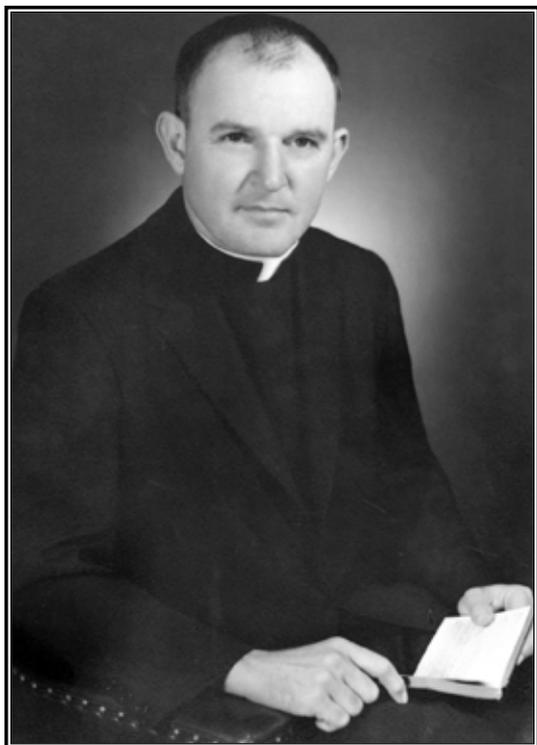


**Reverend Monsignor
James “Jim” Jarlath Dempsey**

Ordained: May 26, 1956

August 11, 1926 - December 31, 2019



Reverend Monsignor James “Jim” Dempsey, 93, of Beaumont, died Tuesday, December 31, 2019, at Christus Hospital-St. Elizabeth, Beaumont.

These simple words mark the end of a long life of ministering – but the impact of Uncle Jimmy/Father Jim will continue for much longer. He loved interacting with people and living life to the fullest. He is described a most kind, generous and understanding man. In a visit he usually asked for five more minutes of your time when you said you needed to leave.

James Jarlath Dempsey Jr., was born on August 11, 1926, to Gertrude Mixson Dempsey and James Jarlath Dempsey Sr., in Beaumont. As a youth Jim attended St. Anthony Elementary and High School. He is remembered in Bulldog football history as the one who caught the extra point in the game against Beaumont High School – leading to St. Anthony winning 13-12.

After high school young Jim enlisted in the U.S. Navy, serving from 1944 to 1946 and was a pilot. Completing his military career Jim came back to Texas to further his education. He enrolled at Texas A&M University and graduated from A&M with a degree in math. He did use that math degree and taught math one summer at Lamar Junior College. It is thought that he is the first A&M graduate to be ordained a Catholic priest.

Though he could have chosen a different life, Jim heard the call to the priesthood and answered that vocational call. In a 2016 interview, he said, “I had been in the Navy two years, then I went to A&M, and then

I said, ‘I’m going to the seminary and give two years of my life to the Church before I get married,’” he said. “I changed my mind while I was there.”

He continued, “I don’t think you can beat being a priest to be honest with you. I don’t think there’s a better job,” he said. “You’re offering the Eucharist and forgiving sins. Sometimes people will come to you and they’re crying because they lost something or someone, and some people come to you because they want to celebrate with you. I’ve found that the priesthood has really suited me.”

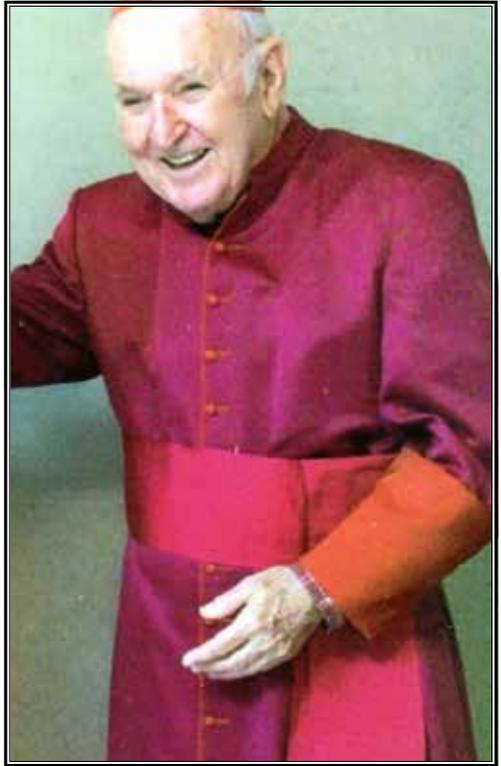
He attended seminary at St. Mary in La Porte and in Houston. Bishop W.J. Nold ordained him May 26, 1956, at St. Mary Cathedral in Galveston for the Diocese of Galveston. Fortunately for Southeast Texas Father Dempsey was assigned to St. Anne in Beaumont when the Diocese of Beaumont was formed in September 1966. Father Dempsey was named a Prelate of Honor by Pope Benedict XVI in September 2009.

