

Brother Matthew O'Meara

June 3rd is the anniversary of the death of Brother Matthew O'Meara. James O'Meara, Jr., was born December 4, 1931, in Iowa City, Iowa. He received his elementary education at St. John Catholic School, Des Moines, graduating in 1946. He received his secondary education at Fairfield High School and St. Ambrose Academy, Davenport, graduating in the Class of 1950.

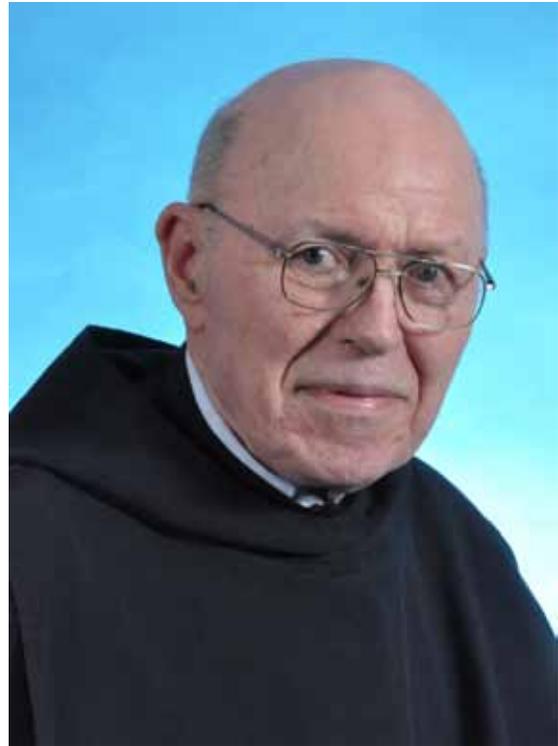
James began his college studies at St. Ambrose College in the fall of 1950, majoring in philosophy. Following the spring semester at St. Ambrose in 1952, James O'Meara was drafted into the military and following basic training, was stationed in Korea from July 1952 until April 1954. He served as Operations Specialist and infantryman for the 3rd Battalion 5th Regimental Combat Team. Upon returning from his tour of duty in Korea, James drove a school bus for St. Mary School in Rock Island, Illinois. He resumed his pursuit of a degree in philosophy at St. Ambrose

during the 1955-1956 academic year, however he had to discontinue his studies because of a need for help on his uncle's farm in Iowa. Between 1956 and 1958 James spent his time working on his uncle's farm, for Farmall Tractors, and as a caretaker for a local cemetery.

In 1958, James felt drawn to discern a calling to religious life. He joined the Oratorians of St. Philip Neri in Rock Hill, South Carolina. There he studied philosophy and theology at Cardinal Newman Oratorian College in Rock Hill. When the college closed in 1963, James spent his remaining two years at the Oratory working as a groundskeeper and in maintenance. In 1965 he made the difficult decision to leave the Oratory and returned to Davenport, Iowa, where he re-enrolled at St. Ambrose College. At St. Ambrose he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy in the spring of 1966.

The years 1966-1978 were, Brother Matthew recalled, "a period of wanderlust for me." In 1966, after brief employment at a small tractor company, he attended the University of Arizona and studied engineering for one year. He worked for an employment agency affiliated with the university, and was moved deeply by the plight of the underprivileged. In 1967, influenced by the work of Dr. Martin Luther King in Chicago, James moved to Chicago and spent the next six years working several jobs: 5th grade teacher in St. Theodore Catholic School on Chicago's south side, advocate for the poor at the State Welfare Agency, US Post Office mail carrier, bus driver for a charter bus company, and lastly as a tour guide for a sightseeing company.

Tired and disillusioned by the bustle of urban life, James moved to New Mexico and took a job teaching social studies and geography to 7th and 8th grades on an Apache reservation. He stayed on the reservation for over one year, before moving on to Boys Town in Nebraska, where he taught remedial math at the elementary level. While working at Boys Town he had heard of the Benedictine monks of Corpus Christi Abbey in Corpus Christi, Texas. Brother Matthew recalled: "The stability of Benedictine life, and the vow of stability, was what attracted me initially, because I felt I'd been drifting for too long. I soon found that service to God and living in community within a simplified, structured, and disciplined way of life pointed to where God was leading me."



In 1977 James O'Meara began the process of applying to Corpus Christi Abbey and was accepted into the Abbey's novitiate in July 1978. James made his first profession of vows as a monk of Corpus Christi Abbey on January 15, 1980, receiving the name Matthew. Brother Matthew made his final profession of vows three years later. While at Corpus Christi Abbey, Brother Matthew worked on the Abbey farm, grounds, garden, and as a plumber and maintenance worker. He also served as Abbey Subprior and Director of Formation for brief periods.

When Corpus Christi Abbey was closed in 2002, Brother Matthew applied to Subiaco Abbey. He arrived in April, 2005, and transferred his stability to Subiaco a year later. During his years at Subiaco, Brother Matthew served our community by assisting in both the Abbey refectory and in maintaining the Abbey cars.

Quiet, gentle, and studious are the qualities that best describe Brother Matthew. In his free time, Brother Matthew enjoyed reading, listening to classical music, and occasionally watching sports events with his confreres.

Suffering from the early stages of Alzheimer's, Br. Matthew entered the Abbey Health Center in the fall of 2009.

At the time of his death, Brother Matthew was 81 years old and had been a professed monk for 33 years. He is buried in our cemetery.