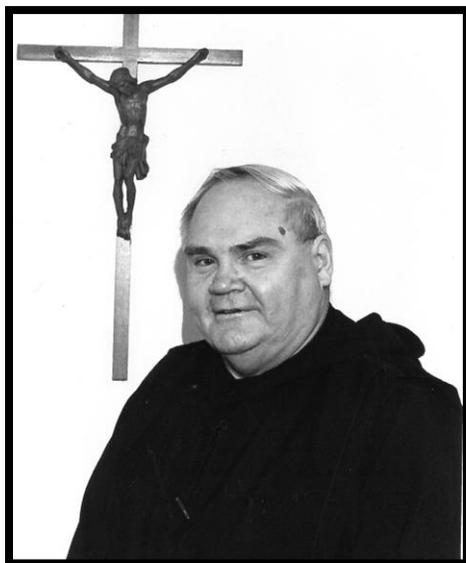


Br. James Joseph Konchalski, O.S.B.

February 15, 1937-September 1, 2018



Joseph Ronald Konchalski was born on the fifteenth of February, 1937, in Newark, New Jersey, to Bronislaw and Stella (née Solinski) Konchalski. Mr. Konchalski, a house painter, died when Joseph was nine months old. His mother was a homemaker. Joseph was baptized at St. Casimir Church, Newark, on the twenty-second of February, 1937. He had an older brother, Frank, who worked as a tool and die maker. Joseph graduated from St. Benedict's Grammar School, Newark, in 1952.

That same year, Joseph applied to St. Mary's Abbey, then located in Newark, as a lay brother candidate. Joseph, while intelligent, was easily discouraged and lacked the discipline to attend high school, though later in life he attended for one year Central Evening High School. When Joseph was sixteen, his mother Stella

remarried. In his letter to Abbot Patrick requesting admission, Joseph wrote he wanted "to serve God in the way He sees fit. The week I spent at Delbarton was most enjoyable."

At the age of sixteen, James was admitted to the novitiate of St. Mary's Abbey. His superior, the late and legendary Fr. Adrian McLaughlin, wrote of Joseph's candidacy: "His age, 16 years, might be considered a handicap but in view of his good spirit, willingness and obedience this factor should not be considered to his detriment." Fr. Adrian, said of the young Joseph: "He is faithful and fairly punctual in his religious duties." Therefore, Joseph Konchalski was admitted to the novitiate in 1953 as a lay brother, assuming the name Brother James.

In 1954, Br. James professed simple vows as a lay brother, on the eleventh of July, the feast of St. Benedict, in the presence of Abbot Patrick O'Brien, in the Abbey Church in Newark. In 1958, on the nineteenth of July, Br James professed perpetual vows as a lay brother, also in the presence of Abbot Patrick.

Whether assigned to Newark or Morristown (as the Abbey had two separate communities in those days), Br. James was engaged in various duties in the monastery, including laundry and cooking. He always had a desire to help others and enjoyed people. Due to his lack of education he served at the monastery as a lay brother and was always faithful to his duties and to prayer. He struggled with anxiety and a need for acceptance throughout his monastic life.

In 1968, as a result of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, Br. James was able to profess solemn vows. He did so on the fifteenth of April, 1968, in the presence of Abbot Martin Burne, in the newly constructed St. Mary's Abbey Church in Morristown. In 1970, Br. James, residing in Morristown after Newark became an independent abbey, requested to transfer his vow of stability to Newark Abbey, where he had spent many fruitful years. In time, however, Br. James desired to return to Morristown, and he formally requested his vow of stability be transferred back to St. Mary's Abbey from Newark Abbey. This became effective on the twenty-

third of June, 1973, with the consent of Abbot Ambrose Clark of Newark Abbey, Abbot Leonard Cassell of St. Mary's Abbey, and Abbot President Martin Burne, the former abbot of St. Mary's Abbey.

On and off throughout the 70s, 80s and 90s, Br. James worked at Delbarton School, among other things in the now-defunct discipline office and later as a Religious Studies teacher. He was also the housemaster of the dormitory after it closed and became a guesthouse.

Br. James continued at various duties as before. Yet somehow happiness eluded him. On the tenth of May, 1980, Br. James was given the privilege of being ordained a permanent deacon in Wilmington, Del., where he had been working at Sacred Heart Parish, then owned and staffed by the abbey, and at a local high school staffed by the Benedictine Sisters of Ridgeley, Md. This was a source of great happiness. He later enjoyed fruitful ministry at Notre Dame of Mt. Carmel Parish, Cedar Knolls, then staffed by the monks of St. Mary's Abbey. There Br. James was most in his element, and fostered the faith of many people, especially the elderly and sick of the parish he would regularly visit. In 2009, Br. James began his last public ministry at Our Lady of Mt. Virgin Parish, Garfield, where he engaged in additional fruitful diaconal ministry, mostly for the sick and elderly of the parish. One hopes that herein was the fulfillment and happiness Br. James sought throughout his life. Ill health meant he had to give this up within a few years.

Another source of happiness and creative outlet for Br. James was flowers. For the last decade of his life, he was the florist for the Abbey Church, till this became increasingly physically demanding. He took pride in his floral arrangements that enhanced the worship space, especially for major feasts and other liturgical celebrations.

In the spring of 2018, when the newly renovated west wing of the monastery opened, to accommodate the needs of senior monks, Br. James was among the brethren honored with one of the new suites. Br. James died in his new room on the first of September, 2018, in the sixty-fifth year of monastic profession and the thirty-eighth of diaconal ordination. Br. James is survived by his sister-in-law, Mary in New Mexico, several nieces and nephews and numerous cousins, and his monastic family.

Br. James' body will be received at the abbey church on Wednesday, September fifth, at 4 p.m. The Office of the Dead will be prayed later that evening at 6:45 p.m. The Funeral Mass and interment will begin at 4:30 on Thursday, September 6. Friends may pay their respects on Wednesday, September 5th from 4-5 p.m., after which a Requiem Mass will be sung. Visitation will continue after the Office of the Dead (c. 7:15 p.m.) until 9 p.m., and continue on Thursday, September 6th, 9:30-11:30 a.m., and 1-4 p.m. Donations in Br. James' memory to support the health care of the monks may be using the following link: <https://www.saintmarysabbey.org/support-us>.

Abbot Richard and the monks of St. Mary's Abbey request the customary suffrages for our brother James.

Abbot Richard Cronin, O.S.B. and the monks of St. Mary's Abbey