

Sullivan, Rev. James

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Rockville Centre, LI

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A Mass of Christian Burial for Father James E. Sullivan, former director of the diocesan Religious Consultation Center, was celebrated Dec. 16 in the chapel at Immaculate Conception Pastoral Center, Douglaston. A wake and Vigil Mass was celebrated the evening before at Holy Trinity Church, Whitestone.

Father Sullivan, 86, died Dec. 13 at Mercy Hospital, Rockville Centre, after a long bout with cancer. Born in Corona, he attended Cathedral College, Brooklyn, and Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington. He was ordained June 15, 1946, by Bishop Thomas E. Molloy at St. James Pro-Cathedral, Brooklyn.

Father Sullivan served as an assistant at St. Thomas Aquinas, Flatlands, 1946; Our Lady of Angels, Bay Ridge, 1946-63; Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ozone Park, 1963-64; and St. Mark, Sheepshead Bay, 1964-66. In September, 1966, he was named director of the Religious Consultation Center, which was located at One Hanson Pl. in Downtown Brooklyn, while he resided at St. Vincent de Paul Rectory, Williamsburg. He retired in 1992. Since 1986, he has resided at Holy Trinity rectory.t

Father Sullivan also taught at the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health in New York City and was named the Iona College Consoler of the Year in 1986. He was the author of several books, including "My Meditation on the Gospels," "My Meditation on St. Paul," "Journey to Freedom: Path to Self-Esteem," and "To Know Jesus from Within."

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio was the main celebrant of the funeral Mass. Special concelebrants included Msgrs. Celsus Collini, Edward Ryan, John McGuirl, Eugene Feldhaus, and Fathers Robert Blauvelt and James Fraser. Msgr. Edward Wetterer preached the homily.

For more than 20 years Father Sullivan came to St. Michael's, Flushing, each day to celebrate Mass, said Msgr. Wetterer, pastor, who has been at the parish since 1994. Together they would sit down to breakfast after 7:30 a.m. Mass. It was then that Father Sullivan's Irish wit and sense of humor were revealed and a friendship grew in which Father Sullivan shared stories of his large family, Msgr. Wetterer said.

Father Sullivan was "a small man in stature," Msgr. Wetterer said, but he took great pride in his "Fighting Irish heritage." Although he was small, he was "not deterred" and played football while in the seminary, where his teammates were "very protective of him."

But it was the way that Father Sullivan celebrated Mass "very much from the heart and with conviction" that Msgr. Wetterer will remember best. "You could tell from his voice that he put his heart and soul into the celebration of the Eucharist," he said. His homilies were always well prepared and his reverence for the Word extended to writing two volumes of meditations one on the Gospels and another on St. Paul, which were published by the Confraternity of the Precious Blood.

After serving as a parish priest for many years, Msgr. Wetterer said, Father Sullivan studied counseling at Iona College to take on the responsibility of the directorship of the Religious Consultation Center in 1966. After Vatican Council II, "many religious experienced profound questioning" about their vocations and the Center was "very timely" in providing counseling services to them. "Many stayed in contact with him over the years," Msgr. Wetterer said. "It was not a job; he ministered as a priest."

Father Sullivan maintained a "tremendous sense of protection of the confidentiality of the people he counseled."

Father Sullivan is survived by his brother, Daniel of Jericho, L.I.; and his sisters, Madeline Lyons of Amityville, Sister Patricia Sullivan, CSJ, of Northport, and Joan Reid of Flushing.

