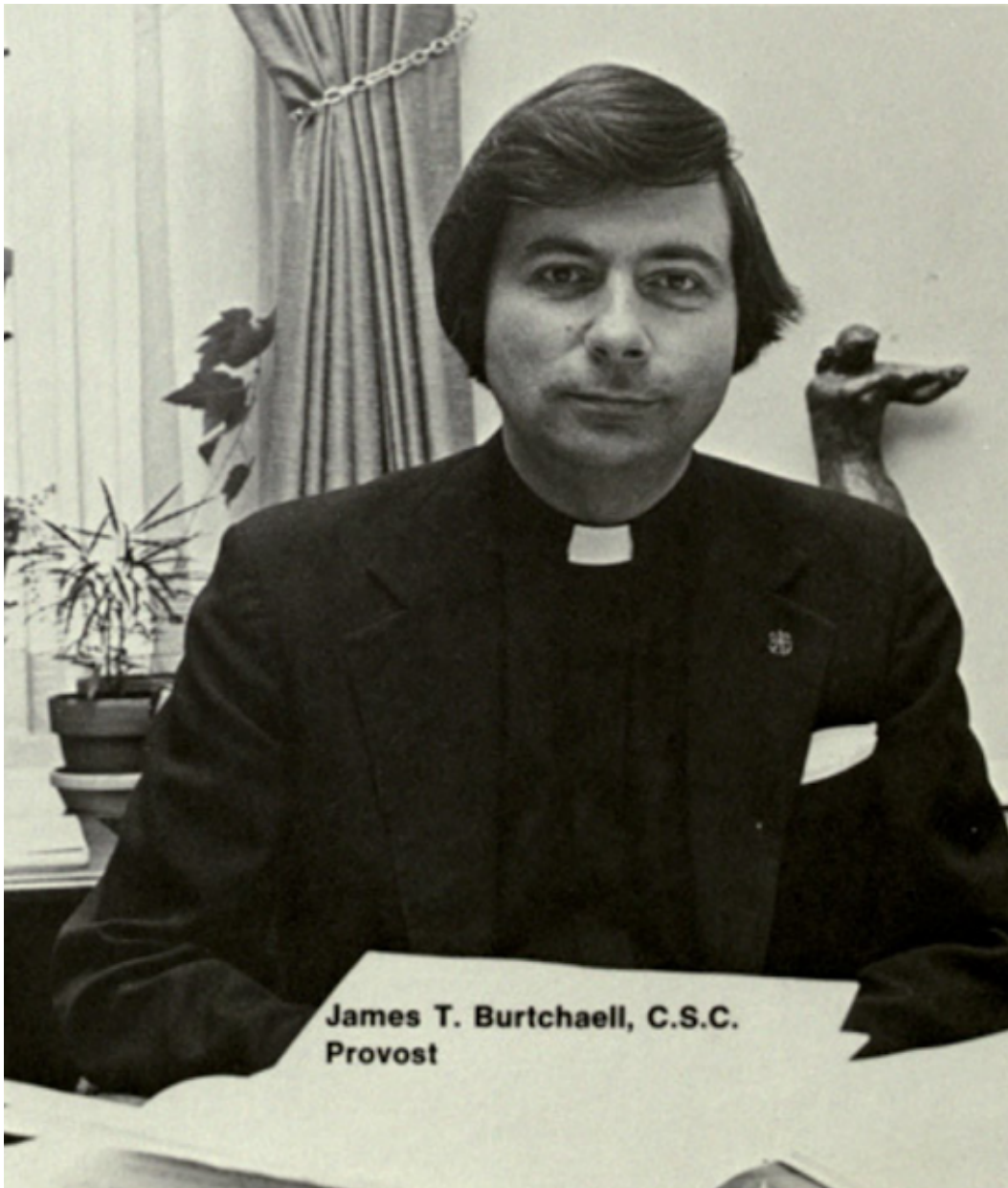


4th October 2017

In Memoriam: Rev. James Tunstead Burtchaell III, C.S.C.
(1934-2015)

