Chatham Center, New York. His aunt Karen, cousins Loretta, Karin and Peter, and my mother and father would all eventually build homes in the area. Lee's love for Columbia County was that infectious.

Lee 's oldest friends still talk about impromptu dinner parties at his studio apartment at 72nd and Park – jazz, cocktails and great food. Uncle Lee was always at some function or another – his friend Bob Swing tells a story that at a very crowded sit-down dinner, Lee couldn't find a seat so he walked up to another table and asked if he could take an empty chair. A woman said she was saving it for someone. Lee picked it up anyway and turned to go, announcing: "No savesies." Note: he eventually had to return the chair and, in typical Lee fashion, spent the rest of the meal kneeling at his table.

Lee's religious faith was always a presence and comfort in his life. In the mid-70s, Lee was called to his vocation. He attended the Pope St John the 23rd National Seminary in Weston, Massachusetts and by Bishop Francis J. Mugavero in 1978. His mother Mary and many of Lee's family and friends were there to celebrate the moment. In what must have felt like a spiritual homecoming, Father Lee's first appointment was as Associate Pastor at St. Savior Church, Brooklyn.

Sean Kenneth Smith - September 27, 2022 at 07:48 PM

“ This is Part One of the family's eulogy, read at Uncle Lee's committal ceremony on Monday

FATHER LEE SMITH

We are here today to celebrate the life of Father LeRoy J. Smith... or Uncle Lee, as his many nieces and great-nieces, nephews and great-nephews, affectionately knew him. Lee was the glue that held the generations of our extended Smith clan together. Though he had no children of his own, Uncle Lee was a devoted family man – he was dedicated to keeping us healthy, safe, and connected through thick and thin. My hope is that today, his family can return the favor.

As we were going through Lee's papers, we came across a flyer announcing Lee's 80th birthday, just seven years ago. It contains a quote from Fyodor Dostoevsky and his Brothers Karamazov. I'd like to read it, because it's a beautiful summation of Lee's approach to life.

“For we are made for happiness,” Dostoevsky writes, “and anyone who is completely happy has a right to say to himself, ‘I am doing God's will on earth.’ All the righteous, all the saints, all the holy martyrs were happy.”

All of us who knew Father Lee will recognize that this was his operating principle – he knew that he could best serve God's will on earth by being the happiest man he could be. In my memory, Uncle Lee is always in motion – he'd drop by in his infamous blue Cadillac convertible, catch up on news, grab a plate of food and a Manhattan or cup of tea, then be on his way. His love of travel and cruises fit into this part of his personality – there are photos of Lee in Africa, Ireland, France and other far-flung places. One year, Lee took a berth on a freighter that circled the globe – Lee was very proud of having undergone a line-crossing ceremony when he crossed the equator for the first time.

Uncle Lee's frequent travel sometimes got him into minor scrapes. My brother Christopher remembers a story Lee used to tell: Lee found himself on a packed airplane, in a dreaded middle seat. Lee flagged down a flight attendant and, in his sweetest tones, said: "Any chance of a poor little priest getting an upgrade?" The flight attendant smiled back and replied: "That depends on if the poor little priest has any money."

Uncle Lee was devoted to his family – to his brothers and sisters and their children. Our grandfather, Roy, died when Lee was a very young man, just starting his life and career. In many ways, Lee became the Smith family's surrogate father, working to support our grandmother and his siblings financially and emotionally. This was a responsibility he assumed in his twenties and never relinquished. That generation of Smiths suffered from too many early deaths – Mary Loretta, Robert, Owen and Ellen all died before their time. Lee did his best to keep this sometimes faltering and fractured family together. All of us who ever visited his various homes or apartments remember that the walls were always covered with photographs of family and friends – Lee was happiest when surrounded by loved ones.

Uncle Lee was steadfast in that love. Mary Loretta's daughter, Jennifer, and her brothers Tom and Mark remember that after their mother died from cancer at the young age of 28, Uncle Lee was determined to stay close to them and to keep them connected to the Smiths in whatever way he could. She writes: "He showed up out of the blue and took us to dinners at fancy restaurants. He taught me to pray to the Virgin Mary as a way to connect to my mom. And every year at Christmastime he pulled up outside the house with a giant beautiful Christmas tree. He didn't give us money to get the tree. He didn't take us to get the tree. He did all the work himself. And in this way, he was kind of like Santa Claus! He was a real Santa Claus of course -- opinionated and fussy, but always quite jolly. He was fully himself and never held back."

