



SECRETARY OF THE PROVINCE

REDEMPTORIST PROVINCIAL RESIDENCE

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Bro. Tom Rochacewicz: Of Sales and Souls

Redemptorist Brother, Thomas Robert Rochacewicz, was born on June 17, 1944 in Montclair, New Jersey. He professed his first vows on August 2, 1964 and made his final profession on August 2, 1968 in Ilchester, Maryland. He died peacefully amidst the prayers of his confreres on May 10, 2015 at St. John Neumann Residence / Stella Maris in Timonium, Maryland. He was 70 years old.



Brother Tom Rochacewicz, CSSR

A Funeral Mass will be concelebrated in the community chapel on the fifth floor of Stella Maris on Thursday, May 14 at 11:45 AM. A wake service will be held at 7:30 PM on Friday, May 15 in the lower church of the Basilica of OLPH in Brooklyn. And a Funeral Mass will be concelebrated at 10:00 AM on Saturday, May 16 at OLPH with interment at the Cemetery of the Resurrection on Staten Island.

Following his first profession Brother Tom began his ministry of domestic work at the Redemptorist College Seminary at Suffield, Connecticut. He returned to Ilchester to complete his second novitiate and was stationed at the Redemptorist infirmary in Saratoga Springs, New York where he cared for the aging confreres. Next he returned to Ilchester as a member of the permanent community for three

Brother Tom Rochacewicz I

years until he moved to St. Michael's in Baltimore, Maryland in 1972 where he worked for the next fifteen years. In 1987 he relocated to New York City for ten years where he served at the Redemptorist parish of St. Cecilia in Manhattan and at the Provincial Residence in Brooklyn.

He crossed the Hudson River to San Alfonso Retreat House in New Jersey in 1997 and served there for five years until he headed south in 2002 to the Saint Alphonsus Villa in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. Brother Tom returned to the Province and ministered at Holy Redeemer College in Washington DC until the onset of some serious health concerns required his relocation to the Provincial Residence and to assisted-living care in OLPH in Brooklyn. Finally, in 2015 his cancer diagnosis required a final transfer to full-time nursing care at Saint John Neumann Residence in Stella Maris where he died.

Beyond his ministerial duties, Brother Tom took time to represent the Redemptorist Brothers at both the local and the national level. For example, he served on the Provincial Secretariat for the Brothers and also represented our CSSR Brothers at the Aquinas Institute of Theology Convocation in Dubuque.

In addition to his culinary skills and his tireless work ethic in all of the communities where he was stationed, Brother Tom also served as the official photographer for many of the ceremonies that took place in the Province, Vice-Province and Caribbean Region.

Taking his cue from the Gospels which proclaim that deacons are ordained to assist the priests in serving the temporal needs of the poor, Brother Tom was certainly ahead of his time when, in the early seventies, he approached then Provincial, Father Joseph Kerins, with the idea of becoming a Permanent Deacon. In the meantime he followed very closely in the footsteps of Father George Wichland in his eagerness to lighten the burdens of the most abandoned by distributing food and clothing to the poor and the homeless. He nourished their spiritual needs with his prayers and their physical needs by finding sales and bargains at flea markets, in second-hand thrift shops, and at day-old bakeries!

“He always had a positive attitude,” says his classmate, Brother Stephen Lendvay. “He was a good cook and a good minister. In fact, he was always thinking of the other men, what they needed, and how to take care of them. There were a few times when he may have gone overboard with the buying to the point of running out of storage space for it. But it wasn't because he was thinking of himself. He was kindhearted, generous, and thought of other people first.”

“I cooked with him when I was a novice,” remembers his confrere, Brother David Skarda. “Sometimes we'd take day trips to relax and unwind and Tom was always fun to be with. Wherever we went, the retired senior ladies were drawn to his winning smile and cheerful demeanor. He did have a hearty appetite but what can you expect from someone who was a phenomenal athlete and gifted baseball player. If he had not been called to the CSSR, I'm sure he would have followed up

on the professional offers he received to join the farm leagues. He was really that good! In our life, he was probably one of the most community-minded confreres I've ever met. He will be missed."

"He was always upbeat," says Father Joseph Tizio, the superior of the assisted-living care program at OLPH in Brooklyn. "And he was optimistic, even when I was taking him for his chemo treatments which took a terrible toll on him and caused embarrassing side effects. I have never seen a man bear the indignity of illness with such grace and dignity as Brother Tom did.

"One thing I will never forget is how he was thinking of others right up until the end. When we had to transport him to Maryland for continuous nursing care, his brother brought me a small box that Brother Tom said to be sure to give me. I opened the box and inside was a light bulb. I asked his brother, 'What is this for?' He said, 'Tom noticed there was a burnt out light in the stairwell and he wanted to replace it so that no one would trip and fall in the darkness.'

"If we look deeply enough, we do meet people who help illuminate our way through the dark moments of our lives, even by the dark moments of their lives. They may be the people we least expect. But they're there. And Brother Tom was certainly one of them."