



Father Juan de la Cruz

September 1, 1932 - January 16, 2018

Father de la Cruz dies, was early pioneer in Hispanic ministry

SNELLVILLE—Father Juan de la Cruz, one of the first Spanish-speaking priests to serve the Archdiocese of Atlanta, died Tuesday, Jan. 16. He was 85. Born Sept. 1, 1932, in Colombia, he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Buga, Palmira, Colombia, on June 29, 1957.

Following his ordination, he served as a professor at the Minor Seminary in Cali, Colombia.

He arrived in the United States in 1971 and began to serve on the staff at the Cathedral of Christ the King, Atlanta. He celebrated Mass every Sunday in Spanish. Father de la Cruz was one of the first priests to celebrate Mass in Spanish in the archdiocese, as people from Cuba and other nations arrived. He celebrated the first Mass in Spanish at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Smyrna, in December 1971. At that time, he had only been in the United States for three months and spoke very little English. According to The Georgia Bulletin, Father de la Cruz spoke at that Mass on the theme, “What is the Church?” He told the congregation that the Catholic Church “belongs to all, that it is not just a building, but is composed of families and people.” He said that although the words during the Spanish Mass may be different, “the heart of the Mass was the same.”

He was incardinated as a priest of the Archdiocese of Atlanta on Feb. 23, 2004. Father de la Cruz also served as Hispanic pastoral minister at St.

Joseph Church, Dalton, from 1987 to 1992, as parochial vicar at Holy Family Church, Marietta, from 1992 to 2006, then 2007 to 2008. His priestly service also included a year as parochial vicar at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Hanover, Pennsylvania.

In 2008 Father de la Cruz was assigned to St. Oliver Plunkett Church, Snellville, where he continued to minister as parochial vicar to the Hispanic community.

Father de la Cruz is survived by his siblings, German de la Cruz, Libia de la Cruz, Mirian de la Cruz and Martha de la Cruz, and nieces and nephews, Martha Lucia Velez, Maria Helena Benitez, Maria Teresa Restrepo and Francesco Javier Franco. The family sent a message from Colombia that they are thankful for having had Father Juan as a member of their family and will remember him as “the person who guided and helped us when we needed him the most.”

A vigil for Father de la Cruz will be held Tuesday, Jan. 23, at St. Oliver Plunkett Church, 3200 Brooks Drive, Snellville. The reception of the body will begin at 4 p.m. and visitation will be held from 4-8 p.m. The vigil and rosary will begin at 8 p.m.

The funeral Mass will be celebrated Wednesday, Jan. 24, at 10 a.m., at the Cathedral of Christ the King, 2699 Peachtree Road, NE, Atlanta. Interment will follow at Arlington Memorial Park, 201 Mt. Vernon Highway, Sandy Springs. Tim Stewart Funeral Home, 2246 Wisteria Drive SW, Snellville, GA. 770-979-5010. Please leave online condolences at www.stewartfh.com.

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN **23**. 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM (ET)

St. Oliver Plunkett Catholic Church
3200 Brooks Drive
Snellville, Ga

Funeral Mass

JAN **24**. 10:00 AM (ET)

Cathedral of Christ the King
2699 Peachtree Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30305

Tribute Wall



“ *Father Juan de la Cruz*

October 08, 2022 at 11:31 AM



“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with the family.He was a very caring priest. Joan & Dick Kennel - Holy Family Catholic Church - Marietta,GA*

R.A.Kennel - January 23, 2018 at 02:27 PM