



### **Obituary for Brother Mary Joseph Szwedo, O.C.S.O.**

Brother Mary Joseph Szwedo, a monk of Mepkin Abbey, died on January 20, 2023. Born in Chicago, Illinois, Walter Szwedo entered Gethsemane Abbey in Kentucky when he was 17 years old in 1944. In 1952 he was asked to come to Mepkin Abbey because the community was struggling to establish their farming programs. Through his early years at Mepkin he contributed his many talents and skills working with the forestry efforts and sawmill as well as the brief effort at raising cattle. For an extended time he oversaw the program milling feed for Mepkin's very successful egg industry.

Possessing a beautiful tenor voice, he sang with the monastic schola giving praise to God at all the liturgies. Devoted in honoring Mary, he was often making rosaries, some of which were sold in the monastery shop. As aging brought physical diminishment, he continued to make rosaries even up to the week before his death.

Daily he could be seen feeding the squirrels as he spoke with them in Polish which they obviously understood. Many monks and monastic guests learned from Brother Mary Joseph to recognize the great number of species of birds that visit Mepkin seasonally, all looking for the food he so thoughtfully and caringly provided for God's creatures..

Having listened in his formation as a lay brother at Gethsemane that when you are not working you are reading - scripture, theology and spiritual authors - he was an example to all the men entering Mepkin that we are as Saint Benedict tells us life long learners.

Kindly join us in thanking God for this man of deep faith who responded generously to God's call to live a life of ceaseless prayer as a monk. He persevered for 79 years saying "yes" to God as did Mary and Joseph whose names were given to him as he took up the monastic life at Gethsemane almost 80 years ago.