JS

“ *Godfather - We will always have fond memories of you. Weather it was riding in your Caddy Convertible as a child, Floating on the river at the red cottage, watch you make a point of showing the entire audience at my wedding the size of my wedding band or countless times we talked at my parents house. You were an incredible person who had a big heart and was loved by many. May you rest in peace and watch over all your family and friends and be their guardian angel. - Joseph Swing*

Joseph Swing - September 26, 2022 at 02:01 PM

CM

“ *Lee was a great godfather and person. Caring, loving, supportive, attentive, and always concerned about my well-being. I have fond memories of Lee from childhood to present. Though not related by blood, he was an extension of our family. He was a dear friend to my parents since their college days at SJU, and part of almost every major event in our lifetimes. Like others, he helped me land my first job, provided college recommendations, and so much more. He left his mark in the world, accomplished so much, touched our hearts and befriended so many people....all with that great, unique personality and charm! Rest in peace Lee. You will be missed by me and many others.*

Chris M - September 26, 2022 at 01:45 PM

CJ

“ *Caitlin Johnston lit a candle in memory of Father LeRoy J. Smith*



Caitlin Johnston - September 26, 2022 at 11:17 AM

YS

“ Lee was a kind and generous brother-in-law whom I loved. It seemed he had friends everywhere because he was always able to find places for us to live whenever Ken changed teaching jobs. He would take my sons to FAO Swartz and let them pick whatever they wanted. He seemed to carry within him a sense of peace and love. He was always so kind and generous to the family
Rest In Peace..

Yolanda Smith

Yolanda Smith - September 26, 2022 at 08:51 AM

RS

“ Lee and I have been friends for 70 years. We had good times in New York and in the red cottage. Lee was a very caring and loyal individual. He could always be dependent upon when I needed help. Lee helped place our parents in hospice care, and helped place our sons in summer positions
I will always cherish our friendship. Rest In Peace LEROY

Robert swing - September 25, 2022 at 10:18 AM

LS

“ 1 file added to the album Uncle's family photos



Loretta Stillman - September 25, 2022 at 10:11 AM

CH

“ *What can I not say about Uncle? He was the center anchor of the Smith family. Memories could fill pages. Suffice to say he was a very spiritual man who lived his life fully and richly. Most importantly he shared his faith thru his acts and not thru words. From the red cottage come my greatest childhood memories. Everyone was welcome there and there was always someone new to meet. He was kind and generous but also human. He loved my irreverent dark Irish humor until his dying breath. He taught his faith thru his deeds. I never knew where my sense of loyalty and duty to friends and family came from. Now I know. Uncle Lee. I am sure he has a place in Heaven. I hope he doesn't try to redecorate it!*

Chris

christopher - September 25, 2022 at 09:20 AM

CS

“ *Lee,
We have been friends since teenagers.
You loved my parents, aunt uncles and all my family and they reciprocated.*

We had fun times, sad times and all the other emotions that come to a long friendship.

*You will not be forgotten. I am sure of that. You WILL rest in peace
Lee*

Celia Swing

Celia Swing - September 24, 2022 at 07:32 PM

DC

“ 16 files added to the tribute wall



Danielle Carlson - September 24, 2022 at 06:46 PM

MA

“ Dear Lee was so very much a part of our life from Brooklyn to Columbia County. We have so many wonderful memories from the times he just dropped by in Park Slope to living down the road in Old Chatham where HE arranged our furniture and cared for our dog, Tonka. But most of all always being there - never had to ask - but HE always knew when HE was needed Lee was much loved for his kindness generosity and concern. We loved him. Maria Harry Schmitz and Family

Maria - September 24, 2022 at 06:37 PM

CH

“ Christopher lit a candle in memory of Father LeRoy J. Smith



christopher - September 24, 2022 at 02:03 PM

CH

“ 17 files added to the album Uncle's family photos



christopher - September 24, 2022 at 08:32 AM