

Curtiss J. Talley, 85, of Memphis, Tennessee, was called home to eternal rest on Thursday, February 6, 2025, surrounded by the love of his devoted family. His journey on earth was one of faith, service, and love, and he now finds peace in the presence of the Lord.

He was born on July 16, 1939, in Holly Springs, Mississippi, to Curtis Tally and Jessie (Rucker) Draper. He was raised by his loving grandparents Derone and Lilly Tally. He graduated from St. Mary's High School in 1957 and pursued his freshman year at Rockhurst College in Kansas City, MO. Beginning divinity studies toward priesthood with the Priests of the Sacred Heart, Curtiss went on to attend Dehon College in Great Barrington, MA from 1958 to 1959 - earning a certificate in Latin and Greek. He then went on to attend Sacred Heart Novitiate in Sainte Marie, IL (1959 to 1960) and Kilroe College in Honesdale, PA (1960 to 1964), where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy with a minor in English. In 1966, after two years at Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, WI, Curtiss chose to discontinue divinity studies and moved to Memphis, TN. He furthered his education in counseling at Rust College in his hometown of Holly Springs and at Shelby State Community College in Memphis, TN. He also studied Human Growth and Development at the University of Memphis in Memphis TN. In 1988, he earned a Master's Degree in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University in New Orleans, LA. A lifelong learner, Curtiss was deeply committed to theology, evangelization, cultural outreach, and social justice.

On December 21, 1968, on a rainy yet beautiful day, Curtiss married the love of his life, Corene, in a heartfelt ceremony at St. Thomas Catholic Church (now St. Augustine Catholic Church). Their union was built on a foundation of faith, love, and enduring devotion, and together, they raised three children: Chrystal, Curtiss Carlos, and Chemberly. As a husband and father, Curtiss led with quiet strength, deep wisdom, and a profound sense of responsibility. He was a pillar of guidance, always ready with a listening ear and words of encouragement. His patience knew no bounds, his love was steadfast, and his lessons—rooted in faith, integrity, and compassion—became the guiding light for his family. Through his unwavering presence, protection, and teachings, he instilled values that will continue to shape the lives of those he cherished most.

Curtiss had an insatiable thirst for knowledge, finding joy in reading everything from theology to history to poetry. He loved deep discussions and sought to understand the world around him. A devoted sports fan, he enjoyed watching both men's and women's athletics from his favorite armchair. He challenged his mind with brain teasers, found peace in long walks, and appreciated good food shared with loved ones. Curtiss embraced life with intellect, joy, and reflection, leaving behind a legacy of wisdom, curiosity, and a love for learning that continues to inspire those who knew him.

Deacon Talley devoted his life to faith, family, and service, recently celebrating 47 years of ministry after his ordination by Bishop Dozier on January 7, 1978. He served multiple parishes in Memphis, holding roles such as Director of Social Ministry Outreach, Pastoral Associate, and Director of Evangelization Ministry. In 1985, he became the first Director of Multicultural Ministries for the Catholic Diocese of Memphis, fostering unity and inclusion within the Church.

As a Deacon at St. Augustine Catholic Church in his later years, he found joy in ministering to others through prayer, service, and acts of charity. Deacon Talley earned a host of accolades for his service over the years, including his most recent: the St. Augustine Catholic Church Lifetime Achievement Award. His tireless dedication to Christ and his community leaves a lasting legacy of faith and love.

A loving son, husband, father, grandfather, sibling, and friend, Curtiss is survived by his wife, Corene Talley; children, Chrystal (Christopher) Gallien and Curtiss Carlos Talley; grandchildren, Anjel Echols, Josiah Forbes, Sha'ona (Jarvis) Hughes, and Shon Coleman; great-grandchild, Aubrey Hughes; and his beloved siblings, Debra Draper Lee, Charlene Calhoun, Brenda Martin, Jaqueline Jennings, Florene Yvette LeSeur, and Earl Draper. He was preceded in death by his parents, Curtis Tally and Jessie (Rucker) Draper; daughter, Chamberly Talley-Forbes; granddaughter, Autumn Bella; and siblings, Anne Dell Anderson, Katherine Lawrence, Gloria Jean Watkins, Gary Draper, Tony Tally, and Ronnie Draper.

The family of Deacon Curtiss J. Talley finds peace in his legacy of faith, love, and service. His wisdom, kindness, and devotion impacted countless lives, and while he will be deeply missed, we celebrate the joy he brought to all who knew him. We are grateful for the love, prayers, and support from family and friends and ask that his memory be honored through acts of kindness and faith.