Post #138, 4 Oct. 2017



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1977 Dome, p. 182

Many of our classmates have widely varying opinions about Father James Burtchaell, C.S.C. The first two adjectives about him that come to my mind are brilliant and controversial. Classmate Dan Saracino had this to say about

how Father Burtchaell impacted Dan's Notre Dame experience and career choice in an interview this past June ([link \[https://notredameclassof1969blog.blogspot.com/2017/06/an-interview-with-69-domer-dan-saracino.html\]](https://notredameclassof1969blog.blogspot.com/2017/06/an-interview-with-69-domer-dan-saracino.html)):

There were many great homilists at Notre Dame...I got hooked on those late-night hall Masses and got to know many of the priests personally, especially Father Burtchaell, who said Masses at Dillon Hall on Thursday nights. His homilies were brilliant...As our graduation approached, Father Burtchaell asked me what I was going to do. I told him I planned on going to ND's law school. He asked, "Do you see yourself as a lawyer?" I told him no. Then he asked, "Do you love Notre Dame? Why don't you give us a year in admissions? You can take advantage of our tuition remission program and take some courses." I forgot law school and went to work in admissions.

James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C. graduated from the Notre Dame with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1956:

James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C.



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Bachelor of Arts, *magna cum laude*

Notre Dame, Indiana

1956 Dome, p. 303

Below are Father Burtchaell's obituary and his autobiographical essay celebrating his Golden Jubilee as a Holy Cross priest. Father Burtchaell's body rests next to Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh's in Holy Cross Cemetery.

REV. JAMES T. BURTCHAELL, C.S.C.

Mar. 31, 1934 - Apr. 10, 2015



Rev. James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C., 81, died Friday, April 10, 2015, at Holy Cross House.

He was born to James T.



Burtchaell, Jr. and Marion M. (Murphy) Burtchaell on Mar. 31, 1934, in Portland, Ore. He attended All Saints and Columbia Prep School. He was received into the Congregation on August

15, 1952. He professed vows on August 16, 1953 and graduated with a bachelor degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1956. He also held a degree in theology from the Gregorian University in Rome, Italy; an L.S.S. in Sacred Scripture from the Biblical Commission in Rome, Italy; and a Ph.D. in Divinity from Cambridge University in Cambridge, England. Fr. Burtchaell professed Final Vows August 16, 1956 and was ordained May 21, 1960.

Fr. Burtchaell is survived by his brother, Robert K. Burtchaell of Portland, Oregon, and sister, Martha Burtchaell Bernadelli of Seaside, Oregon. He was preceded in death by his parents James and Marion (Murphy) Burtchaell, and by a sister, Margaret Burtchaell of South Bend, Indiana.

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1960-1961 | University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN |
| 1961-1964 | Ecole Biblique, Jerusalem |
| 1964-1966 | Cambridge University, England |
| 1966-1968 | University of Notre Dame, Teach & Assist |
| 1968-1970 | Univ. of Notre Dame, Chairman, Theology |
| 1970-1977 | University of Notre Dame, Provost |
| 1977-1980 | University of Notre Dame, Teach |

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1980-1981 | Sabbatical |
| 1981-1985 | University of Notre Dame, Assist |
| 1985-1986 | Sabbatical year, Cambridge, England |
| 1986-1990 | University of Notre Dame, Teach |
| 1990-1992 | Sabbatical leave, Princeton, NJ |
| 1992-2000 | Our Lady of Princeton, Reside |
| 2000-2001 | Holy Cross Center, Reside, Berkeley, CA |
| 2001-2009 | Casa Santa Cruz, Reside, Phoenix, AZ |
| 2009-2015 | Reside, Holy Cross House, Notre Dame, IN |

[\https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-

[IOpTn_zCY5Y/WdUZ28PnyLI/AAAAAAAAVdg/QOhUofGnMKcOIJIDaxNgofAVqlo0SXewACLcBGAs/s1600/Screen%2BShot%2B2017-06-18%2Bat%2B9.53.33%2BPM.png\]](https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-IOpTn_zCY5Y/WdUZ28PnyLI/AAAAAAAAVdg/QOhUofGnMKcOIJIDaxNgofAVqlo0SXewACLcBGAs/s1600/Screen%2BShot%2B2017-06-18%2Bat%2B9.53.33%2BPM.png)

FR. JAMES TUNSTEAD BURTCHAELL, CSC

I am a fifth-generation Oregonian who was taught by Holy Cross priests at their high school in Portland, and decided to join them. I entered the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1952, professed my final vows on August 16, 1956, and was ordained a Holy Cross priest on May 21, 1960. My vocation took me to studies at Notre Dame, Rome, Washington, Jerusalem, and Cambridge, where I earned my Ph.D. in theology. I began teaching theology at Notre Dame in 1966, and during my years as a teacher here, I held other responsibilities as department chairman, and later provost and University trustee.

