



## Rev. Lester Earle Durst

January 7, 1951 - June 22, 2016

The Reverend Lester Earle Durst, of Valrico, Florida, passed away on June 22, 2016 after a brief and sudden illness. He was 65.

Lester was born and raised in Sarasota, Florida, where he met his wife of 43 years, Carolyn. They were high school sweethearts and attended Stetson University together before marrying. Lester then graduated from the University of Florida with a law degree and practiced with the Farr Law Firm in the Punta Gorda area for more than a decade.

With the birth of their children, Michael and Lauren, in 1981 and 1983, Lester took on his most important job as Dad.

Soon after, Lester answered God's call to the ministry, attended Virginia Theological Seminary, and was ordained an Episcopal priest in 1991. Fr. Durst served at The Church of the Redeemer (Sarasota), St. John's (Tampa), St. Peter's (Plant City), St. Christopher's (Pensacola), and St. Mary's (Tampa) before retiring due to Parkinson's Disease in 2008. His ministry touched many over the years.

Lester loved to read, walk fast, tell "dad jokes", and drink chocolate milkshakes -- his granddaughter Margaret calls the slurping sound a "Granddaddy noise". He's known for saying "Smile! It makes 'em nervous" and

knew it applied in most situations.

His family wishes to thank all of his former parishioners, whose expressions of support comforted his family through his last days.

Lester was preceded in death by his parents, Marion and Mildred Durst. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn; his daughter, Lauren; his son, Michael (Alison); his granddaughter, Margaret; his sisters, Mildred Dana (Noel) and Amanda Durst; his aunt, Claudia Rich; his niece, Virginia Thrift (Glenn); and his nephews, Leon Dana (Tania), Paul Blackwell, and Todd Blackwell.

A memorial service will be held at The Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota (222 S. Palm Ave.) on Thursday, June 30 at 1:00 P.M. A reception will follow in the Parish Hall. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you consider a donation in Lester's name to The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. Expressions of condolence at [www.HopewellFuneral.com](http://www.HopewellFuneral.com).

# Previous Events

## Service

JUN **30**. 1:00 PM (ET)

Church of the Redeemer Episcopal  
222 S Palm Ave  
Sarasota, FL 34236-6799  
(941) 955-4263

# Tribute Wall

AB

“ I was very sad to hear of Rev. Durst's passing. I am a close college friend of his son Mike, and both parents were very gracious hosts of two Spring Breaks in Florida for Mike and me during those college years. They treated me like another son. They supplied endless amounts of peanut butter and tuna fish for me during those visits, as those were my favorite snacks at the time. And many years later, they traveled to Ohio for my wedding and took me out for a brunch before the big day. Rev. Durst was such a kind-hearted man. My heart is with his wonderful wife, my friend Mike, and sister Lauren, during these difficult times.

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**Andrew Brandt** - July 06, 2016 at 03:32 PM

SH

“ I am saddened by the loss of Fr. Lester. His sermons and and humorous timing touched us all, and we will miss him at St. Mary's. Prayers and condolences to his love ones and all who were blessed to know him.

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**Sherry Hood** - July 03, 2016 at 06:17 AM

CS

“ I was saddened to hear the news of his passing. I have many fond memories of him (and the whole Durst family). Prayers are with you all!

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**Carson Olmsted Sheets** - July 02, 2016 at 02:55 PM

AF

“ Carolyn and family, we were saddened to hear of your loss of Lester. We remember you both of course from Sarasota High. Please know that: He'll be with you in the places you go, in the things you do...in your heart. Wishing you comfort in all the wonderful memories you shared.  
We wish God's grant of strength and peace for you all.  
Dale and Alicia (Byrd) Fruehwald, Sarasota

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**Alicia Byrd Fruehwald** - July 02, 2016 at 12:04 PM

RH

“ Lester & I were first together in first grade at Southside School in Sarasota. We became acolytes together as soon as possible after confirmation at St. Wilfred's. He would substitute for any missing acolyte , which might mean serving at all 3 morning services. Lester always wanted to be an Episcopal priest, as I recall, but Fr. Fitzgerald told him to "go work in the world first, so you can relate better to people". And so he did, as an attorney, but he stayed true to his original calling to the priesthood. The world is a better place because he did.  
Rusty Horneman

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**Rusty Horneman** - June 29, 2016 at 11:20 AM

FF

“ Farr Law Firm purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Rev. Lester Earle Durst.



