

## **Catholic diocese and Southeast Texas mourns the loss of Deacon James DeLee**

After decades of service in Southeast Texas, Deacon James DeLee passed away on his 78<sup>th</sup> birthday Aug. 7 at Harbor Hospice, Beaumont.

Visitation will be held 5-8 p.m. Aug. 9 with a vigil at 7 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, 211 Hardy Avenue, Nederland. Bishop Curtis Guillory, SVD, will celebrate a Mass of Christian burial at 10 a.m. Aug. 10 at St. James Catholic Church, 3617 Gulfway Dr., Port Arthur.

He was ordained to the permanent diaconate Feb. 25, 2006, at St. Anthony Cathedral, Beaumont, by Bishop Guillory. Effective immediately following his ordination, Deacon DeLee was assigned to St. James, Port Arthur, where he served until his death.

Deacon DeLee led a life of service even before he became a deacon. He was a retired colonel in the Texas National Guard, a paratrooper and former Airborne Brigade Commander. He also served Southeast Texans as a board certified family and criminal law attorney in Jefferson County for nearly 40 years.

Prior to his legal career, Deacon DeLee was employed as a civil engineer at Gulf Oil and later at Jefferson Chemical.

“From the time I joined the Catholic faith through conversion, I have wanted to be as involved as possible in areas that I might contribute and be able to serve. Somehow it always brought me back to the diaconate program,” he said. “Regardless of what I did there always seem to be a calling to serve more, and that more was the diaconate. I feel this is where I belong.”

A member of several organizations, Deacon DeLee was on the founding board of directors of Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas.

At the Red Mass in October 2009 to celebrate the opening of the judicial year, Deacon DeLee received the St. Thomas More Award for his incredible acts of generosity, participation and service to the United States, Southeast Texas and the Catholic community.

Deacon DeLee was a native of Port Arthur and graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School. He is survived by his wife Deanie DeLee, sons Jim DeLee Jr. and Richard DeLee, and daughters Teri Papania, Deborah Nicholson and Becca Oberg, as well as several grandchildren.