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Joseph "Joe" Swiss Jr. died Sept. 18, 2025. He was 77. (Courtesy photo)

St. John parishioner Joe Swiss remembered for helping others find the Lord



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By Katie V. Jones

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Joseph "Joe" Swiss Jr., a leading figure in evangelization in the Archdiocese of Baltimore who was known for his embrace of new technologies in spreading the Gospel and his passion for welcoming adults to the Catholic faith, died Sept. 18. He was 77.

Swiss served in a variety of roles, including pastoral associate and director of liturgy at St. John the Evangelist in Frederick from 2010 until his death in 2024. He previously was the archdiocesan director of catechist formation from 2002 to 2010, and director of religious education at St. John from 1991 to 2002.

Swiss was "quick to learn" new technology, according to Amy Spessard, executive director of formation and accompaniment at St. John. He used material that could be shared on various platforms, she said, including parishes' websites and social media. He also used videos and music during his adult catechetical sessions.

"He was very much about meeting people where they were," she said. "Doing things the way they've always been done is not productive."

Spessard said Swiss had a gift for talking about the Lord.

"Helping people have a better relationship with the Lord was really who he was," she said.



KATIE V. JONES



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Technology, including both hardware and software, in the church gathering spaces and classrooms.

Funds will also be used to provide the necessary training to use the technology.

Julie St. Croix, the archdiocese's pastoral planning facilitator and a close friend of Swiss, remembered him as a "fun" person.

"He was all about small group sharing," she said. "He was very positive."

Swiss also had a "beautiful eye for decorating," according to St. Croix, and his arrangements for liturgical holidays, like last Easter, were "gob-smacking beautiful."

"He went all out and was very intentional about it," St. Croix said. "He made sure any liturgical place was beautiful and a place to encounter the Lord."

Father John Williamson, pastor of St. John, said Swiss "really loved" OCIA (the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) and was "very committed" to it.

"He had a great sense of humor," Father Williamson said. "He could bring levity to a tense situation."

Born May 11, 1948, in Erie, Pa., Swiss received a master's degree in pastoral studies/counseling in 1986 from St. Thomas University in Florida. While in Florida, he met his wife, Susan Marie Swiss. They had a son who died in 2017 and a grandson.

A funeral Mass was offered Oct. 4 at St. John.

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