

## Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Coll

August 13, 1930 - April 20, 2026

Monsignor Robert J. Coll of Naples, Florida devoted his life to parish ministry, education, and humanitarian service around the world. He is remembered with deep gratitude for his faith, compassion, and unwavering commitment to the poor.

Born on August 13, 1930, Monsignor Coll was the son of the late Edward A. Coll and Margaret A. (Dreger) Coll. He was raised in the Philadelphia area in a devout Catholic family, who valued faith, hard work, and service to others. A graduate of St. Joseph's Preparatory School, he embraced the Jesuit ideal of being a "man for others," a conviction that stayed with him as he discerned his vocation. After attending Saint Joseph's University, he followed his calling, graduated from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, and was ordained on May 7, 1959.

Early in his ministry, Monsignor Coll served in the Lehigh Valley as a professor at Notre Dame High School in Easton and as Catholic chaplain at Lehigh University in Bethlehem. In 1961, he became a priest of the newly established Diocese of Allentown.

From 1966 to 1980, Monsignor Coll served as the founding pastor of St. Thomas More Church in Allentown, where he helped build a community rooted in family and service. There, in 1975, he created Operation Rice Bowl as a local Lenten response to hunger in Africa, encouraging families to share a simple meal and donate the savings to help the poor. What started as a local effort in Allentown has grown into a national program of Catholic Relief

Services, raising more than \$350 million in 12,000 parishes nationwide. That enduring legacy reflected Monsignor Coll's conviction that the smallest acts of sacrifice, offered faithfully, could become instruments of grace and hope.

In 1980, Monsignor Coll joined Catholic Relief Services as Assistant Executive Director in New York City and later served as its European Director in Rome until 1985. His ministry took him far beyond the boundaries of parish life and into the center of some of the world's most urgent humanitarian crises in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and South America.

Monsignor Coll was known not simply as an administrator, but as a priest willing to go where suffering was greatest. During the Lebanese Civil War, he accompanied Mother Teresa through active war zones to reach her community of missionaries, who were caring for disabled children and elderly victims. Amid the devastating Ethiopian famine, he acted as the on-air guide for CBS's Mike Wallace during the landmark 60 Minutes report from the famine's epicenter to bring global attention to the crisis. Following the assassination of Archbishop Óscar Romero in El Salvador, Monsignor Coll became a voice for the poor with political leaders in Central America. His courage helped build awareness, credibility, and support for global relief at critical times.

During this time, Monsignor Coll also promoted interfaith cooperation in the fight against hunger. In the mid-1980s, he served as Executive Director of the Interfaith Hunger Appeal, helping unite Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish organizations in support of humanitarian relief. His leadership reflected a lifelong belief that service to the poor could unite people across religious and cultural lines.

In 1987, Monsignor Coll returned to parish ministry as pastor of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Bethlehem, PA where he served until his retirement in 1996. Parishioners knew him as a thoughtful pastor, gifted preacher, and priest whose local ministry had been enriched by global experience.

During those years, Monsignor Coll also continued his intellectual and

canonical formation. In 1992, he took a sabbatical for graduate studies in Rome and earned a Licentiate in Canon Law from the Pontifical Lateran University.

Named Pastor Emeritus in 1996, Monsignor Coll remained active in priestly service and deeply engaged in the life of the Church. During retirement, he continued serve and build communities rooted in faith in Naples, FL, championing the creation of St. Agnes Catholic Church. Later, he became a familiar and beloved presence at St. John the Evangelist Parish, regularly assisting with daily and weekend Masses. His long priesthood was celebrated there in 2019 on the 60th anniversary of his ordination.

Monsignor Coll is remembered not only for the titles he held or the institutions he served, but for his love for those most in need. Whether he was preaching in a parish, walking through a refugee camp, or advocating for the poor, he embodied the idea that no suffering person is ever far from the heart of God, and no act of compassion is ever too small to matter.

