



Deacon John William Nelson

April 16, 1943 - April 1, 2026

John William Nelson, loving husband, proud dad, and kind-hearted grandpa, passed away peacefully on April 1, 2026, surrounded by his family.

John's life is a testament to his unwavering faith and commitment to serving God and others. Born in Rahway, New Jersey, he grew up with a passion for sports. A standout basketball and baseball player, John loved cheering for his New York teams – the Yankees, Knicks, and Giants – and later, through marriage, the Chicago Cubs.

As much as John loved the Jersey Shore, no place held a more special spot in his heart than the University of Notre Dame. It was there that he met the love of his life, Katherine (Kay) Jeanne Faivre, while earning his bachelor's degree in English and serving in the ROTC program. Days before his graduation, John was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Navy and was assigned to a ship serving in the Vietnam War.

John and Kay moved up their wedding date to accommodate his new assignment, marrying in her hometown of Maytown, Illinois on April 30, 1966. Serving as a U.S. Naval Lieutenant JG on the USS Fort Marion during the war, John was awarded several medals for his dedication and service. After completing his military term, he earned a master's degree in business administration from San Diego State University.

Accepting a position with Xerox Corporation, John moved his growing family to Rochester, New York, where he began a successful career in finance that spanned nearly three decades. Even during his busiest periods at work, John made it a priority to attend as many of his children's sports events and activities as possible. He became famous on the sidelines for coining the term "Composure!" which he loved shouting to his kids during key competitive moments.

A devoted parishioner of Christ the King Church, John, together with Kay, founded the church's first youth group. He and Kay also helped lead the Pre-Cana and Marriage Encounter programs. When he wasn't working or volunteering, John loved spending time with his family grilling, playing in the pool, rooting for Notre Dame, camping, and most of all, enjoying vacations on Long Beach Island and Martha's Vineyard. He absolutely loved sharing these cherished traditions with his grandchildren, whom he adored and who made him immensely proud.

John marked the beginning of a new chapter after retiring from Xerox. He was ordained as a deacon in the Catholic Church on June 8, 2002, following the completion of his master's degree in theology from St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry. He served as a deacon at Christ the King for five years, and St. Charles Borromeo in Hampshire, Illinois for 18 years after he and Kay moved back to the Midwest. Through John's leadership, the church established its first conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, helping many families in need. He also volunteered as a chaplain and communion minister at local hospitals and nursing homes.

John's legacy of faith and service continues through his wife of nearly 60 years, Kay; his four children, Kelly (David) Zitlow, Christopher (Joan) Nelson, Bridget Nelson, and Megan (Russ) Wylie; his grandchildren, Eva and Ryan

Zitlow, Hannah (Matthew) Duffey, Christopher (Samantha), Katherine, Conor, and Jack Nelson, and Eloise, Henry, and George Wylie; his sister Janice Pflugfelder; and many nieces, nephews, and wonderful friends.

Through his words and actions, John instilled in his family the importance of always thinking of and caring for others. His example continues to inspire them to lead lives of compassion, integrity, hard work, and kindness. As his family carries forward his spirit, John's influence will forever be felt in the lives they touch.

Visitation will be held on Wednesday, April 8, 4 pm-7:30 pm, followed by a prayer service. Visitation will continue Thursday, April 9, from 9:30 am-10:45 am, followed by a funeral mass at 11 am. All events will take place at St. Charles Borromeo Church, 297 E. Jefferson Ave., Hampshire, IL. A burial with military honors will be held in the church cemetery immediately following. Family and friends are warmly invited to attend all events. For those unable to join the funeral service in person, you are welcome to join us virtually via this link: <https://youtube.com/live/-xbZZR3T2oE?feature=share>.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to a scholarship fund at University of Notre Dame established in John's name by his children and to be awarded to students in need, or to the parish conference of St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Donations can be made payable to University of Notre Dame, Department of Development, 1100 Grace Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556 with a note directing your gift to John William Nelson '65 Scholarship. Or your gift can be directed to St. Charles Borromeo Conference of St. Vincent de Paul Society, 297 E. Jefferson Ave., Hampshire, IL 60140.

Cemetery Details

St. Charles Borromeo Cemetery

Getzelman Road
Hampshire, IL 60140

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 8. 4:00 PM - 7:30 PM (CT)

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
297 E. Jefferson Ave.
Hampshire, IL 60140

Prayer Service

APR 8. 7:30 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
297 E. Jefferson Ave.
Hampshire, IL 60140

Visitation

APR 9. 9:30 AM - 10:45 AM (CT)

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
297 E. Jefferson Ave.
Hampshire, IL 60140

Mass of Christian Burial

APR 9. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
297 E. Jefferson Ave.
Hampshire, IL 60140

Graveside Service

APR 9. 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM (CT)

St. Charles Borromeo Cemetery
Getzelman Road
Hampshire, IL 60140

Tribute Wall



“ Fredrick Funeral Home created a Deacon John Nelson in memory of Deacon John William Nelson



Fredrick Funeral Home - April 03 at 11:24 AM

DD

With prayers of sympathy and with gratitude for Deacon Nelson's generous service...
Diaconate Community - Diocese of Rochester

Diaconate Community DOR - April 03 at 09:00 PM



“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Deacon John William Nelson.



April 08 at 09:11 AM

LS

“ Loren Stuvick purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Deacon John William Nelson.



Loren Stuvick - April 07 at 04:45 PM

LS

“ Loren Stuvick planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Deacon John William Nelson.

Loren Stuvick - April 07 at 04:45 PM



“ Bright and Beautiful Spray was purchased for the family of Deacon John William Nelson.



April 06 at 11:58 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Deacon John William Nelson.



April 05 at 08:24 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Deacon John William Nelson.



April 05 at 05:40 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Deacon John William Nelson.

April 05 at 05:40 PM



“ David, Steve, Avi and Noa Grossman purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Deacon John William Nelson.



David, Steve, Avi and Noa Grossman - April 04 at 02:09 PM



“ I remember Mr. Nelson as warm, friendly and always welcoming. His easy friendliness left a lasting impression, and I especially remember the shared love of Notre Dame he enjoyed with my dad. His kindness left quite a lasting impression. He will be greatly missed.

Julie Pinto - April 04 at 11:11 AM



“ John and Beth Straka and family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Deacon John William Nelson.



John and Beth Straka and family - April 03 at 03:45 PM

JF

“ John and Beth Straka and family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Deacon John William Nelson.

John and Beth Straka and family - April 03 at 03:45 PM



“ Tranquil Seas was purchased for the family of Deacon John William Nelson.



April 03 at 01:20 PM

FO

“ John became more than a brother-in law in the last 60+ years, he became a friend, a fierce euchre competitor, a puzzle buddy and companion on the beach in Florida, and facilitator of family picnics, among ,many other roles. He helped whomever was in need of help and was a shining example of someone who lived his faith and never stopped reflecting on it. We will miss him. He leaves a giant legacy to his children and grandchildren to live up to his expectations and faith in God and people. "Well done, good and faithful servant"

Fay and Joe Oberrgfell - April 03 at 12:55 PM