

FATHER JAMES MCKAY, SM

The Marianist Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **JAMES MCKAY**, priest, of the Siena Woods Community (Dayton, Ohio), who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on October 15, 2015, in Dayton, Ohio, USA, at the age of 98 with 81 years of religious profession.

A scholar of languages, Father Jim served the Society of Mary as a teacher, administrator, community director and chaplain over a span of more than six decades. He is remembered for his mild manner, devotion to prayer and his Irishman's "twinkle in the eye."

James Robert McKay was born on November 14, 1916, in Manifold, Pennsylvania. He was one of 11 children in the family of Edward and Anna (Duffey) McKay. The family moved to Michigan, where young Jim met the Marianists at Holy Redeemer School in Detroit.

At age 14, Father Jim entered the postulate at Mount Saint John in Dayton, Ohio. He began his novitiate there in 1933 and professed first vows on August 15, 1934.

In 1937, Father Jim earned a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Dayton and began teaching religion, Latin and English at Cathedral Latin School in Cleveland, Ohio. He professed perpetual vows on August 8, 1938. That fall, Father Norbert Burns was among the freshmen at Cathedral Latin and remembers well the impression Father Jim made. "Students loved him very much. He was a mild-mannered man – always smiling. No one ever saw him upset or angry," Father Norbert said. He added that in later years, men from that same freshman class would travel to Dayton to visit their beloved former teacher.

Father Jim remained at Cathedral Latin until 1941, when he began studies at St. Meinrad Seminary in southern Indiana. World War II prevented him from attending the Marianist Seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland, which would have been customary.

Father Jim was ordained on May 30, 1944, at Mount Saint John in Dayton. For the next three years, he taught at Purcell High School (now Purcell Marian) in Cincinnati, Ohio.

During the summers, he worked to earn a master's degree in classical languages at Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Father Jim moved to Ponce, Puerto Rico, in 1948, where he ministered as chaplain at Colegio Ponceño and taught religion, English and German. During the mid-1950s, he attended Ohio State University where he continued his study of classical languages while also serving as chaplain of St. Joseph Academy in Columbus.

In 1958, Father Jim returned to Cathedral Latin, where he spent the next six years as its president and principal. It was a peak time for the school, which saw its enrollment swell to more than 1,000 boys.

"Father Jim was president of Cathedral Latin during my first two years as a student. His presence was one of a model Marianist and consummate gentleman," said Brother Joe Kamis, assistant provincial of the Province of the United States. "He practiced the Characteristics of Marianist Education long before they were promulgated by the General Chapter."

Over the next several years, Father Jim taught and was chaplain at Chaminade High School (now Chaminade Julianne) in Dayton (1964 – 1965), at Covington Catholic in Covington, Kentucky (1965 – 1966) and at North Catholic High School (now Cardinal Wuerl North Catholic) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1966 – 1969).

In late 1969, Father Jim was called to minister at the new Bergamo Retreat Center in Dayton. He led retreats and served in a public relations role, remaining there until the fall of 1972. At that time, he returned to high school ministry, serving as assistant principal at Mater Dei High School in Evansville, Indiana, for two years.

Father Jim was appointed director of Bergamo East Conference Center in Marcy, New York, in late 1974 and continued in that post for two years.

Just before his 60th birthday, Father Jim embarked on a new role as parish priest. He began ministry at Emmanuel Church in Dayton in 1976 and remained there for 12 years. "Jim was well suited to Emmanuel," said Father Norbert Burns, who was close to him during those years. "Emmanuel was a conservative, traditional parish, which matched

his temperament,” Father Norbert said. During his tenure at Emmanuel, Father Jim researched and published a history of the parish for its sesquicentennial.

In 1988, Father Jim moved to the Marianist Community at Johnstone Place in Cincinnati, where he provided pastoral services in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and his community. In 1990, he was called to Dublin, Ireland, where he spent a year in ministry with the Spanish/English Institute at St. Laurence College and at the Church of the Apostles.

He returned to the United States in 1991 and served as chaplain for his community at North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh for nearly a decade. He later returned to Dayton, where he lived in the Alumni Hall and Siena Woods communities

“In his later days, Jim enjoyed singing short ditties and songs that were usually Irish,” said Father Bert Buby. “He could make you feel that he was singing them just for you – even applying the words to you with clever additions. He always had a twinkle in his eyes and a beautiful accompanying smile,” said Father Bert.

“Jim also loved praying the Divine Office. He was faithful to all of the hours of the breviary and relished the writings of the saints and fathers of the Church,” Father Bert said.

In 2014, Father Jim celebrated 80 years of profession and 70 years of ordination. He liked to call it his 150th anniversary. In his jubilee reflection, he wrote the following:

“I have been blessed in many ways for accepting the Lord’s invitation to join the Marianists. The call of Jesus, always challenging and sometimes difficult, could not be any plainer or any more straightforward: ‘Come follow me.’ As a Marianist, I have in Mary the most perfect example of response to Jesus’ call, and from her an invitation to share in her own formula for doing so: ‘Do whatever He tells you.’”

May he rest in peace.