Father Dempsey spent most of his ministry as a priest at several parishes – all but one was in Southeast Texas. His first assignment was as an assistant at Blessed Sacrament, Houston. The rest were all in Southeast Texas – assistant at St. Charles Borromeo, Nederland; St. Anne, Beaumont; and Our Lady of the Assumption, Beaumont. He served as pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows, China, and at St. Therese, the Little Flower of Jesus, Port Arthur. He also served as the Diocesan Director of the Cursillo. Father Dempsey was a chaplain at St. Elizabeth Hospital, Beaumont, from 1988 until his retirement in 1999. In an October 2009 interview he said he felt he had an impact on people when he was a hospital



chaplain. “I was able to give them the sacraments and see them in their difficult times.”

Father Eathan Oakes recently shared some thoughts about Father Dempsey. “You may hear it said that Father Dempsey, like all priests, was a ‘Priest of Jesus Christ.’ How true, but it is not merely ordination that makes that title especially appropriate — it was his disposition. He was a priest of Jesus Christ because he was a man who exhibited one of the greatest qualities of Jesus Christ — his love for the people around him.... Of all of the gifts someone can give us, time is one of the most precious because it



cannot be recouped—once it’s gone, it’s gone for good. To give your time to someone is, in essence, to give your life. Father Dempsey spent his time giving it to each one of us. He learned about us, included us in his life, laughed with us, prayed with us, played with us and, sometimes, mourned with us. Like Jesus, he truly, from the heart, made his dwelling among us.”

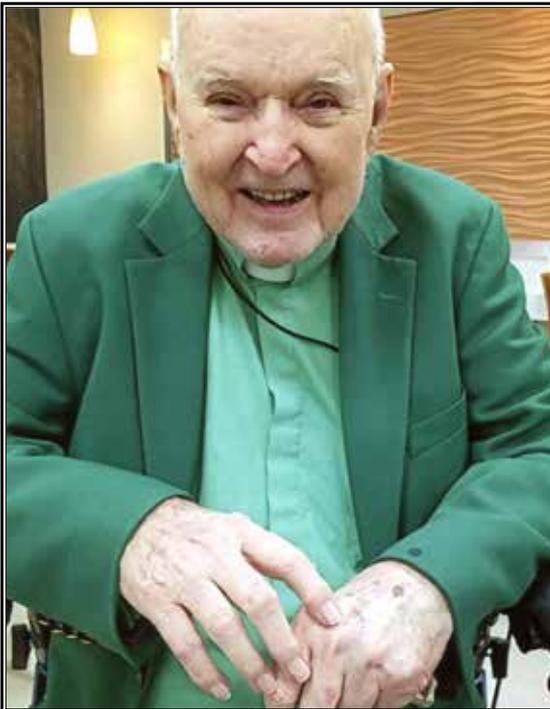
Throughout his life, though his ministry was to the parishes, he was also present to his family as well. They remember Uncle Jimmy bringing his horse to their neighborhood so that they could ride. Another favorite memory is Uncle Jimmy treating them to meals at Bonanza.

Theresa Herink also shared some thoughts about Father Dempsey. “He never judged you and whatever you needed, he would do it for you,” she said. “He had an amazing sense of humor and loved to instigate people,” she continued. She shared some of Father Dempsey’s “favorites – Jason’s Deli, fudge, Sister Emily’s pralines, Little Debbie oatmeal pies, Cheetos, buttermilk, McRib sandwiches but especially

being with people.

Though his last twenty years of life Father Dempsey was officially retired, he rarely took it easy. He continued his priestly ministry celebrating Masses for special intentions and doing parish replacement ministry as long as possible. Father Dempsey would participate in reconciliation services at parishes and would drop what he was doing when he was asked by someone to hear a confession. One recollection is that many times Father Dempsey gave you the penance of the prayer of St. Francis – and would recite it with you or share a copy with you. In an October 2009 interview he said that what he missed about being a parish priest was “administering the sacraments, especially confession.”

