



February 2025 - Abbots and Priors Meeting at St. Joseph Abbey, in St. Benedict, Louisiana. Brother Richard is second from left in front row.



**brother John Robert Hammond
(1924 – 2025)**

Brother John was born on August 29th, 1924, in Burlington, Vermont, to William and Alice (Hebert) Hammond. He was named Robert at birth in honor of Bishop Robert Joyce of Burlington. In 1950 he was ordained to priesthood for the diocese of Burlington. He met Abbot Leo von Rudloff, Abbot of Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem, in August 1953

when the diocese welcomed Leo to found a Benedictine monastery in Vermont. It was the occasion of a Pontifical High Field Mass at South Park. There was something new here for Father Robert and he felt that Abbot Leo's homily was quite like the writings of Thomas Merton.

On June 24, 1958, the now called Father John made Monastic Profession in the Chapel at Weston Priory. The young community was still in its first years and it was discerned that the community needed solid ground to continue growing. Thus, Father John was sent to Ottawa to study psychology. This was also where he received his Seminary Education. The schooling was excellent and prepared him for future responsibilities. When he came back to the Priory, he was asked to become its fourth Prior. He loved to remind the community that there were no other ordained members at that time, so he was the only choice!

When asked to offer leadership in the community he was clear that there was only one condition, "That I may remain a brother among brothers." Abbot Leo agreed, but as he would say, "I was the mother who gave birth to Weston Priory, but brother John is the founder." Abbot Leo retired to the Weston community in 1968 and became "brother Leo". The community slowly and at times painfully has continued to learn what it means to brother each other, a process that continues to this day.

Brother John retired as Prior towards the end of 1997. These last years have given the whole community a wonderful learning opportunity. As brother John's hearing continued to decline and the clarity of his memory faded, there was always one priority that he kept very clear: "I want to be with the brothers." The gift of presence was given to us especially at our common prayer which occurs five times a day, and at our evening recreation where we sit in a circle and share about our day. Brother John, losing his hearing, tired and sometimes asleep, wanted to be there with us.

Brother John died in the midst of his brothers at Weston Priory in the early morning of March 19, 2025. A public memorial Eucharist was celebrated at Weston Priory in the afternoon of the day of his passing to his new life in God. His burial took place on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, 2025, following the 11:30 am Eucharist at Weston Priory.

Perhaps it is fitting to end with how he finished the obituary for our founding abbot and brother Leo, "He is now among the truly living in the hands of the one God. Let us join him in prayer and praise



At the end of May, 2025, the brothers received the visit of Abbot Justin and Father Jonathan of St. Joseph Abbey in St. Benedict, LA.