



Father Leo P. O'Brien

April 22, 1931 - March 18, 2026

Father Leo Patrick O'Brien, Albany Diocesan Catholic priest for seventy years, died on Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at Teresian House in Albany. He was 94 years old.

The son of Harold and Anna O'Brien, Father Leo was born April 22, 1931, in Troy, New York. A 1947 graduate of Catholic Central High School, he began his studies for the priesthood in 1948 at St. Charles College in Catonsville, Maryland, continued studies at St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester, New York, and completed his studies in 1956 at the Theological College of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He was ordained in the spring of 1956.

Father Leo's first assignment was to St. Paul the Apostle in Schenectady. Forever grateful that his pastor was Father Robert Cronin, Leo spent eight years at St. Paul's growing every day in his understanding of parish life. He was instrumental in developing a vital youth program, in serving as chaplain of the Christian Family Movement, and promoting the opening of two Catholic high schools, Notre Dame and Bishop Gibbons.

In 1964 Father Leo was assigned to the Chancery Office in Albany, serving as Vice-Chancellor, then in 1966 Chancellor, and in 1970 he was elevated to Vicar General. While serving the Diocese in these capacities, he loved connecting with the students at Vincentian Institute and parishioners from St. Vincent de Paul Parish by saying daily Mass at the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in Vincentian Institute.

In 1972 Father O'Brien was appointed pastor of St. Vincent's Parish in Albany, while continuing to maintain the role of Vicar General. He was back to his first love — parish work and life. His priorities in building a thriving parish were strong liturgical celebrations, a vibrant music ministry, faith formation programs, and a social justice conscience. In the Diocese, he served as spiritual director of the Cursillo Movement and was a leader in the Residents Encounter Christ, a prison ministry program that served seven state prisons. He also was an active member in the International Renew Program. Along with Sister Joan Byrne, Father Leo served as a major catalyst in repurposing Vincentian Institute into senior housing and establishing DePaul Housing Management, now a major senior housing program in the Diocese.

Father Leo retired from St. Vincent's in 2006 and moved to the Avila Retirement Home where he served as Chaplain. While at Avila he continued his engagement in the Ecumenical and Interfaith Community and also served as sacramental minister for a few years at St. James Church in Albany. For his own personal growth, he took up the study of Hebrew and also became a master at jigsaw puzzles.

During his life, Father Leo enjoyed traveling. He spent time in Ireland, Israel, and Italy and loved his summers on Martha's Vineyard and the Cape. He relished the chance to play golf especially with his brothers and brother-in-law at Seaview Golf Resort. One of his favorite places to totally relax was at his country home near the village of Tomhannock known as The Ranch, a small house on the land that was the site of his mother's family home.

Father Leo always sought to grow further in his understanding of life and his faith. He spent several summers studying at Notre Dame University. He was also an avid reader, both popular texts and texts about the Faith. He continued to bring his thinking into the concrete world by being active in the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry.

Humble and committed, Father Leo throughout his life tried his best to emulate the work of Jesus, reaching out to all and sharing Jesus's message of hope and love.

Father Leo is survived by his sister Rose Mary (Colin) Nadeau of Lakewood Ranch, Florida, his brother Paul (Deborah) of Niskayuna, his brother John of Waltham, MA; his nieces, Kathryn, Mary, Carolyn, Colleen, Siobhan, and Caitlin; and his nephews Daniel and Eamon. He is also survived by a number of grand nieces and nephews and a wide circle of family and friends.

The Reception of the Body and wake for Father Leo will be at St. Vincent's Church on Tuesday, March 24, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. The Mass of Christian Burial will be on Wednesday, March 25, at St. Vincent's Church at 11:30 a.m. All attendants are invited to a luncheon in honor of Father Leo immediately following at St. Vincent's Apartment's Community Room, 475 Yates Street, Albany.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. Vincent de Paul, 900 Madison Avenue, Albany, or the Bishop's Appeal of the Albany Diocese to support Bishop Mark's vision for the Future of our Diocese.

The family is grateful to Patti Jarvis and Lillian Dandrow as well as the Touching Hearts Service for their assistance to Father Leo while he lived at Avila and to the staff of the rehabilitation floor at Teresian House for providing kind and compassionate care to Leo in his final few weeks.

"To walk Humbly with your God."

Tribute Wall

DC

“ We are all sad to learn of Fr. O'Brien's death. We came to St.Paul the Apostle parish at the same time. I moved to the parish and completed my Senior year at Mont Pleasant Hifgh School. He joined us the same year direct from the Seminary. I fondly remember his efforts to get the youth involved in the parish. First a pizza party, including suggestions for service projects in the parish: raking, mowing, snow shoveling and caring. He even brought a group of us to Tanglewood for the Pops Concert. He was a support and guidance to Virginia and I during our dating years. After we married he left us alone for a year. Then he called to tell us about he plans to start a CFM (Christian Family Movement) and would we make some calls to invite people to an introductory meeting. Of course we agreed. Then he gaver his a list of 100 names to call. Ginny and I took turns calling all the names and 40 agreed to com to the meeting. Of those two groups of five agreed to continue monthly meetings.

On a personal level, he baptized all three of our children. We have kept in touch, sharing and encouraging of efforts in the faith.

Dick Connery - March 24 at 01:39 PM



“ Heavenly Grace Spray was purchased for the family of Father Leo P. O'Brien.



March 23 at 07:05 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Father Leo P. O'Brien.

March 23 at 07:05 PM



“ I was an altar boy at St. Paul the Apostle for Father O'Brien and Monsignor Cronin in the late 50s early 60s. Father O'Brien was someone we looked up to. Throughout the years I would meet up with him at different functions. His outgoing personality never changed. He was special.

Richard Henry Moran Sr - March 21 at 03:12 PM



Fr O'Brien was a dear friend to our family and a holy priest we have been blessed for having shared a few years of his life while pastor at St Vincent de Paul's parish .

Emily Slattery Quinn - March 23 at 11:28 PM



I grew up in Albany and knew Father O'Brien through Vincentian Institute, which is where my brother very to school. I was a Cathedral gal. Father O'Brien was the officiant that married my husband and I in 1981. My husband is from Ohio and was being transferred in the military, and we didn't have a lot of time to arrange a wedding but Father O'Brien helped us by finding a date that he could marry us, he helped us get the Knights of Columbus for our reception. We moved to Florida shortly after that but Father O'Brien three years later baptized our first child. He was very pleasant, and just a very very good and decent human being. He helped my mother a lot when she was having health issues. I ran into him once on a visit to Albany and filled him in that we now had two children, and happy successful lives. He smiled ear to ear and thanked me for filling him in, that such stories really made his day. Lovely man, I am so happy that he lived a long life. God blessed his faithful servant. Rest in peace, Father O'Brien.

Sharon Tomaszewski - May 14 at 08:27 AM