Monsignor Coll was preceded in death by his parents, Edward A. and Margaret A. (Dreger) Coll; his brothers, Edward A. Coll Jr. and Joseph C. Coll; his sister, Nancy C. Gibbons, and her husband, Richard E. Gibbons; and his niece and nephews, Loretta Coll, Francis Coll, and Robert J. Coll II. He is lovingly remembered by his sister-in-law, Betty Coll, and by the sons he guided as their guardian. He will be deeply missed by generations of nieces and nephews in the Coll and Gibbons families. The family extends heartfelt appreciation to Sue and Michael Adams for their loving and devoted care. Beyond his public ministry, Uncle Bob, as he was known to his family, presided over many weddings, baptisms, and gatherings. Despite his busy schedule, he was always present, ready to listen, and generous with his guidance and advice. His larger-than-life presence will be deeply missed. From Philadelphia to Allentown, from Bethlehem to Rome, from Beirut to Ethiopia, Monsignor Robert J. Coll lived the priesthood as a mission of compassion, courage, and faithful service. His legacy lives on in the faithful

communities he shaped, global reach of Operation Rice Bowl, and countless lives he touched.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00 AM on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church 625 111th Ave. N., Naples, FL. Visitation will be held from 10:00 AM until the time of the Mass. Honorary pallbearers are Jim O'Connor, Joe Topper, John Leone, George Pfothhauer, Joe Fitzpatrick and Buzz Zaino.

For those unable to attend in person, the Mass will be livestreamed at <https://sjecc.org/funeral-mass/>. A reception for family and friends will follow in the parish life center. Burial will be in the memorial garden at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Monsignor Coll's name may be made to Avow Hospice, Naples, FL, St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Naples, FL, St. Agnes Catholic Church, all of Naples, FL; Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) Catholic Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Allentown, PA.

To sign his guest register or to leave online condolences please visit [www.ShikanyFuneralHome.com](http://www.ShikanyFuneralHome.com).

Arrangements are being handled by Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home Family Owned and Operated Since 1978.

# Cemetery Details

## St. John the Evangelist Memorial Garden

625 111th Ave. No.  
Naples, FL 34108

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAY 12. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church  
625 111th Avenue North  
Naples, FL 34108

## Mass of Christian Burial

MAY 12. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church  
625 111th Avenue North  
Naples, FL 34108

*Live streaming at <https://sjecc.org/funeral-mass/>*

## Reception

MAY 12. 12:15 PM (ET)

St. John the Evangelist Parish Life Center  
625 111th Ave. No.  
Naples, FL 34108



# Tribute Wall

FC

“Monsignor Bob was always bigger than life and when we banded around the highlands of Ethiopia during the great famine back in 84-85 while with CRS he left a large footprint and filled many-an empty stomach and lifted the burdens from Sagging shoulders.—truly a man for all seasons. A priest forever and a man forever! May his memory be eternal. Frank Carlin

---

**Francis X Carlin** - May 14 at 07:18 PM

RS

“Having had the honor of knowing Monsignor Coll from the earliest days of Saint Thomas More Parish in Allentown, I pray that the Lord has welcomed him into paradise with open arms. Monsignor will be long remembered for his vision, compassion and wisdom—qualities that enriched and empowered many across the continents. His enduring accomplishments and his love for all of God's children live on. May he rest in peace and may eternal light shine upon him. Sending my sympathy and prayers to his family.

*Robyn Sherman Sullivan*

---

**Robin Sullivan** - May 13 at 12:00 PM

RB

“Remember visiting a young seminarian, Robert Coll at St Charles with my mother, Anna Rose Hummel Beaty, Monsignor Coll's first cousin. Monsignor Coll assisted my company when we attempting to develop a cocoa composting facility in Ghana in 1985. I will always remember, Monsignor Coll truly as a Man for Others. Rest in Peace

---

**Robert Beaty** - May 12 at 10:32 PM

FD

“ *The most sincere and understanding man we ever met. We were lucky to know him.*  
*The Divon Family*  
*Joe, Fran, Olivia and Sophia*

---

**Fran Divon** - May 06 at 08:40 PM



“ *Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Coll.*



---

May 05 at 10:47 AM

JO

“ *Thank you Msgr Coll for living the gospel with your mind, heart and your feet.*  
*You were Christ's hands in places most of us only read about. You showed the people you touched that love has no borders .*

