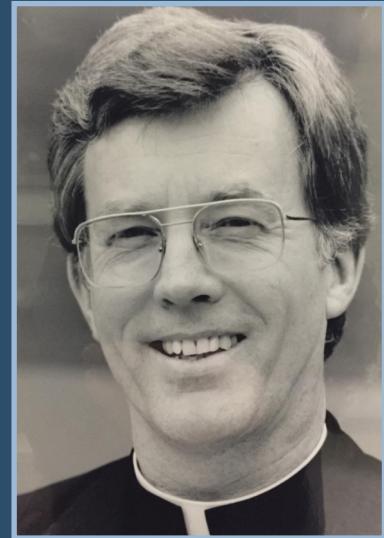


# Remembering Father Norris

Following the special newsletter announcement of Father Edwin A. 'Gregory' Norris' death, last Thursday, June 22, I received several email reminiscences, worth sharing, I believe. You'll find them below, and [here's a link to the obituary from the June 28 edition of the Dallas Morning News.](#)

- Fr. Raymond +



**From Father Bob Petite, Current Ascension Assisting Priest**

Patrick, Thanks for the news re Fr. Norris. He was a wonderful priest and joy to minister with. Hope you and your family are doing well.

*Bob*

**From Father Steven Giovangelo, former parishioner and vestry member, sponsored by Ascension for ordination (Deacon, 1977, Priest, 1978), now retired in Indianapolis.**

Hi Fr Patrick,

Steve Giovangelo here in Indianapolis.

I was saddened (but not surprised) to learn of Gregory Norris' passing—a wonderful pastor and priest. He was my sponsoring rector at Ascension and I served on vestry a couple of times during his tenure prior to my entrance into Seabury-Western Seminary. He was, as you noted, dearly loved and a superb liturgist who had a 'knack' for making all the acolytes etc comfortable at the altar and not nervous. He was also fun to be around socially, had a good sense of humor and I wonder how many know that when he was able, apart from Ascension pastoral duties, he played cello or violin in the Evanston Symphony and was an accomplished musician; I heard him play a few times.

For those of us who claim Ascension as our first parish, (and indeed I was hoping to visit with my husband the past several months but—of course COVID stopped all that) for those of us who remember Gregory Norris, he was a warm, caring and faithful priest and pastor.

I hope you are coping in these unusual times and I appreciate getting the online Ascension emails. God's peace and grace to you Patrick.

Steve

**Father Lister Tonge, Dean of Monmouth/Newport, Wales, once lived in the Ascension coach house while enrolled in academic studies in Chicago.**

Dear Patrick,

I was sad to read of Fr Norris's death, though I never knew him. He had only recently left The Ascension when I showed up. Fr Taylor (in his brown suit) was interim Rector. We shall pray, here, for Fr Norris's eternal repose. He was a much-loved fellow pilgrim who will now have reached his journey's end.

We are now back in church but only for live-streamed masses. Life is busy as I prepare to move all my belongings to my retirement home on Monday. I am taking my summer leave to make the move and then returning here to finish off as dean, retiring on 31st August, at long last. Can't wait.

I'll be across as soon as travel restrictions permit. It is high time for my annual retreat at the Cenacle, when they reopen.

I hope life has improved for you and yours and that the challenges of the Ascension do not keep you away at night. You and your family and the people of the parish continue in my prayers.

See you before too long, I hope.

*Lister*

**From Father Jason Parkin, Rector, Church of the Holy Comforter, Kenilworth**

Dear Patrick,

I hope you and your family are well, and holding up as well as possible during these challenging and unique times!

I am writing because Jim Drury and Jim Berger forwarded to me your message yesterday about Gregory Norris' death, and I wanted to pass along my sorrow, as well as few memories. [My mother] was on the vestry under Greg in the 1980s, and sang in the choir for a few years in the mid 70s. He was an important figure in our family's life: he prepared my then-girlfriend, now-wife for reception into the Church in 1981; sponsored me for seminary; officiated at our wedding in 1984; and put up with my teenage shenanigans in the choir loft during his sermons back in the 70s.

I was the person who convinced him to withdraw his name after three ballots when he had been nominated from the floor during the Suffragan election that brought us Bp. Wiedrich (he had had no desire to be bishop: he simply was the one put forth by the old Catholic Clerical Union in their desire to deadlock the voting, but his candidacy was pushing the election toward the last person that group would have wanted to see get elected).

I joined the choir at Ascension at the absurd age of 15 when hired by Roy Kehl, and stayed there until heading to Nashotah in 1982, and also served on the vestry under Fr. Norris when in college, so he was a constant in my life during those important years. My mother was on the vestry that interviewed me for candidacy, but recused herself from the discussion, even though she stayed in the room, much to Gregory's amusement. He and I jokingly argued for years about the comparative worth of Wagner as over against Palastrina, he favoring the former, I the latter, with neither winning.

*Continued ...*

Our connection to George [Monroe, Fr. Norris' longtime friend/companion/partner] goes back even further, to his arrival at St. Luke's, Evanston, as curate in 1968, the year I became head chorister. Our family loved him immediately, and he, and eventually the two of them, were regular guests at dinner and cocktail parties during my adolescent years and beyond. Indeed, one of the funniest meals I ever remember experiencing was a farewell dinner for Jerry Manning and Don Schmidt, long-time St. Luke's and Ascension members and dear family friends, as they headed to South Carolina (Don worked for my father, starting in 1953, and died just last year; my Mom stays in close touch with Jerry, who is now in Georgia). Present were the honorees, my father and mother, second brother Jeff, wife Jan, Bob Brotherton (Don's former partner), Fr. Allen Wilborn (who preached at our wedding), and George and Gregory. It was a truly raucous, hysterical evening. We had a lot of fun at Ascension in those days, largely because of all of these wonderful men and others like them. Gregory's main role that evening was to laugh at George, Don, my father and brother, all of whom were or are very funny people, and he loved it.

I am so glad I got to see both George and Gregory at Bp. Montgomery's funeral last fall: they each looked wonderful, so news that Greg had died yesterday was both a source of sorrow and something of a shock.

There's no real point to this message other than just indulgently to share with you some of my connection with, and love for, Gregory and, indeed, my entire experience at Ascension from 1974 to 1985. I know full well—and you and I have even talked about this—how difficult it can be to hear one's predecessor lauded, but Gregory's time was far enough removed from yours, and so much water has flowed under the Ascension bridge in the meantime, that I hope you don't mind. Even though I have not been there in years, I still love Church of the Ascension, and pray for your ministry and the people there.

Faithfully,

*Jason*

Condolences may be sent to:

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