In his retirement Father Dempsey continued to stay active in a variety of activities that included knitting scarves, collecting stamps, staying informed on the stock market and visiting with friends and family members. Erin Mulvaney wrote this reminiscence after learning of Father Dempsey’s death about the time they spent together almost ten years before. “He was funny and told great stories. I learned piecemeal about his life. He was at the end of his career and reflecting back. I



was at the beginning of mine, and very scared that I wouldn’t accomplish anything worthwhile. After I left Beaumont, we stayed in touch and he regularly caught up on my life, and he often repeated pieces of advice. He became a subscriber to every publication I’ve ever worked for and read all my stories. This year, he called me on Christmas Eve and told me he was very impressed with me for being in D.C. and asked if I was happy. After we hung up on the short call,



the last time we would talk, I thought about that time in my life years before and how he encouraged me to be ambitious but still made me realize that life is about much more than that.”

Father Dempsey was an athlete as long as he could be – tennis, volleyball, running, horseback riding and other activities. He was known to stand outside of church after Mass looking for a tennis partner. In December 1978, the Port Arthur News featured Father Dempsey in an article headlined “Priest runs for fun.” It included a photo of him and a couple of children from Little Flower Parish running and described him as “probably the most physically active of priests in the Beaumont Diocese.

Another newspaper article – Beaumont Enterprise June 1975 – described his beekeeping hobby. At the time he was pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows in China and had seven hives with a bee population of 50,000 per hive. He harvested about 600 pounds of honey a year.

Though he had a more difficult time getting around in his later years, Father Dempsey continued to go to the Lamar University Catholic Student Center to concelebrate Mass, hear confessions and have

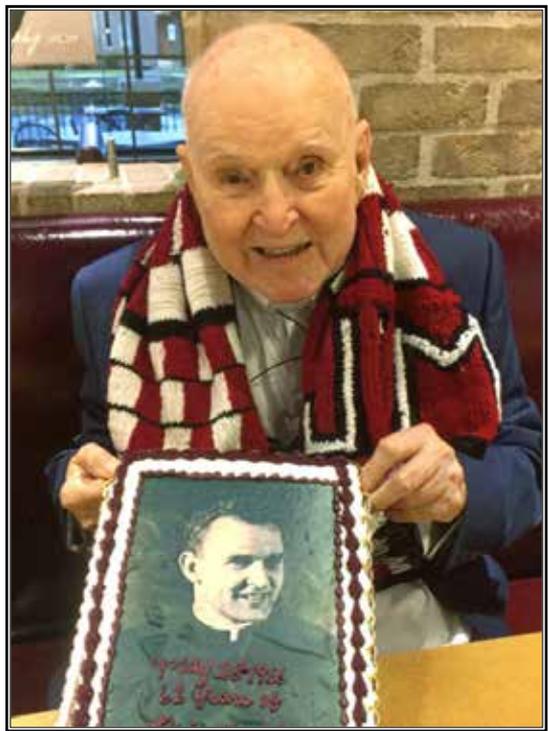
lunch with the students because the youth are important.

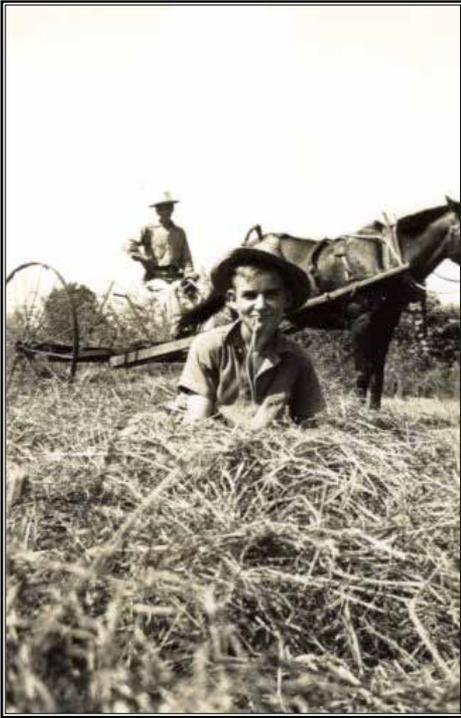
One youth, McKayla Herink had this to say after his death. “Father Dempsey had the kindest heart, most contagious laughter, and most generous soul. I will miss his funny emails and spontaneous phone calls. I know he’ll be looking out for me in heaven. He had so much love to give, always had a listening ear, and will be dearly missed.”

Father Dempsey’s favorite psalm was, “If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” He always preached that and lived it, Toni Mulvaney said. “I think he always looked for God in everything he did in life. I will always think of him when I hear that psalm. The main thing about Father Dempsey is that he loved life. He made the most of every moment. He noticed and respected everything about it — especially people. He knew a lot of them, he made each one feel special. And all of us, we remember him with love.”

