

# Catholic Diocese of Palm Beach

Diocese of Palm Beach  
9995 North Military Trail  
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Media Contact:**

**Dianne Laubert**

(561) 775-9529

### **Bishop Barbarito Announces the Loss of One of the Area's Longest-Serving Priests**

(Palm Beach Gardens, FL) May 12, 2011 - It is with deep sadness that Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito announces the death of one of the longest-serving and endearing priests in the Diocese of Palm Beach. The Reverend Francis Lechiara, Pastor of St. Edward Catholic Church in Palm Beach passed away this morning. He was 79 years old.

Known as Father Frank, Father Lechiara was ordained as a priest 52 years ago. After serving at a number of churches in Pennsylvania and in the Archdiocese of Miami, he became a priest of the Diocese of Palm Beach when it was formed in 1984. For nearly 20 years, Father Lechiara had been the pastor at St. Edward Church. During that time, he took on the mission of feeding the area's homeless and hungry by starting a food pantry. Working with the St. Edward Guild members, they began providing prepared meals and sandwiches to a local food pantry. The outreach program has grown in which they now provide weekly 750 meals to various locations including St. Ann's Place, Westgate Tabernacle Church and St. Patrick's Episcopal Church.

For his work, Father Lechiara was honored earlier this year with the Andrew F. O'Connell award by Catholic Charities Diocese of Palm Beach Elder Affairs program. The award is presented to a person who has given back to the community by helping the elderly and supporting the work of the Elder Affairs program.

"Father Frank was truly a blessing to the diocese. He served so faithfully and was a priest's priest. He was respected and loved by his fellow clergy and parishioners at every parish in which he served. The Lord gave him many talents which he used daily to serve the priesthood and the church," stated Most Reverend Gerald Barbarito, Bishop of the Diocese of Palm Beach.

Father Lechiara served the Diocese and its people in many different ways: as Vicar for Education, as a member of the Bishop's College of Consultors and on various other diocesan Boards and committees, including chairing the committee for the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Diocese of Palm Beach in 2009. He served as chaplain to Knights of Columbus local chapters and as Spiritual Moderator to the Catholic Lawyers Guild. In addition to

his Pastoral duties, Father Frank taught school at nearly every level, including high school, university and Seminary, and was the team chaplain for the University of Miami football team.

Father Lechiara felt so compassionate about the value of a Catholic education and Catholic schools that he requested upon his death that memorial gifts in his name should be given to the Diocese of Palm Beach Education Fund for Needy Students. Checks should be made out to the Diocese of Palm Beach and mailed to:

Diocese of Palm Beach  
Post Office Box 109650  
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410-9650

**Please be sure to include a note or write in the memo of the check that the donation is for the Education Fund for Needy Students.**

Final funeral arrangements are still pending. Arrangements are with Quattlebaum Funeral Home in West Palm Beach. Visitation and Funeral Mass will be at St. Edward Church with burial at Our Lady Queen of Peace Cemetery in Royal Palm Beach.