

## Rev. James J. Naughton, SDB 1938-2013

Fr. James J. Naughton, SDB, 75, passed away early Wednesday morning, Nov. 27 at St. Theresa's Church in Leeds where he had been pastor since July 1, 2000 after a long battle with skin cancer.

He was the elder of Michael and Mary Cody Naughton's two sons, born in Bronx, N.Y. He entered Don Bosco Juniorate in Haverstraw, N.Y., as a high school seminarian in 1952 and graduated in 1956. From there he was admitted to St. Joseph's Novitiate in Newton, N.J. He earned a B.A. in philosophy from Don Bosco College in Newton in 1962. He served as teacher at St. Dominic Savio High School in East Boston from 1959 to 1963. In 1963 he went to Italy for his seminary training in Bollengo. He was ordained in the basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin on March 18, 1967.

Upon his return to the U.S., Fr. Naughton served until 1976 with passion and notable success as vice principal at Don Bosco Technical High School in Paterson, N.J., leaving a lasting, positive impression on both students and faculty. He remembered that first priestly assignment fondly: "I learned a lot from the kids that I instructed. They were truly an inspiration."

During his years in Paterson he also earned an M.A. in education at Montclair State College (1972). From 1976-1979 Fr. Naughton was treasurer at Don Bosco Preparatory High School in Ramsey, N.J. From 1979-1981 he was assistant pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Harlem, New York City. He helped set up and run a computer training center for local youths, a youth center, and summer day camp. From 1981-1985 he was pastor of the parish and director of the Salesian community, and then for another nine years he was, once again, assistant pastor. He served as the treasurer of the Salesian Society, New Rochelle province, from 1985 to 1991.

In 1994 Fr. Naughton moved to Birmingham, Ala., as assistant pastor of Holy Rosary Parish, and also responsible for St. John Bosco Parish a few miles away. He was pastor in from 1995 to 2000, when he moved to Leeds as pastor of St. Theresa's Parish. His ministry at both parishes included jail visits and visits to the sick in their homes, nursing homes, and hospitals.



An article about St. Theresa's Church in *The Leeds News* (May 6, 2004) noted the pastor's "wit, wisdom and sense of humor [that] he uses in ministering to his congregation and to residents of the community." As a *New Yorker*, the article observed, Fr. Naughton had to adapt a much slower pace of life when he came to Alabama, as well as to learn "Alabama English." He compiled a short history of the parish, which began in the 1930s with only four Catholic families.

In 1996, Fr. Naughton received a liver transplant at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, which saved his life and left him ever grateful to his unknown donor. "I don't know my donor," he told *The St. Clair Times* of Alabama, "but I try to treat everyone as if they were the one who donated to me or the family of the person who donated to me."

He was a famously hard worker at whatever he did, and he had great respect for anyone else who worked hard. In 2007, during the 50th anniversary of his religious profession, Fr. Naughton said he stayed young by trying to work with the young. He gladly acknowledged that he has "received more from God than I have given."

He got the people of St. Theresa in Leeds involved in the work of the Holy Rosary Youth Center and the food pantry, a work which he loved dearly.

Fr. Naughton is survived by his brother Michael (Carol) of Chicago, his nephews James, Michael, and Daniel, the extended Naughton family, and his Salesian family.

*In lieu of flowers, Fr. Naughton has requested that contributions be made out to Holy Rosary R.C. Church with the notation "Food Pantry."*

