

Rev. Terry James O'Connell

54th State Chaplain of Oregon 2009-11



Terry James O'Connell was born July 19, 1954 in Minot, ND to Earl and Myrtle Annell O'Connell.

When Terry was 9 years old, the O'Connell family moved to Salem, OR where he graduated from McNary High School in 1972.

Terry went to the University of Oregon and graduated in 1978 where he earned a double major: BS in Psychology and Social Work.

After graduating collage, Terry enlisted in the Navy as a vocational counselor. He moved up the ranks and became a Navy Officer Billet – Electrical Officer on the USS Nicholson, DD 982. He went all over the world, including Persian Gulf with the Middle East Force amid the Iran-Iraq War's "Tanker War" phase, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, the Gulf, Guantanamo Bay, Barcelona, Spain, Mediterranean, and Caribbean just to name a few.

Terry was honorable discharged on June 3, 1986, at PSD NETC Newport, Rode Island. After he disembarked in Rode Island, 30-40 fellow military personal rode bicycles across the United States. The group saw major sites, celebrated birthdays together, camped in every state, and even created their own song. Slowly people diverted from the group as they hit their home state. The last 10 Pacific Northwestern riders ended up in the Ogle's backyard in Beaverton, OR for a night.

The next phase of Terry's life involved the Catholic Church, Terry enrolled at the University of Portland while living at the St John Vianney House of studies perusing pre-theological studies from 1986, then received a "pastoral year" placement 1989-1990 at St Anne Parish in Gresham, OR. For one summer, Fr. Terry signed up for a mission in Mexico, he left not knowing any Spanish and was assigned living arrangements with a local family. There he became fluent in Spanish, culture, and found a love in culinary arts. He started his seminary journey in 1989 at Mt Angel Seminary and was ordained a Catholic Priest on September 5, 1992 at St Mary's Cathedral in Portland, OR along with Bishop Liam Cary.





In order of priestly ordination, he served at: Sacred Heart – Medford, Mission Santo Niño de Atocha Guantanamo, Cuba, St. Monica - Coos Bay, St. James – McMinnville, Good Shepherd – Sheridan, St. Michael - Grand Ronde, St. Peter – Newberg and St. Juan Diego – Portland. Fr. Terry was the second permanent pastor at St Juan Diego in Portland, OR between 2013-2021. During that time, he started the Spanish mass for the parish in July 2014 and started the planning and funding of a new community building. Unfortunately, he never saw the hall completed.

Fr. Terry was forced into retirement after a life altering stroke in 2021. Since then, his health declined and other serious health issues became prominent. His final residence was an adult foster home in Beaverton, OR.

Rev. O'Connell was the Oregon Knights of Columbus State Chaplin 2009–11.

Rev. Terry James O'Connell died on November 10, 2025 at an adult foster home in Beaverton, OR from Congestive Heart Failure.