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# **Funeral Mass for Fr Bob Yoest: Livestream from Lagos**

A Funeral Mass for Fr. Robert Leonard Yoest was celebrated on Friday, 20th of February, 2026 at the Divine Mercy Catholic Church, Lekki, at 9 am. Live images were broadcast from the church.

19/02/2026

**Brochure for the Mass.**

**Broadcast Stream.** The streaming started at 8:45 am on Friday, 20th of February, 2026.

## **Fr. Robert Leonard Yoest: The Child Prodigy Who Left Everything for God**

Fr. Robert Leonard Yoest was born on December 10, 1935, to Leonard L. Yoest and Juliana Zelik in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His very existence was a testament to the power of prayer. After years of difficulty conceiving, the couple had nearly given up hope when Fr. Robert, the pastor of St. Boniface Parish, encouraged them to persevere in prayer and trust in God. When their long-awaited child finally arrived, they gratefully named him after the priest who had interceded for them. Four years later, his younger brother Jim was born.

Young Bobby Yoest was nothing short of extraordinary. At age five, he made headlines in the local

newspaper for his ability to read from an encyclopedia and for possessing the IQ of a fourth grader—before he had even started school.

Throughout his education at St. Athanasius School and North Catholic High School, Bobby excelled in both academics and extracurricular activities, earning numerous awards and recognitions. A talented musician, he played the clarinet, saxophone, and piano and was part of the school band. His achievements left such an enduring mark that in 2019, sixty-seven years after graduation, he was inducted into the North Catholic High School Hall of Fame.

Bob graduated *Magna Cum Laude* from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh with a B.S. in Chemistry in 1956. He then pursued doctoral studies at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of

Technology (MIT), earning his Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry while working three summer research stints with Gulf Research and Development Company.

It was at MIT that Bob's life took its decisive turn. In the fall of 1956, he joined the Newman Club and, through friendships formed there, began strengthening his faith practice. He met residents of Trimount House, a university residence established by members of Opus Dei, who were also active in the Newman Club.

Interestingly, this wasn't Bob's first encounter with Opus Dei. As a student at St. Athanasius School in 1945, he had read about the dramatic escape of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo (successor to Saint Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei) and his companions from communist-

controlled Spain during the Civil War in October 1938.

After initially declining several invitations to attend a day of recollection at Trimount House, Bob finally accepted. This decision changed his life. In October 1958, he requested admission to Opus Dei, first as a supernumerary member and, a few months later, as a numerary—embracing apostolic celibacy as a special dedication to God lived out in the midst of ordinary professional life.

Following his doctorate from MIT, Bob accepted an invitation from the then-Msgr. Josemaría Escrivá to train for priestly ordination. He studied at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, earning a Master's degree in Sacred Theology in 1967 and a Doctorate in Sacred Theology in 1968. On August 25, 1968, he was ordained a priest for Opus Dei at the

Basilica of St. Michael in Madrid, Spain.

Fr. Bob Yoest was distinguished by his immediate readiness to serve wherever Opus Dei's apostolates needed him. After ordination, he spent three months in Vigo, Spain, followed by six and a half years in Austria.

In July 1975, Fr. Bob arrived in Nigeria, where he would dedicate more than fifty years of his life:

- **Ibadan (1975-1977):** His first Nigerian assignment
- **Enugu (1977-1980):** The first Opus Dei priest to reside there; two days after arrival, he was appointed chaplain of the Catholic community at the University of Nigeria Enugu Campus and taught at the College of the Immaculate Conception

- **Lagos (1980-1994):** Fourteen years of pastoral service
- **Iroto Conference Centre, Ijebu-Ode (1994-2014):** Twenty years as resident priest
- **Lagos (2014-2026):** His final assignment, where God called him home

Fr. Bob's pastoral approach was marked by genuine personal interest in everyone he met. He immersed himself in local languages, keeping a Hausa dictionary and Yoruba learning materials in his room. He delighted in learning people's native names and would explain their meanings—sometimes revealing nuances even the owners hadn't noticed.

His legendary memory allowed him to recall dates, names, and faces even after many years. In his later years, public Masses and gatherings would see him surrounded by people eager

to reconnect. Behind this remarkable recall was something deeper: authentic concern for people's welfare, especially their spiritual good.

Decades of hearing confessions and giving spiritual direction made him a natural guide for souls seeking to know God better. Even during hospital stays in his final years, he distributed prayer cards of St. Josemaría to hospital workers and patients, and heard confessions whenever needed. He was truly a shepherd whose heart was with the souls around him.

Fr. Bob was diagnosed with cancer over a decade ago, but this didn't deter him from his pastoral duties. He continued giving classes and preaching meditations until it became physically difficult. For his 90th birthday in December 2025, he summoned the strength to preach a

thirty-minute meditation before concelebrating Mass. He served as confessor to an Opus Dei center until his final hospital admission.

When tests revealed his condition had worsened, Fr. Bob faced his final days with characteristic grace. Throughout his hospital stay, he received Holy Communion regularly. It was only the day before he died that he found it difficult to ingest anything. Although he had received the Sacrament of Anointing at different stages of his illness, he was again anointed on that Tuesday. On Ash Wednesday, just minutes before his death, a priest administered ashes to him. Fr. Bob passed away peacefully while a priest recited the prayers for the commendation of the dying. Fittingly, the last prayer offered over him was the Litany of the Saints—a shepherd returning to the Good Shepherd, accompanied by

all the saints he had so faithfully served.

Fr. Bob had spent the greater part of his life seeking holiness, and his love for God and others was unmistakable. He cherished the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, often noting that from ordination until a hospital stay some years ago, he had never omitted daily Mass. He held unwavering devotion to Our Blessed Mother, frequently showing visitors the beautiful image of the Virgin and Child that hung in his room.

As his brother and family members often observed, with his exceptional intellectual gifts, Bob Yoest could have achieved tremendous success in business or academia. Instead, he put all of them to use in serving God in Opus Dei, first as a layman and later as a priest. Fr. Bob was always wherever his vocation led him—

completely available, utterly generous.

Since his passing, condolence messages have poured in from people across all strata of society, each one recounting how Fr. Bob touched their lives with his personal attention and pastoral care.

While we mourn Fr. Bob's passing, we give thanks to God for his life of faithful service. He gave his all. He will be deeply missed by countless people who looked up to him as an example of fidelity and self-giving.

We pray that God grants him eternal rest in the homeland he prepared for throughout his earthly pilgrimage.

*May the soul of Fr. Robert Leonard Yoest and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in perfect peace. Amen.*

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