Survivors include his nieces, Margaret Sonnier Breaux and her husband, David; Mary Lou Sonnier Pearce and her husband, Tim; and Trudee Swain Markham and her husband, Barry; nephews, Donald J. “Donnie” Sonnier, Jr., and Beverly Moxley; Dr. Leo “Butch” Sonnier and his wife, Kathy; Tom Sonnier; David H. Swain, Jr., and his wife, Brenda; Curtis Swain; and Patrick Swain and his wife, Donna; and numerous grandnieces and nephews.

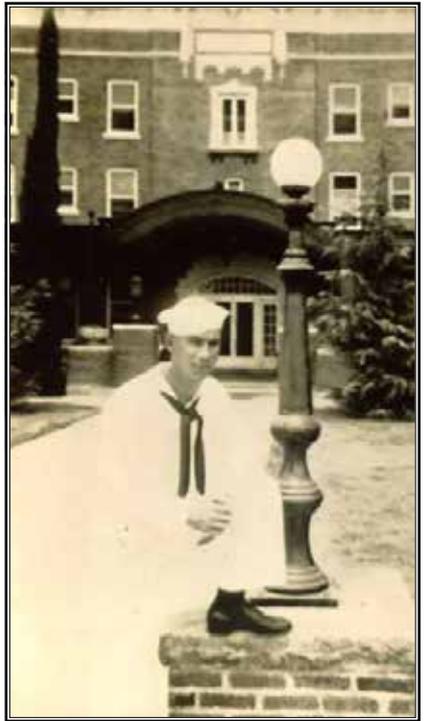
He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters, Trudeen Dempsey Swain and Mary Dempsey Sonnier; nieces, Cheryl “Cup” Sonnier Dana and Therese “Teri” Swain; nephew, James “Jimmy” Sonnier; and grandniece, Molly Ann Swain.

