Culture
News

Actor Martin Sheen (left) talks with St. Anthony Messenger staff outside their Cincinnati editorial offices after recording an interview for American Catholic Radio Oct. 14, 2011, At the center is Franciscan Fr. Jack Wintz, who died Jan. 11, 2021, at age 84. The priest was an award-winning journalist and photographer, who helped build St. Anthony Messenger magazine into a popular publication that reflected a down-to-earth message of faith. (CNS/St. Anthony Messenger/John Feister)

by Catholic News Service

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As a journalist, Franciscan Fr. Jack Wintz covered stories that explored human nature and focused on the mission of inspiring people as they lived their faith daily.

The award-winning journalist and photographer, who helped build St. Anthony Messenger magazine into a popular publication that reflected a down-to-earth message of faith died Jan. 11 at age 84.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Jan. 18 followed by burial at St. Mary Cemetery in St. Bernard, Ohio.

Wintz was affiliated with the magazine for more than four decades, becoming its editor from 1999 to 2002. Whether reporting from around the world or a local parish community, his stories and photos won numerous Catholic Press Association awards. In 2006, he received the association's highest honor, the St. Francis de Sales Award, "for his dedication to justice through the power of Catholic journalism and for radiating the truthful, gentle spirit of St. Francis de Sales."

Of his years with St. Anthony Messenger Press/Franciscan Media, Wintz said in 2020 they were "the best times of my life."

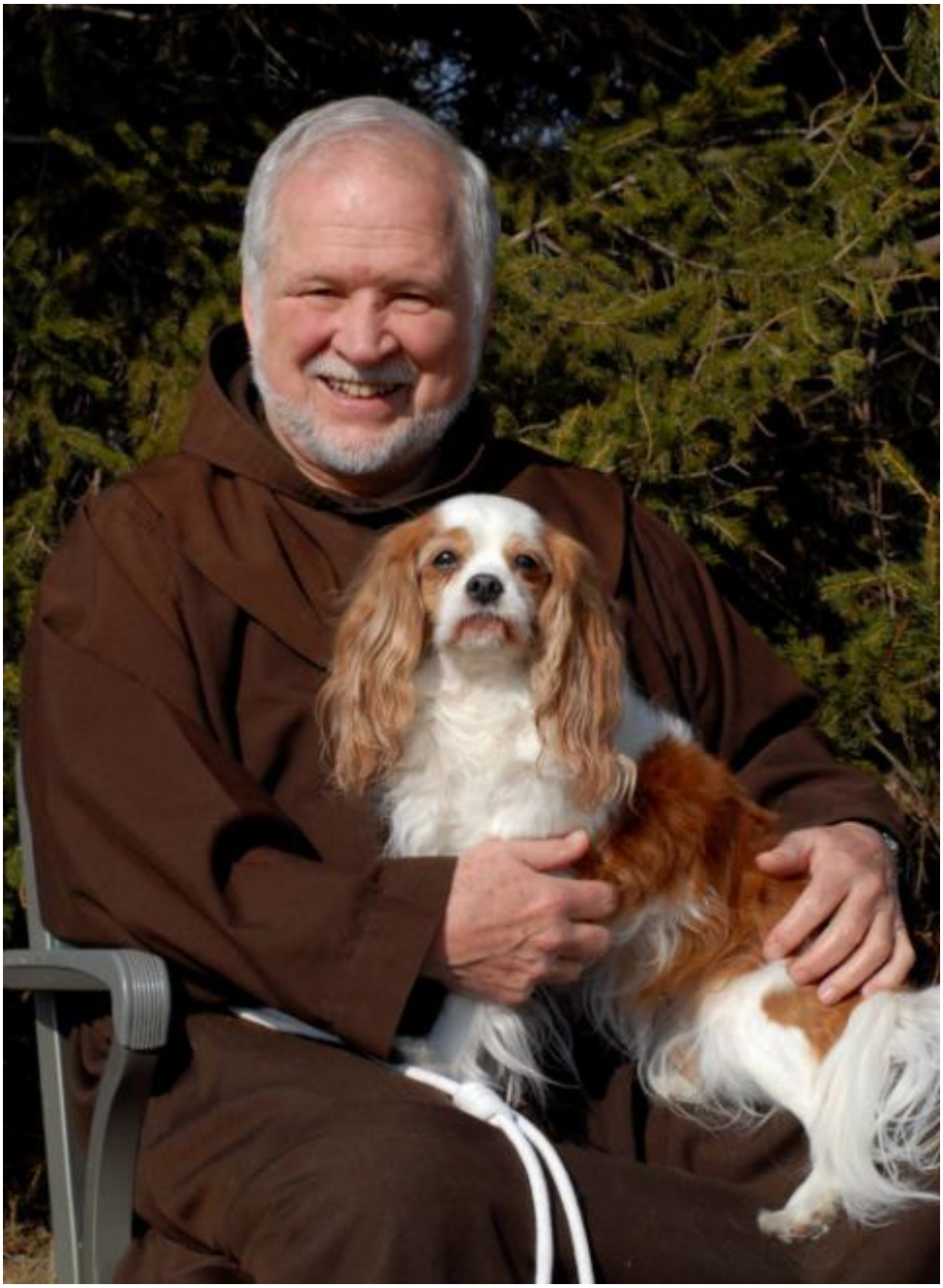
Wintz joined St. Anthony Messenger Press in 1972, becoming associate editor of St. Anthony Messenger magazine. He became editor in March 1999, serving in the position for three years.

