

Catholic Diocese of Palm Beach

Diocese of Palm Beach
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bishop Barbarito Announces the Loss of a Priest Who Built Hispanic Ministry on the Treasure Coast

(Palm Beach Gardens, FL) May 20, 2011 - It is with deep sadness that the Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito announces the death of one of the longest-serving priests in the Diocese of Palm Beach and a pioneer in outreach and ministry to the Hispanic community. The Reverend Gerard Don Redden passed away this morning. He was 77 years old.

Father Redden was born and ordained in Dublin, Ireland. After his ordination in 1959, he ministered in Peru and Ecuador before coming to the United States in 1979 to minister in the Archdiocese of Miami. He was incardinated into the Diocese of Palm Beach in 1985, just eight months after the Diocese was founded. Father Redden served as Parochial Vicar at Holy Name of Jesus Parish in West Palm Beach from 1982 to 1985 before his appointment to the Treasure Coast as Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry to Hispanics.

Father Redden was a forerunner in providing Hispanic Ministry within the Diocese of Palm Beach. Early in the Diocese history, Bishop Thomas V. Daily recognized the pastoral needs of the Spanish-speaking Catholics of the two northern counties – St. Lucie and Indian River. He appointed Father Redden as Coordinator for Pastoral Ministry to Hispanics in that area, which included Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie, Vero Beach, Sebastian and Fellsmere.

When he arrived in Fellsmere, there was very little Catholic activity or organization and Masses were held in a picnic pavilion. Father Redden began a catechetical movement and as the community kept growing, the City of Fellsmere loaned him a small meeting room, and the fire station allowed him to use their garage to hold classes and liturgies. Eventually, a large parcel of land was purchased by the Diocese and a combination church/hall was built and blessed in December 1992 by Bishop J. Keith Symons and named by Father Redden as Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission.

Father Redden's ministry also included work in Fort Pierce with the thousands of migrant workers and families. Similar to the humble beginning in Fellsmere, Father Redden began his ministry on the carport of his rented home. As the community grew, members began to fund raise for a pastoral center in which they could meet for religious education and social functions.

A site was found near St. Anastasia Church in Fort Pierce. The center was opened and blessed in December 2001 by Bishop Anthony O'Connell.

“Father Redden's pastoral ministry was unique in that he was a priest from Ireland who came to America and through his tremendous outreach efforts, helped bring Catholic teachings and ministry to thousands in the Hispanic community. He will be remembered as a forerunner and pioneer in the history of the Diocese of Palm Beach,” said Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito, Bishop of the Diocese of Palm Beach.

Due to health problems, Father Redden had recently been residing at the Lourdes-Noreen McKeen Residence in West Palm Beach.

There will be visitation at San Juan Diego Pastoral Center, 401 South 30th Street in Fort Pierce, on Monday evening from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. with a scripture service at 8:00 p.m. Bishop Barbarito will celebrate a Funeral Mass at St. Anastasia Church in Fort Pierce on Tuesday evening at 6:00 pm. Interment will take place at a later date in Ireland.