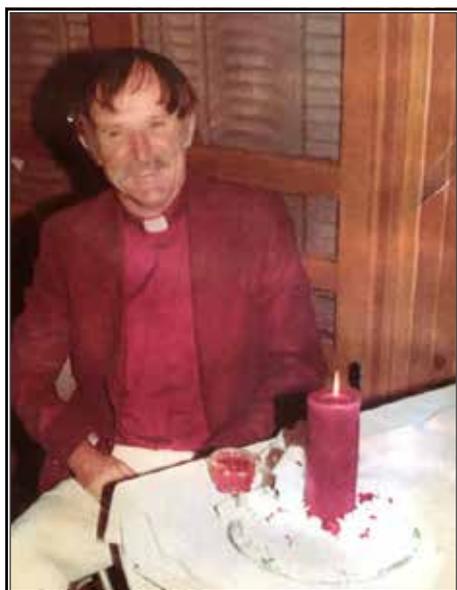


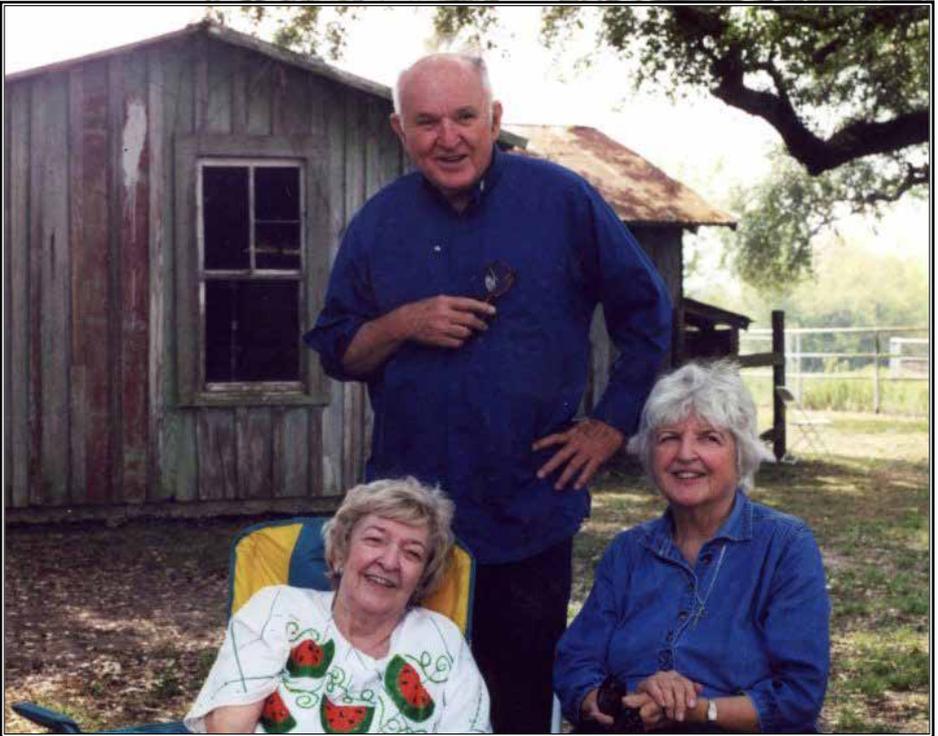
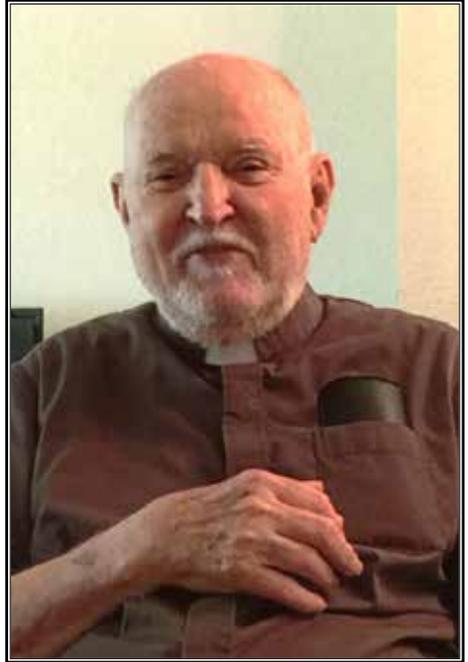
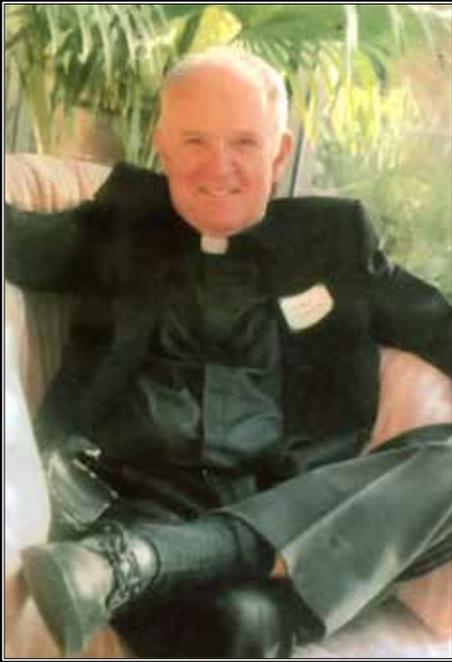


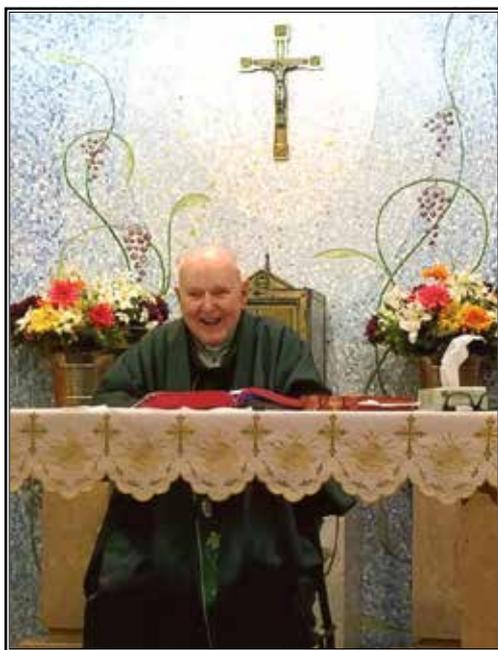












**Celebrant
Placing the Pall**

Most Reverend Bishop Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D.
Jennifer Rice, Lisa Boudreaux, Suzette Mireles
Roby Boudreaux, Theresa Herink, Aurora Resurrection,
Cecilia Sims, Sue Hebert, Toni Mulvaney
Anna Sigur, Gwen Cormier, Esther Salazar
Denise Gary Stasio, Toni Mulvaney

**Gift Bearers
Lectors**

Mass of Christian Burial
Friday, January 10, 2020 11:00 a.m.
St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica
Beaumont, Texas

Interment
Magnolia Cemetery
Beaumont, Texas

Memorial Contributions
Some Other Place
P.O. Box 0843
Beaumont, Texas 77704

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Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas
2780 Eastex Freeway
Beaumont, Texas 77703

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Southeast Texas Food Bank
3845 MLK Jr. Parkway
Beaumont, Texas 77720

*Please join Monsignor James' family for a reception
immediately following the service
in the Cathedral Center.*



Please sign Reverend Monsignor Dempsey's guest book and share your memories at
www.broussards1889.com