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**Farr Law Firm** - June 29, 2016 at 10:52 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Rev. Lester Earle Durst.*



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June 28, 2016 at 09:12 PM



“ *We've only known Fr Lester for two years but his kindness and quiet smile was something that we've come to love. He will be sadly missed. Prayers of comfort goes out to his entire family. Love Greg Williams and Family.*

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**Simoni Williams** - June 28, 2016 at 07:26 AM



“ *I am saddened on Lester's passing. I enjoyed his priestly guidance at St. John's and St. Mary's. He went from the man of law to a great Man of God. I will miss him. His body can now rest in peace. Prayers to his family that will deeply miss him.*

*With Deepest Sympathy,  
John Genter and family*

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**John Genter** - June 28, 2016 at 06:23 AM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rev. Lester Earle Durst.*



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June 27, 2016 at 04:53 PM

JM

“ We are so sorry to hear of Fr. Lester's passing. May the memories you hold in your heart comfort you always. He will be missed. With Love, Greg, Jenn, Madalyn , and Emily Millman ( From St. Mary's)

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**jenn millman** - June 27, 2016 at 03:21 PM

JS

“ The Scott family is so saddened by the passing of Fr. Lester. I will always remember his sense of humor and kindness. He loved being a priest and I think that's what made him such a wonderful one. We will miss him both on the altar serving God and off, still serving God. May God's peace be with his family at this time.

*Much love from the St. Mary's Scott family - John, Jennifer, Alexandra and Delaney*

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**Jennifer Scott** - June 27, 2016 at 09:32 AM

SA

“ *Fr. Lester Durst was so important to my family and me during his years at St. Peter's, not only as our priest, but as a friend. He made a positive spiritual impact on lives of my daughters during their pre-teen and teenage years -- acolytes, confirmation, Wednesday night dinners, youth group activities, etc. He was there for me in celebrating the good times like my marriage to Scott, and a great source of comfort in the sad, unexpected loss of my mother. The world is a better place because of Lester Durst, and I am a better person for having known him.*

*My love, hugs and condolences to Carolyn, Mike and Lauren.*

*Starr Anderson*



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**Starr Anderson** - June 26, 2016 at 11:28 PM

AF

“ *We are so sorry to learn this news and send condolences to the Durst family. Fr. Lester was a wonderful man. When I felt my kids might have been being jokesters in their confirmation classes, he reassured me by telling me "God created humor, too." He obviously had a great sense of humor himself. We will miss him.*

*The FitzGerald Family*

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**Ari FitzGerald** - June 26, 2016 at 08:15 PM

LS

“ *With Deepest Sympathy from Ed Scott and family*

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**Lucy Anna Scott** - June 26, 2016 at 06:26 PM



Marialinda Epps

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Marialinda Epps - June 26, 2016 at 01:58 AM



BS

“ *Lester was a prince of a man. I had both the privilege and pleasure of serving at the altar with him. We had a "scheduled formation" for three Good Friday services. Good bye good friend and teacher.*

Bob Suhrheinrich - June 25, 2016 at 01:31 PM



PW

“ *Judi and I will miss Lester. I vividly remembered when he, Carolyn, Lauren and Michael moved to Pensacola. He had such a keen wit. I remember approaching him and asking, "if Judi and I, two Seminoles, could take Communion from a Gator"? Without hesitation he replied, "I would think the Seminoles would be honored"! Our thoughts and prayers are with Carolyn, Michael and Lauren and the whole family. You had a wonderful husband and father, but you already knew that.*

PC Wu - June 25, 2016 at 12:56 PM