

Father James Farrell, C.Ss.R. (1916 - 2013)

Joyous hymns and tributes wafted throughout St. Patrick's church during the Mass of Resurrection for Rev. James Farrell, the oldest and longest serving confrere in the Edmonton-Toronto Province.

In his homily, Provincial Superior Mark Miller read Superior General Michael Brehl's tribute. "Jim was a great man. One of the most non-judgmental and kind people, a great preacher, beautiful voice to sing, welcoming and hospitable."

Fr. Farrell died at the age of 97 on September 11 at LaSalle Manor in Toronto, where he had lived since 2010. His body was buried in the Redemptorist plot in Mount Hope cemetery, Toronto.

The fifth of six children, James Joseph Farrell was born on June 16, 1916 in Montréal and was baptized in the Redemptorist parish of St. Ann's. During the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic, his father died and Jim grew up in Griffintown, the Irish enclave of Montréal, attending local schools of St. Dominic's, St. Patrick's and St. Ann's. He served as an altar boy at St. Ann's church. His older brother Tom entered the Brothers of Christian Instruction, becoming a teacher and founded the order's Walsh College, a liberal arts college in Canton, Ohio, serving as its first president (1960-1970).

From the age of 11, he said he "talked about being a C.Ss.R. At fourteen after some overtures to go the diocesan Petite Seminaire, I followed my heart...I just liked the Redemptorists and their ways. My family was pro C.Ss.R."

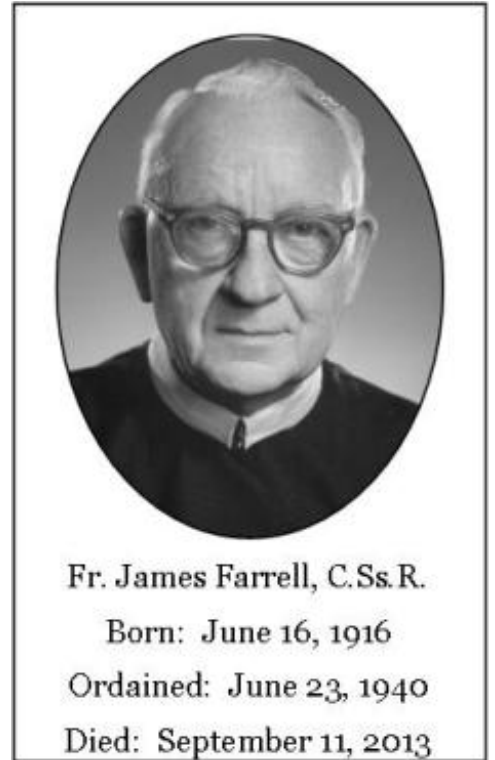
In 1930 at the age of 14, young Jim arrived at St. Mary's College in Brockville, ON, graduating in 1934. A few weeks later, he entered the Novitiate in Saint John, NB under Novice Master Rev. James Fuller. In later years, he wrote, "I was professed on August 2, 1935 and have never seriously thought of any other way of life."

After seminary studies at St. Alphonsus seminary in Woodstock, he was ordained there on June 23, 1940 by Bishop Thomas Kidd of the London Diocese. Fr. Farrell celebrated his first Mass at St. Brendan's in Montréal with Fr. Alexander McNeil, C.Ss.R., as preacher.

For 30 years, Fr. Farrell served in Redemptorist parishes: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Vancouver (1941-1946); Holy Redeemer, Sudbury (1960-1967, rector and pastor 1964-1967); St. Alphonsus, Peterborough (rector and pastor 1968-1974, 1983-1984) and Our Lady of the Assumption, Toronto (1953-1960, 1984-1988 rector and pastor, 1986-1988).

In his later years when living in Toronto at the Provincial Residence (1988-2002) and at St. Patrick's parish (2002-2010), he returned to all of the parishes for special events and pastoral assistance. Parishioners from each of the Ontario parishes attended his funeral in Toronto. Meanwhile in Vancouver, parishioners attending the weekday Masses scooped up the dozens of a reprinted 2010 Community Connections article about him, which pastor Fr. Rich Luberti had left at the back of Our Lady of Perpetual Help church.

Tall, dignified and a sunny disposition with an infectious chuckle and laugh, he described the "happy part of my life



Fr. Farrell graduating from St. Mary's College, Brockville, Ontario in May 1934

Photo courtesy of the Archives

was ... music." A rich baritone voice, he credited seminary singing with nurturing a life-long communication through song inside and outside of church. During a visit to Sudbury in the mid-1990s, he sat on the hill overlooking the proposed site of the new church, singing "Jerusalem" to musically bless the ground. In the mid-2000s, his singing of favourite Redemptorist hymns was captured on a DVD.

Following the first pastoral appointment in Vancouver, Fr. Farrell attended Second Novitiate and joined the mission bands in Peterborough (1947-1949) and Saint John (1949-1953). During that time in Saint John, he organized a men's choir and was involved with the young people in the parish when recovering from the demanding years of the mission band.

Sister Hilda Lunney, SOS, recalled this time in Saint John. "He was a second father to us at St. Peter's parish when we were growing up. We all loved him dearly and have fond memories of him."

After the Second Vatican Council, he attended the Divine Word Institute in London, ON (1967-1968) for pastoral renewal courses. Later he established the programs for Marriage Encounter and Engaged Couples in southwestern Ontario while living at Holy Redeemer College, Windsor (1974-1981). Throughout the years, he has kept in touch with many of the couples he instructed and married, even to the point of marrying their grandchildren. For the Redemptorist students, he lived at Gerard House, Toronto, (1981-1983) as a senior presence.

Throughout his Redemptorist life, Fr. Farrell made confreres, parishioners and friends sing and laugh. Rev. Peter McKenna, SCJ, added, "after spending time with Jim, (I) walked away feeling valuable, special and somewhat 'unburdened.'"



Fr. Farrell at Holy Redeemer in Sudbury in 2005

Photo courtesy of the Archives