

FATHER JOSEPH J. BELTRAN. Fr. Joe was born on October 16, 1929 in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania the third child and oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Beltran. God had called into his service four members of this extraordinary family. His two older siblings were of the Bernardine Sisters of St. Francis, Sr. Mary Corona and Sr. Mary Sponsa and his younger brother Archbishop Eusebius Beltran. Fr. Joe received a Catholic education attending elementary school at St. Lee in Ashley, Pa. and Marymount High School in Wilkes Bane. Fr. Joe attended St. Mary's College in Orchard Lake, Mich. and upon graduation was accepted as a candidate for the diocesan priesthood of the diocese of Savannah-Atlanta in 1949. He attended St. Mary's College in Baltimore and St. Mary's Theological School in Baltimore and earned his bachelor of arts degree in 1951 and bachelor of sacred theology in 1953. He was ordained by the Most Reverend Francis E. Hyland at the Cathedral of Christ the King on May 19, 1955. Fr. Joe was temporarily assigned to the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and transferred to St. Thomas More of Decatur in the fall of 1955. In September of 1957 he was transferred. to St. John the Evangelist of Hapeville as the Asst. Pastor and remained until November, 1959. In Nov. Fr. Joe was sent to St. Mary's in Rome, GA for a short stay then on to St. Anthony's as Asst. Pastor. While at St. Anthony's, Fr. Joe became renowned for his "The Story of Catholics and Catholicity in America". This was a series of articles on the history of the Catholic Church in America. Fr. Joe was truly a fountain of knowledge on the subject of his church and his God whom he loved and was proud to serve. Fr. Joe served the Archdiocese of Atlanta and left his presence known at numerous parishes in his nearly forty years of service. Fr. Joe became best known for his ability to build new parish homes. He not only built new parish homes but he also paid for them. Fr. Joe had a passion for the color red but never let that color be seen in parish budgets. Fr. Joe was insistent upon paying for these buildings, he wanted to ensure that there was a secure place for the people of God to worship. It was often said at the archdiocese that Fr. Joe could squeeze the buffalo right off a nickel and the entire church would be the beneficiary. Fr. Joe was the founding pastor of the parishes of All Saints, Corpus Christi and St. Gabriel. He was instrumental in the building of numerous other parishes or new buildings within established parishes. Fr. Joe always said, "Remember, whatever we do should be for the honor, praise, and glory of Jesus Christ." When Fr. Joe left any place, he left a monument to Christ, not himself. Fr. Joe suffered a major stroke on Feb. 25, 1993 and was hospitalized and underwent long months of rehabilitation. Fr. Joe realizing the hopelessness of his condition made the hardest decision he had probably faced in his entire life, to retire from the priesthood. Even in his illness Fr. Joe continued to do the one thing that he said was the most important thing he ever did in his life, to celebrate the Eucharistic Feast in the Mass. In March of 1995, Fr. Joe had made a decision to visit the mission of his sister, Sr. Sponsa on the Ivory Coast of Africa. Fr. Joe felt the experience would be uplifting and wanted to experience Christ in the lives of the poorest of the poor and the sufferings of those in exile from a war torn country. While visiting his sister in Africa Fr. Joe contracted malaria and was hospitalized. Fr. Joe's physical being left this world on April 30, 1995, but his spirit lives on in the numerous parishes where he served and the people to whom he ministered. © Frank and Carol Beltran. Atlanta, GA. 2016.
