

Former Catholic Review columnist dies at 81

Paulist Father James McCabe, former director of the Family Life Center in Baltimore and a longtime columnist for The Catholic Review, died Dec. 25, 2011 in Toronto. He was 81 and had been battling cancer.

Born in New York, Father McCabe was ordained a Paulist priest May 11, 1957. He was associate director of the Catholic Information Center in Baltimore from 1962 to 1971. The center was designed as an evangelization outreach to those with questions about the faith and those interested in entering the Catholic Church.

Father McCabe became director of Baltimore's Family Life Center in 1971, while continuing his ministry at the Catholic Information Center through 1978. While serving in Baltimore, he initiated a marriage preparation program for inter-faith couples.

For 10 years, Father McCabe wrote a weekly column in The Catholic Review. It answered questions from readers and offered insights on the news of the day.

Monsignor Paul Cook, pastor of St. Joseph in Cockeysville, remembered that Father McCabe was "well-loved" and "well-respected" by the priests of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

"He was very pastoral and related very well to people," Monsignor Cook said. "He was a good homilist and liturgist. He was a wonderful person who enjoyed being with the people."

During part of his time in Baltimore, Father McCabe assisted with weekend Masses at St. Joseph, Monsignor Cook said.

Paulist Father John E. Hurley, executive director of the archdiocesan department of evangelization and one of Father McCabe's longtime friends, said Father McCabe was "one of those people you could warm up to immediately" and was known for being a good listener.

Father McCabe inaugurated much of the adult faith formation outreach in the Baltimore archdiocese following the Second Vatican Council, Father Hurley said. "He was at the forefront of that in the 1970s," Father Hurley said.

Father McCabe's other assignments were in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Toronto, Boston and Austin. A funeral Mass was offered Dec. 29 at St. Peter in Toronto, a church he had served as associate pastor from 1999 until his retirement.