

**LOUISVILLE, KY** — Father Edmund F. McCaffrey, Ph.D., a former Benedictine monk, a founder and former head of the political science Department at Belmont Abbey College, a visiting professor, writer, abbot ordinary of the Belmont Abbey monastery, and pastor, died Nov. 13, 2016. He was 83.

Father McCaffrey was born Jan. 9, 1933, in Savannah, Ga., to Joseph E. McCaffrey and Ruby Elizabeth Johnson Fairbanks McCaffrey. He was a graduate of Belmont Abbey Preparatory School, Belmont Abbey College and Belmont Abbey Seminary in Belmont, N.C., and Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He held a bachelor's degree, a master's, and a doctorate in political science, and a sacred theology doctorate. He made his profession as a Benedictine monk (American Cassinese Congregation) on July 2, 1953, and was ordained into the priesthood on May 23, 1959. He was elected the fourth abbot of Belmont Abbey on March 2, 1970.

In the Diocese of Charleston, Father McCaffrey served at [St. Andrew](#) in Myrtle Beach, was the priest in charge of the Garden City Catholic Community, helped found [St. Michael](#) in Murrells Inlet, was pastor at [Divine Redeemer](#) in Hanahan, and retired Jan. 1, 2003, after serving as pastor of [Holy Family Church](#) on Hilton Head Island. Even in retirement, he continued to lecture, lead pilgrimages and retreats, and offer spiritual direction.

“I’m proud of the work I did at St. Michael Church,” he said in a 2008 interview with The Miscellany. “When I started, it was a little church and we didn’t have any money, but what we built has become one of the largest parishes in South Carolina.”

Father McCaffrey was an avid supporter of vocations, and in 1974 he served as co-founder of the Institute on Religious Life in Chicago with Father John Hardon, Bishop James Hogan and William Isaacson. He was executive vice president and executive director from 1975-80. The institute’s mission is to promote the growth and renewal of consecrated religious life. He started the organization when he was abbot of Belmont Abbey Monastery.

Father McCaffrey received the institute’s 2003 Pro Fidelitate et Virtute Award for manifesting “notable support and promotion of the consecrated life.” Other recipients of the award have been Mother Teresa, Father Hardon, Virgil Dechant and Cardinal James Hickey.

In 1990, Bill Smith and Jim Likoudis approached Fathers McCaffrey and Hardon at a religious life conference. They asked the priests if they would like to co-found Eternal Life, a Catholic pro-life organization that would focus more on the educational aspect of pro-life work. In the first few years, they held more than 20 “Make a Moral Miracle Happen Conferences” all over the country.

Father McCaffrey returned to Myrtle Beach in 2003 because he had so many friends there. He still traveled around the country leading retreats and parish missions, and helped at area churches. He led more than 23 pilgrimages to Fatima, and still tried to go annually. He is preceded in death by his father, Col. Joseph E. McCaffrey; mother, Ruby McCaffrey Johnston); a brother, Deacon Joseph McCaffrey and a nephew, Timothy McCaffrey.

He is survived by a sister in law, Betty McCaffrey of Fort Smith, Ark.; four nephews, Joseph, Patrick, Michael and Shaun McCaffrey and a niece, Colleen Jordal.

Masses may be offered for the repose of his soul or memorial contributions may be made to Eternal Life, 902 W. Stephen Foster Ave., Bardstown, KY 40004.