From 1990 until the fall of 1999, I lived near Princeton and devoted my time to research and writing, and from 1999 until 2008 I was in residence with my brother Holy Cross priests at Casa Santa Cruz in Phoenix. Since the spring of 2008, I have been a member of our community at Holy Cross House.

About my theological work, I can only say that it has been historical in mode, revisionist in manner and somewhat divers in subject matter. I have written many articles and books, perhaps most notably *Philemon's Problem*, *Marriage Among Christians*, *Rachel Weeping*, *For Better For Worse: Sober Thoughts on Passionate Promises*, and *The Dying of the Light*. I have always liked to take a topic about which I have



a hunch that the received understanding has somehow gone wrong, then study the evidence and the accepted interpretation, and I have usually re-presented the evidence sustaining a different interpretation. I have also been interested in the way ethicists work and say they work, and in how we use our imagination to do our moral reasoning.

In the winter of 2006 I came to understand and began to tell my dearest friends how

I was turning a corner in my life. I had noticed a depletion of my mental abilities that was clearly recognizable as an onset on dementia. Reading over things several days after writing them, I couldn't remember having done so. I began to scramble for old friends' names and to default on commitments when I hadn't written them down in my appointment book.

Throughout these years as a teacher, a scholar and a priest, I have been blessed, born up and sustained by the love of my two families, my dear brethren of the Congregation of Holy Cross and my dear brothers and sisters, Robert Burtchaell, Martha, Bernadelli, and Margaret Burtchaell. I thank God daily for them.

Some years ago, introducing Philemon's Problem, I wrote:

I begin again with Philemon, an earnest man troubled by a command that could give him no rest, yet offered peace. He was offered a Gospel

Click on the photos to see larger images.

that he could not quite master. He responded, one trusts, to a summons that drew from him never enough, but more, and then still more, much more even than he had planned to give or thought himself able to give. It put nails through him. It transfigured him. It was worth it.

This book strains after what drew him on.

Embarking on my 77th year of life and my 51st year as a Holy Cross priest, how grateful I am even still to be so drawn.



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Update, 11 Oct. 2017

Errol Flynn had the following comment about Fr. Burtchaell:

Like Dan, I, too, was close to Fr. Burtchaell, and beneficiary, or at least respondent, to his advice. I stayed at ND during the summer between our Jr. and Sr. years when I was in pre-med and intent on med school. Fr. Burtchaell asked me a question similar to his to Dan, and, after I indicated I wanted to be a doctor so I could help people, he

suggested, "I would do more people more good by something I enjoyed doing rather than something that was of itself useful." While I've never been sure that I would not have enjoyed being a doctor, I'm certainly happy with the paths my life has taken since that talk. I should also mention that I was pleased to have Fr. Burtchaell come to Fostoria, Ohio to marry Mary Ann and me in 1971.

Sources:

* "Fr. James Tunstead Burtchaell, CSC," *2010 Holy Cross Jubilarians: Sixty – Fifty – Twenty-Five Years*, p. 29-30. ([link \[https://www.holycrossusa.org/PDF/special_publications/2010_jubilee.pdf\]](https://www.holycrossusa.org/PDF/special_publications/2010_jubilee.pdf))


* Rev. James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C. obituary, *The Province Review*, June 2015, p. 19. ([link \[https://www.holycrossusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Province-Review_June2015.pdf\]](https://www.holycrossusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Province-Review_June2015.pdf))

* Rev. James Tunstead Burtchaell, III Findagrave.com Memorial. ([link \[https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSI=burtchaell&GSiman=1&GScid=640718&GRid=145042312\]](https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSI=burtchaell&GSiman=1&GScid=640718&GRid=145042312))

Posted 4th October 2017 by [JP Hickey ND '69](#)

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