*The world is a better place because you chose to work with those who had the least .*

*Your OPERATION RICE BOWL initiative will live on forever .*

*Thank you for traveling the world, Including Naples, Florida to prove love has no passport.*

*I will miss our routine breakfasts together. Thanks you for your friendship , Praying for you TODAY AND ALWAYS*

*JIM O'Connor*

---

**James O'Connor** - May 04 at 12:00 PM

DF

“ I remember the formation of St Thomas More church and Father Coll as the founding pastor. Years later joining St. Agnes and discovering Monsignor Coll as an intricate part in its formation; what a special moment introducing my family to the Monsignor. He was a kind and loving spiritual leader, and will always be remembered.  
With gratitude and respect:  
Dan and Miriam Flemming

---

**Dan and Miriam Flemming** - May 03 at 03:57 PM

DF

“ Dan & Miriam Flemming purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Coll.



---

**Dan & Miriam Flemming** - May 03 at 03:45 PM

GL

“ Father Coll married my wife and me at St. Thomas More church in Allentown in 1971. He had an unforgettable personal charisma and was a no nonsense priest. Susan and I remember him fondly as a builder and caretaker of the Church. He is now with our heavenly Father. Well done Monsignor Coll!

---

**Greg Loudon** - May 03 at 02:20 PM

RH

“ Ray and Janice Hurt purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Coll.



---

Ray and Janice Hurt - May 03 at 01:53 PM

RH

“ Ray and Janice Hurt planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Coll.

---

Ray and Janice Hurt - May 03 at 01:53 PM

JS

“ In Honor & Memory of Angel Monsignor Coll. With deep & undying gratitude for all of his loving kindness towards my beloved late in-laws ,Fran & Warren Smith from STM & my beloved late husband,Jim Smith. My very heartfelt & deepest sympathy & many loving prayers for comfort for his loving family. 🙏



---

Joan Lockwood Smith - May 03 at 07:33 AM

SP

“ I remember when Msgr. Coll would come to our home for a visit with our family. He would sing and I would accompany him on the piano. He loved to sing! He also sat with our family at the dinner table. I took a picture of him holding our youngest child on his lap. We loved Msgr. Coll! He was a great priest and he had outstanding vision for our parish of St. Thomas More.

*A founding parishioner and organist (1966-2020) of St. Thomas More Parish, Allentown, Pa.*

*Mrs. Santa Peters*

---

**Santa Peters** - May 01 at 08:14 PM

KP

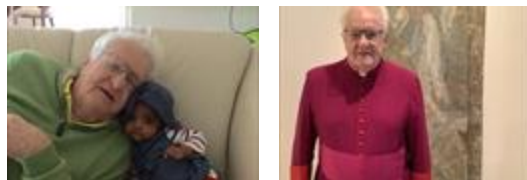
“ Monsignor Coll was our first pastor after our marriage in 1976. St. Thomas More Parish was a vibrant parish that immediately welcomed us and engaged our Catholic mission to prayer & service of others. Thank you to Monsignor Coll for that. May his soul rest in eternal peace. Our heartfelt condolences to his loved ones.

---

**Kim Piergallini** - May 01 at 05:41 PM

AB

“ *May God welcome you with open arms as one of his good and faithful servants; may HE give you eternal rest as you’ve walked for so many years giving hope to the hopeless and opportunities to the young ones including my brothers and I. Thank you, Monsignor, for being the embodiment of Christ’s love and compassion that so many of us need in this tumultuous world. My family and I will miss you deeply!*



---

**Abiy Belege** - April 30 at 01:45 AM

TF

“ *The Ludrof Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Coll.*



---

**The Ludrof Family** - April 29 at 01:05 PM

TF

“ *The Ludrof Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Monsignor Robert J. Coll.*

---

**The Ludrof Family** - April 29 at 01:05 PM



“ Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Coll.



---

April 29 at 09:40 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Monsignor Robert J. Coll.

---

April 29 at 09:40 AM



“ Abiy, Brook & Yohannes purchased the Ocean Breeze Spray for the family of Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Coll.



---

**Abiy, Brook & Yohannes** - April 29 at 06:48 AM