

June 24, 2008

Death Notice No. 14 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Province of the United States of America, recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **JOHN BOLIN**, priest of the Cupertino Marianist Community, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on June 15, 2008 in Cupertino, California, in the 83rd year of his age and the 64th year of his religious profession.

Fr. John was born in Brooklyn, New York, on September 4, 1925, to John Francis and Margaret (Kennedy) Bolin. He was the middle child of five. When he was nine years old, the family moved to Queen's

Village, Long Island.

Although he was set to attend a diocesan high school, he placed first in the scholarship test for Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York. He later wrote: *"And so I was to spend four of the happiest years of my life in surroundings which stole my heart. My greatest benefit ... was coming in contact with Mary's own – the Brothers of Mary. This was the beginning of my vocation to the Society of Mary."*

John decided in his senior year at Chaminade High School to join the Society of Mary and entered the novitiate at Beacon, New York, after graduation in 1943. He professed first vows on August 20, 1944, at Beacon, and perpetual vows on August 17, 1948, in Dayton, Ohio. He received a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Dayton in 1947.

In requesting perpetual vows in 1946, he wrote: *"I am wont to compare this continuous growth of appreciation of my vocation to the study of a foreign language, in which study each new day of application seems to elicit undreamed of wonderment and deep, appreciative love of the language. This devotion to our Blessed Mother, this communal and fraternal spirit, and this effervescent spirituality of my former teachers, have become for me not only things to admire, but actualities in my own life as a Brother of Mary."*

From 1946 until 1952, Fr. John was a teacher at Marianist high schools in Pennsylvania and Ohio. He then attended the Marianist seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland, where he was ordained on July 17, 1955. Fr. Bill O'Connell, who attended the seminary at the same time, remembers Fr. John's thoughtfulness.

"My mother was traveling by herself from California to Switzerland to attend my ordination. She had never left her home state. John wanted my mother to feel comfortable, so he said, "I'll have my mother meet your mother in New York."

During his time in Switzerland, Fr. John earned two degrees in theology from the University of Fribourg. In 1954, he received an S.T.B degree – Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology. Two years later he earned his Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.)

When he returned to the U.S. in 1956, Fr. John served as a teacher and chaplain at two Marianist high schools in California – Junipero Serra in Gardena and Archbishop Riordan in San Francisco. Throughout

the 1960s and 1970s, he held a number of positions in leadership in the formation of young Marianists and in provincial administration.

“His whole life he was in positions of responsibility,” said Fr. Dave Schuyler. “He had a certain carriage and dignity. Everyone had a deep respect for him.”

Fr. John served as chaplain/teacher at the scholasticate in Honolulu, novice master at the novitiate in Santa Cruz, California, rector at the Marianist seminary in St. Louis, novice master at the novitiate in Cupertino, California, and assistant rector and rector at the seminary in Toronto.

“He ran a tight ship at the novitiate, but it was never oppressive,” said Bro. Dennis Schmitz. “He was wise and had a strong sense of direction. He was always experimenting with new ways and had a gift for explaining things to our generation. He had a great sense of humor and loved telling jokes.”

Fr. John’s work in provincial administration began in 1962 when he served as head of the Office of Apostolic Action in Santa Cruz. He later served as head of the Office of Religious Life in Cupertino. In 1981, Fr. John became provincial for the former Province of the Pacific in Cupertino, serving in that position until 1989.

“As a leader in the Pacific Province he worked hard to bring people together and make connections,” said Fr. Tim Kenney. “John was a master teacher who spent much of his life teaching novices, scholastics, and seminarians about Marianist spirituality. We lovingly nicknamed him ‘MJB,’ for ‘Mighty John Bolin.’ Our Marianist world has lost another giant of a man.”

During Fr. John’s tenure as provincial, Marianists from the Province of the Pacific ministered in Korea, a country much loved by Fr. John. “Any time he’d come to Korea, he’d bring a whole suitcase full of gifts for the brothers, including Butterfingers candy bars for me,” said Bro. Dennis. “Then he’d fill up the empty suitcase with gifts from Korea for his family. He loved Korea, and the Korean brothers loved him.”

One of Fr. John’s favorite ministries involved diocesan work. He served as vicar general for the Diocese of Honolulu from 1995 to 2000 and was involved in the Presbyteral Council of the diocese as well as other diocesan committees and commissions.

“He was an exceptionally gifted person,” said Fr. Dave. “Because of his wisdom, prudence and pastoral sensitivities, bishops took his counsel very seriously. He was able to look over the whole situation. He also was very approachable and had a lot of friends. After he had moved from Hawai’i to California, any time I went to Hawai’i, the first question everyone asked was: ‘How’s John Bolin?’”

He also was closely associated with Chaminade University of Honolulu, acting as a professor of English, vice president for academic affairs, chancellor and rector. In 2000, the university awarded him a Doctor of Humane Letters degree, *Honoris Causa*, “for his dedicated service to higher education, his exemplary modeling of Marianist ideals, and his service to the Diocese of Honolulu.” He was senior advisor to the president for diocesan relations before his retirement in 2005.

Bro. Bernie Ploeger, executive vice president and provost of Chaminade University, said that in decisions about administrative matters, Fr. John was a clear thinker who knew his mind; in personal situations, he was also prudent and charitable. “His advice of persons and situations continues to provide guidance for me,” said Bro. Bernie.

As the director of the Center Marianist Community in Honolulu, Fr. John was “well organized and concerned in keeping the community functioning smoothly,” said Bro. Frank Damm. “His ‘For the Good of the Community’ item on the agenda of each meeting often sparked discussion even in a community full of introverts.”

“It’s the passing of an era,” said Bro. Dennis. “He was such a pillar for us, such a symbol of the Province of the Pacific, it’s hard to conceive of him not being here.”

May he rest in peace.