



**Fr. Placid (Robert)
McSweeney, OCSO**

September 8, 1935 - March 20, 2000

St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, MA



Entered October 6, 1953

Professed November 13, 1955

Ordained December 19, 1959

F^{R. PLACID (ROBERT EUGENE) MCSWEENEY} entered St. Joseph's Abbey on October 6, 1953 at the completion of his high school studies in Manchester, New Hampshire, the place of his birth. His childhood friend Rusty remembers that on frequent visits to Placid's home he could always count on finding him in one of two places: at the piano, or in a chair reading. Placid would continue to cultivate these two penchants during his lifetime in the monastery. In fact, shortly after his entrance, he became one of the monastery's accompanists.

He made his simple profession on November 13, 1955. During the period of his simple vows he continued his priestly studies, already begun during the second year of his novitiate. In the summer of 1958 he was chosen to go to the Abbey of Solesmes in France for further studies in Gregorian chant. Shortly after his return he made his solemn profession on November 13, 1958, and the following year he was ordained to the priesthood (December 1, 1959).

He was destined for further theological studies, however, and in the autumn of 1960 he headed for Rome with a group of other monks of the Abbey for studies at the Angelicum University. He obtained his licentiate in theology and returned to the monastery the following year when he

became professor of theology in the Abbey's program of studies.

In 1964 he requested a leave of absence and spent four years as professor of theology at the University of Illinois' Champaign-Urbana campus, where he also functioned as chaplain of the Newman Club. He later transferred to the Diocese of Manchester, serving in various capacities for three years, after which he returned to the Abbey in August 1972.

After several months as director of the Holy Rood Guild, Father Placid was named liturgy coordinator and music director of the Abbey, offices he occupied for many years. The numerous musical compositions written during this period constitute what was probably his major contribution to the liturgical life of the Abbey.

His theological studies, begun in the monastery and continued in Rome, nourished the ever-deepening stream of his own theological reflection, which he shared at the Abbey in his theology courses for the simply professed, and for the community as a whole in various conferences and homilies. But he was destined to share this talent with an ever-widening audience in his retreat work at the monastery's guesthouse, and in the many workshops and conferences he gave at monasteries both in the United States and Canada.

His writing talents, as well as his capacity for synthesizing materials, won him the job of secretary for the American region of the Order. Subsequently he was called to form part of the secretariat of the General Chapters of the Order in 1993, 1996, and 1999. The travelling entailed by these responsibilities was a particular pleasure for Placid, one he never tried to hide. To gleeful effect, he would relate numerous encounters and experiences from his journeys, spreading his infectious, delightful sense of humor.

During a number of years until his death he served as secretary to the abbot at Spencer and as public relations contact for the Abbey, but for him a most cherished occupation was that of editor of the region's "Mailbag."

Beyond these many important services which Placid rendered to Spencer, however, his great gift was himself. His ever-growing theological culture, always attuned to what was happening in the Church and in the world, made him a valuable contributor to Spencer's life and vision. By a word spoken in a community chapter, or an opinion given in a monastic council meeting, he made us somehow aware of the values which we all hold dear, values to which he was himself totally committed.