In 1973, he founded Catholic Update, an award-winning, four-page religious education newsletter that reached a circulation of nearly 250,000 by 2009. He also wrote a bimonthly email newsletter, "Friar Jack's E-spirations," which reached 43,000 subscribers.

At the magazine he reported from around the world, including from Haiti, Honduras, East Africa, Israel, Jordan, Vietnam, and, in 1982, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese cities targeted by atomic bombs at the end of World War II. He told Catholic News Service in 1993 that the article he wrote on Hiroshima was a personal favorite because he was able to address a "human and spiritual issue."

A few years later, Wintz traveled to El Salvador trying to "shed light on the controversial issue of liberation theology" by interviewing people who were "trying to apply the liberating message of the Gospel to their own situations."

His 2009 book published by Paraclete Press, *Will I See My Dog in Heaven?* explored whether God's plan for salvation includes creatures other than humans.



Franciscan Fr. Jack Wintz is seen in this 2009 photo. The award-winning journalist and photographer, who helped build St. Anthony Messenger magazine into a popular publication that reflected a down-to-earth message of faith died Jan. 11, 2021, at age 84. (CNS/Courtesy Glenmary Challenge)

He told CNS during a book signing in Washington that the question in the title of the work "sounds like a naive kid's question, but I think it fits in this broader context [of the question of salvation for all creation.]"

He said his motivation for writing the book stemmed largely from his experience as a Franciscan. "I have a great fascination for St. Francis of Assisi, especially his great love and respect for animals as well as for trees, rivers, wildflowers and creation as a whole," he said.

While the book included a substantial amount of theological analysis, Wintz said he included several heartfelt stories and wrote "for a wide popular audience."

Paraclete Press later invited Wintz to expand a magazine article into a series of spiritual essays. *Will I See You in Heaven?* was the first of six slim volumes he wrote to comfort people struggling with the loss of a beloved companion animal. The series drew from Christian tradition, Scripture and the life and teachings of St. Francis to assure readers that there is a place in the afterlife for all of God's creatures.

Paraclete Press mourned the loss of Wintz, calling the Franciscan a "dear, beloved author and friend."

"His books have inspired and gladdened the hearts of thousands of people around the world," the publisher said.

Declining health led Wintz to retire in 2013 and he moved to St. Margaret Hall in Cincinnati.

Wintz was born Feb. 22, 1936, in Batesville, Indiana, to Paul and Viola "Tillie" Wintz. He attended elementary school and St. Francis Seminary in Cincinnati before entering the Franciscan novitiate in 1954.

After professing first vows in 1955, he entered Duns Scotus College in Southfield, Michigan, near Detroit. He professed final vows as a Franciscan in 1958 and was ordained a priest in 1963.

Wintz served one year at St. Boniface Parish in Louisville, Kentucky, before he began teaching English and journalism at Roger Bacon High School in St. Bernard, a village surrounded by the city of Cincinnati. He taught at Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana, from 1965 to 1969, focusing on English, drama and communication

arts.

The missions then called and Wintz spent three years on the faculty of the Franciscan Seminary College and Maryknoll College in Manila, Philippines, after which he joined St. Anthony Messenger Press/Franciscan Media in Cincinnati.

Jack Wintz is survived by a brother, Gary Wintz, of Marina del Rey, California, and a sister, Tese Neighbor of Seattle. He was preceded in death by his parents, a sister, Judy Hirn, and a brother, Paul Wintz.

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