

James McManamon, O.F.M.

August 11, 1922 – December 11, 2015

When I heard that Jim McManamon died, my mind drifted back to 1976 – the year I met Fr. James. He was the Guardian at St. Joseph Friary in Cleveland, Ohio. I moved to Cleveland that summer to begin the year of postulancy with eight other men. St. Joseph Friary was chosen as one of the Houses of Formation for this Program.

How does one describe this unique friar of the Sacred Heart Province? To accomplish this task, I believe we must go back to the early years of Jim's life.

Terence McManamon was the son of the late Joseph and Catherine Moran McManamon. He was born on the Feast of St. Clare and would tell people he was destined to be a Franciscan. Jim was one of five children and grew up in Cleveland. He was baptized at St. Ignatius Parish and confirmed at Our Lady of Angels, a parish staffed by our friars. Jim was of Irish descent and very proud of that fact.

What is unique about Jim is that he followed not only one brother into St. Joseph Minor Seminary but two brothers. Many of us knew his brother John but few of us may remember his older brother Joseph.

In a letter written to Jim a year ago by Provincial Minister Bill Spencer, O.F.M., Bill wrote the following.

Thank you for sharing the obituary from the newspaper for your brother, Joseph McManamon. A surprise was that your brother spent six years at "Westmont." Your letter mentioned the "foundation he received at St. Joe's Sem.," but until I read the obituary, I didn't realize that he left in or after the Sixth Class.

Jim persevered in seminary life along with his older brother John. In 1942, Jim was in the Fifth Class at St. Joseph Seminary and his brother John was in the Sixth Class. It was during this time the United States was entering into World War II. According to John Ostdiek, O.F.M., a classmate, the Province decided to "graduate" the Fifth Class with the Sixth enabling Jim and his brother John to enter the novitiate together. Both were ordained on June 24, 1949.

For almost the next forty years Jim dedicated his life to the ministry of education as a teacher, Superintendent, College President, Newman Center chaplain and archivist. It was a ministry he truly loved.

When the Academy of Franciscan History in Washington, D.C. closed in 1989, Jim chose to return to Cleveland, the city of his birth. He was very close to his large Irish family and he was able to re-connect with family and friends.

In 1990 he volunteered to be Parochial Vicar at Holy Family Parish in Parma, a ministry he was dedicated to for the next thirteen years. When his health began to decline, Jim chose to become a resident at Mt. Alverna Village in Parma. Living there gave him the opportunity to be closer to the friars in Brooklyn and also to his family.

In a letter to Provincial Minister Michael Perry, O.F.M., dated February 17, 2009, Jim wrote the following.

I wish to thank the Province for allowing me to reside here at Mt. Alverna. My nieces and nephews visit me regularly twice a week, and make sure I am present for all family events, e.g. Baptisms, Graduations, etc. May the Lord, His Blessed Mother, and St. Francis continue to bless you and your administration.

The years Jim lived at Alverna Village were certainly a blessing for him and for his family. As Jim was praying the rosary with his nephew on the evening of December 11th, he died peacefully from complications of pneumonia.

The funeral liturgy of our brother Jim began with a Wake at Chamber's Funeral Home on the evening of December 17th. The next morning his body was brought back to Alverna for a special prayer service with the residents. Fr. Doug Makowski, former friar of the province, led the prayers. The Liturgy of Resurrection was celebrated at Holy Family Church in Parma – the Church Jim served for thirteen years. Provincial Vicar Michael Jennrich, O.F.M., presided and Ted Haag, O.F.M., preached the homily.

Jim planned the entire funeral liturgy. The Church was filled to capacity to remember and give thanks to God for our brother. As Ted reflected on the Word of God he told the assembly,

“Jim’s life was a homily.” “The homily of his life helps us to discover the spiritual meaning of the word that God spoke to him and speaks to us.” The Scriptures he chose: “The souls of the just are in the hand of God,” “No one lives for oneself...in life and in death we are the Lord’s,” “I am the way and the truth and the life...” speak about the journey of our brother Jim whose God was at the center of his life. Jim’s entire life was based on faith and trust and the confidence he placed in God.

Aware of his own accomplishments, Jim was also aware in more recent years how much God had blessed his life as a friar and a priest. He would never say “thank you.” His response was “God love you.” Filled with the love of God, blessed with the blessings of God, he never kept it to himself, what was received was used and shared for the good of others.” Responding to the blessings of God, Jim was faithful to his Franciscan calling as a friar and a priest.

Jim is survived by one brother, Thomas McManamon and his wife Betty; a sister-in-law Ann; 14 nieces and nephews; many great nieces and nephews and his Franciscan family. We express our deepest sympathy to them and to all those who knew and loved him.

Jim was laid to rest alongside his Franciscan brothers at Holy Cross Cemetery in Brook Park, Ohio. Jim was buried with a green sweater under his habit, an Irish Cross, and an Irish Tam, the one he wore for many years. He was “Irish” to the end.

I would like to conclude with the words of Ted Haag, O.F.M.

As we return Jim to God today, we listen to and cherish the homily of his life with thankful hearts - for the word of faith and hope, of light and life that God has spoken to us in him. We will remember and we will give thanks for Father Jim and say with him, not just in word but also in deed: “God love you.”

John Dombrowski, O.F.M.

In your kindness, please consider making a donation in memory of James McManamon, OFM, to the Development Office of the Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart.

Please send your charitable contribution to:

St. Anthony Friary

3140 Meramec Street

St. Louis, MO 63118-4399