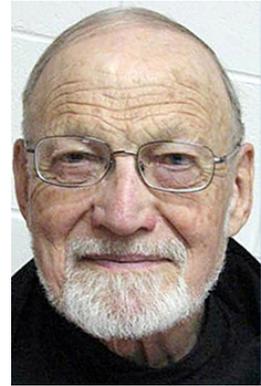


## James Gray, OSB (1927-2009)

A man of culture and learning, Fr. James Gray grew up in the environs of St. Peter's abbey in Muenster, Sask. Born on Feb. 6, 1927, William James Gray received his primary education at Ives rural school, his high school at St. Peter's College and his seminary training at St. John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minn. He made first profession of vows in 1947 and was ordained to the priesthood on June 7, 1953.



Fr. James' interests were wide ranging and eclectic. Through the high school and college English courses he taught, he influenced generations of students through his encouragement of independent thinking and critical evaluation of literary works and current trends in society.

He was editor of the *Prairie Messenger* from 1962 to 1972, and was a strong supporter of the renewal of the Second Vatican Council. Over more than four decades, he reviewed hundreds of books for the *Prairie Messenger*.

In 1972, Fr. James chose to live a solitary life at "Maranatha," a hermitage on abbey grounds, a lifestyle for 30 years. He joined the monastic community daily for the Eucharist and made it his ministry to visit the elderly and sick at St. Mary's Villa in Humboldt every Thursday evening. He also tended the gardens, created beauty spots with flowers and fed the chickadees.

He served the community as subprior from 1966 - 1971 and as novice master from 2002 - 2008. He was a faithful weatherman, making observations every morning and evening for 20 years (1989 - 2009). His visit to Brazil in 1970, and a meeting with Archbishop Helder Camara in Recife, nourished a life-long interest in the abbacy mission there and a concern for the poor and powerless.

A much-sought-after spiritual guide and confidant, Fr. James had a large number of friends with whom he kept in contact through letters and notes.

He died at age 82 on Easter Monday in Humboldt District Hospital, eight days after he was hospitalized for a ruptured aortic aneurysm.

After his death, friends shared their memories of him in the book, "Bush Dweller", his favorite way of referring to himself in his hermitage.

**LINK:** <http://stpetersabbey.ca/wp/>