

To: The Pine Bush Knights of Columbus
From: Jimmy Dennedy

RE: Reverend Monsignor James S. Conlan "Father Jim"

This is a brief outline of my knowledge and experience with Father Jim Conlan.

Father Jim was born in the Bronx to Richard and Eleanor Conlan on June 9, 1927. Father Jim was born with polio. His parents had just lost a son to polio and were devastated that this could happen to them again. Father Jim grew up and lived his life with a withered leg. As a child, he could not play all the games and sports like the other kids could. When playing baseball, he had to play first base because there was no need for him to move. He eventually entered the seminary because he always desired priesthood. On one occasion while walking to class in the seminary, a Jesuit priest stopped him and asked him if he had polio. Father Jim answered yes. The priest replied "you must feel sorry for yourself, don't you" and walked away. Father Jim was devastated that this apparently healthy man would say something like that to him. Unable to study for the following day's exam, he laid in bed all night not being able to sleep. He was thinking about what he was going to say to that priest when he saw him again. It was about 3:30 in the morning when Father Jim realized that he had always felt sorry for himself and he also realized that the polio was God's gift to him and was meant to direct his life towards God.

Father Jim finished the seminary and was ordained to the priesthood. Father Jim never really wanted to teach but was willing to do any type of parish ministry. As God would have it, he was assigned to teach at Cardinal Hayes and Cardinal Spellman High Schools. It was while he was teaching at high schools that he became aware that the Lord had blessed him with the "gift of healing". At first he was so afraid, that he traveled to the Midwest to meet with a priest who had the same gift. The priest explained to Father Jim that it was indeed a blessing from God and he should not be afraid of it. He was told that when he prayed for healing, he should always pray that "God's will be done". Father Jim returned to New York with confidence.

Father Jim was eventually assigned St. Joseph's seminary in Yonkers. Because Father Jim had such outstanding oratory skills, he was named head of the homiletics department and taught the seminarians how to preach the Word of God.

At the ripe old age of 63 Father Jim was assigned to his first parish. It was the Church of the Infant Savior in Pine Bush, New York. He loved it and the people loved him. As pastor, the church grew to such an extent that Father Jim decided to give up his rectory/residence, which included several bedrooms. The rectory now would be used for classrooms to teach the children their faith and/or adult education. Father Jim moved into a trailer which was purchased by the parish. Father Jim stayed at Infant Savior until he was forced to retire because of health reasons in July of 1996.

On October 14, 2001 Father Jim passed away. His funeral mass was held at his home parish of Infant Savior where, 75 vested priests were on the altar, to concelebrate his funeral mass. The mass was said by Bishop McCarthy. There were dozens of priests and deacons sitting in the pews.

Just a few of Father Jim's accomplishments:

- Received personal permission from Cardinal O'Connor to start "the parish mission's team". The parish mission's team traveled to parishes throughout the Arch Diocese of New York. Well over 500 three day missions were conducted. Hundreds of spiritual, physical, and emotional healings took place. These healings included cancer, broken bones, emotional healings, and marriages that came back together.
- He was asked to be the guest homilist and lecturer at numerous conventions and priests' retreats throughout the country.
- Produced dozens of audio tapes which were used by clergy and lay people alike for guidance.
- Mother Theresa's first trip to America was at the request and sponsorship of Father Jim Conlan.
- He was the founder and first radio host of "Religion on the Line" broadcast in New York City and the Tri-state area.
- He was considered by priests as a "Priest's Priest" and a "Priest's Confessor and Spiritual Advisor".
- Cardinal O'Connor, while he was dying of cancer, wrote a short letter to his old friend Father Jim Conlan. In essence it said "Jim, I am finally able to experience the pain you have suffered all of your life", Signed John.
- Personal sufferings he suffered in union with Christ:
- He lived with life-long polio; Had open heart surgery; Contracted hepatitis C from being given contaminated blood during his open heart surgery.; Cancer.; Diabetes.; Liver transplant.; Kidney dialysis.

Through all of the above Father Jim never complained about the pain but rather valued it. Father Jim was known for always saying "thank You Lord, praise You Lord" no matter what life threw his way.

At the Church of the Infant Savior, many people can still feel his presence and love comforting them. The Church of the Infant Savior was his home.

Dear Brothers,

I believe that our council should be named after Msgr. James Conlan. For those of you who didn't know him, he brought back energy and life to our parish. Everything that he did, he did with great love for the parishioners. He showed that our faith should bring joy and happiness to us all. On a personal note, he baptized both of my daughters and impressed everyone there, including my sister-in-law, a Methodist minister, with the time he took to explain the ceremony to everyone, especially the children.

The other two candidates are exceptional in their own right, but I strongly believe that our council should be named after someone who has done so much for the Infant Saviour parish.

Sincerely,

Ray Perry