



Joseph Thomas Michalak Sr.

July 1, 1932 - December 9, 2022

Joseph Thomas Michalak, Sr. July 1, 1932 – December 9, 2022

Dear husband of nearly 66 years to the love of his life, Christine (deceased, April 5, 2022) and caring father to Deacon Joseph, Jr. (Anne), Susan Havrilla (Daniel) and Beth Rahill (Seamus): proud grandpa to William Joseph (deceased), Andrew, Katie, Lizzie, Maggie, Elise, Michael, (Megan), Kevin, (Jessi), Clare, (Connor) and Grace, and great grandfather to Olivia, Amelia (deceased) and Theodore; dear brother to John. Preceded in death by his parents Michael and Sophie Michalak, brothers Eugene and Mitchell.

Joe was faithful Catholic son of Polish working-class row-home Philadelphians, and though the only one of his generation to attend college he never forsook his Bridesburg heritage of hard work, familial duty, home-made kielbasa. From St. Joe's Prep at 17th and Girard in Philly to metallurgical engineering at Drexel to doctoral research and teaching at (then) Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh, Joe became a respected name in a singular group of scientists doing molecular research on changes in steels—alchemy to the rest of us. His was a long and fruitful career at the U.S. Steel Research Center during its heyday, and he fit the part: crewcut, pens in pocket, thin dark tie, and quiet excitement over grainy spectrographs. A man of habit, Joe eschewed flamboyance; bombast had no impact upon him, he was the opposite of flash, and you could mark your calendar by his weekly lawn-mowing routine. That steadiness was the essential complement to dear Chris's energy. Joe and Chris became models of sacramental married love

and devotion to one another—it became difficult to imagine one ever without the other at their side. Together they became pillars of the neighborhood, parish, and, from the early 1970's, the local Catholic Charismatic Renewal. For years they hosted weekly prayer meetings in their home, and they offered bed and board to folks from around the world—only last week an elderly Scotsman in Glasgow remarked “Oh, I’ve met your father. We enjoyed your parents’ hospitality. They fed us a lot.” Joe and Chris participated in one parish liturgy, event, program, undertaking after another. They made every funeral they possibly could. Joe not only served as Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, but he orchestrated that ministry of Communion to numerous nursing homes and led services in those homes. He accompanied the dying. He gave of himself Eucharistically; he would have made an exemplary deacon. Life-long devotion to family ritual (“Polish Christmas Eve will only end with the Second Coming” and “You have to dip the Easter egg in the coloring just the right length of time”) only reflected devotion to family. Joe celebrated the smallest accomplishments of spouses of the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren; he humbly admired achievements he only aspired to; he received the personalities of each as gifts to be relished.

Pensive (witness notebooks chock full of lectio notes) and at times poetic (Ode to the Surface Carbide), Joe always lived attuned to the interior life. Reticent in speech, his words flowed from reflection. He was slow to criticize but suffered with the Church and was pained by the failures of her children. His latter years were a fabric of sacramental devotion, basking in the family’s presence, and quiet prayer. In his last days Joe lived the mystery of suffering, stripped of mobility, speech, and the ability to read; intimacy with Christ alone sustained him. He heeded well Jesus’ words: “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life.” Viewing will be on Monday, December 19, 2022, from 10:30-11:30 am at Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish at St. Bernadette Church, 245 Azalea Drive, Monroeville. Mass of Christian Burial at 11:30 am. Interment following at Good Shepherd Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, contributions in memory of Joe may be given to

the Retirement Fund for Religious at <https://retiredreligious.org/ways-to-give/donate/#donate-now> or to the Institute for Diaconate Formation Scholarship Fund at the Saint Paul Seminary at <https://saintpaulseminary.org/giving/> Arrangements entrusted to the GENE H. CORL FUNERAL CHAPEL INC. OF MONROEVILLE. www.corlfuneralchapel.com.

Cemetery Details

Good Shepherd Cemetery

733 Patton St.
Monroeville, PA 15146

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 19. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish at St. Bernadette Church
245 Azalea Drive
Monroeville, PA 15146

Mass of Christian Burial

DEC 19. 11:30 AM (ET)

Christ the Divine Shepherd Parish at St. Bernadette Church
245 Azalea Drive
Monroeville, PA 15146