

January 30, 2025

## Obituary Bro. Andrew Joseph Barrish

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **Andrew Joseph (Joe) Barrish** of the St. Leonard Community in Centerville, Ohio, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on January 20, 2025, in Dayton, Ohio, at the age of 95 with 77 years of religious profession.

An acclaimed visual artist and dedicated teacher, Brother Joe joyfully recognized how the Marianist way of life energized his artistic vision and deepened his personal spirituality. “Throughout my years as a Marianist, something wonderful has happened to me,” he once wrote. “I have come to sense a presence – a benign, encouraging presence – in the icon of Mary and Jesus. I have found, over the years, that this presence is not just contained in a specific room or building; rather, it is found in a community of brothers, each of whom strives to become like Jesus.”

Andrew Joseph Barrish was born on April 28, 1929, in Cleveland, Ohio. He was the middle child (along with two sisters) in the family of Andrew and Julia (Boron) Barrish. After graduating from the parish grade school, Joe first encountered the Marianists at Cathedral Latin School in Cleveland. He chose the school, he later said, because it offered an art program while other Catholic schools in the area did not. The Brothers he met there made a definite impression. Writing many years later in a jubilee memoir, he recalled, “The Marianists were fine teachers, I soon discovered. But I was most impressed in the after-school hours when, on the way to band practice, I saw my teachers (who were all business during the school day) become affable, friendly, and open. This made a more lasting impression about community and the fraternity of the Marianists than any of the literature I read about the Society of Mary.”

While still in high school, Joe became a postulant at Dayton, Ohio, in 1945. A year later, he entered the novitiate at Beacon, New York, and professed first vows there on August 17, 1947. Brother Joe began scholastic studies at Maryhurst in Kirkwood, Missouri, before continuing his undergraduate education at the University of Dayton. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Education at UD in 1950 and professed final vows there in 1951.

For the next 25 years, Brother Joe served as a teacher at grade schools and high schools in Maryland and Ohio. Throughout this period, he continued to develop his gift for the visual arts, having earned a Master of Arts degree in Fine Art from The Ohio State University (Columbus) in 1951. He joined the faculty at the University of Dayton in 1975 and taught there for decades – while also becoming in 1990 the administrator and artist-in-residence for the Gallery St. John on the campus of Mount Saint John in Dayton.

In his prolific career as a visual artist, Brother Joe won many awards from organizations such as the Metropolitan Church Federation Exhibit of Religious Art (St. Louis, Missouri), the Liturgical Art Guild of Ohio (Columbus), and the Dayton Society of Sculptors and Painters. His work appeared in prominent galleries in New York City; Chicago, Illinois; Cincinnati, Ohio; Los Angeles, California; Dublin, Ireland; and Ann Arbor, Michigan, among other locations. He worked in a variety of media – creating visual images in watercolor and acrylics; stained glass; multimedia collages and relief prints and serigraphs. Brother Joe also accepted many commissions through the years to design art for chapels, churches and other liturgical spaces across the United States.

All this work was a manifestation of his graced life as a Marianist, according to Brother Joe. Writing on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> jubilee, he noted, “I’ve been able to establish myself as an artist and have grown as a result of all the wonderful opportunities provided for me. Superiors were very gracious in allowing me to study both in the United States and Europe,” as well as offering the chance to work with “wonderful men like [Marianist Brothers] Cletus Behlman and Mel Meyer.” In one of the many published

articles profiling Brother Joe and his work, he described how most of his 40+ sketchbooks resulted from the dozens of summers he spent traveling with Brother Mel – painting and sketching throughout their trips to Italy, Spain, New England, the Badlands, Texas, and Wisconsin among other locales.

Still working well into his 80s, Brother Joseph brightened the walls of the Samaritan Homeless Clinic in Dayton with a series of colorful city-scapes – designed to hearten its clients by giving them a “bus-rider’s view” of the city. Then, having retired his brushes and palette with his move into the St. Leonard Community, he continued bringing beauty into the world through his ready smile and gentle demeanor.

Father Bert Buby, S.M., recalls how Brother Joe “always edified us with his contemplative gifts that nourished his dedication to his talents as an artist. He supported our prayer life by reminding us how important the hour of Mass and prayers in common are. He challenged us to remember all those who served and took care of us in assisted living and often prayed for them in intercessions.”

Fellow artist Brother Brian Zampier recalls how he drew inspiration for his own vocation from Brother Joe. “As I looked into Marianist life, he gave me hope and inspiration that being a Marianist brother and an artist is possible,” says Brother Brian. “I admired his friendship with Brother Mel Meyer and their many years of sketching and painting trips. I am confident of the great joy in heaven as he joins his fellow prolific and creative Marianist Brothers Mel and Cletus [Behlman] in hanging out with our head Creator.”

Brother Jack Somerville often assisted Brother Joe with the physical and mechanical aspects of his art through the years. “He was a deep man of prayer and was always promoting a sense of beauty around him, especially in the community,” Brother Jack says. “He would frequently repeat, ‘Our communities should be places of beauty, reflecting the beauty of God.’ Together, we strived to make that happen as we renovated the chapel, hallways, living room, and dining room of the old novitiate building.”

Brother Bob Politi considers it a particular blessing to have known Brother Joe during the last months of his life. “I moved into this community this past year, the first I was blessed to live with Brother Joe and experience his welcoming smile and his gentle, soft voice,” Brother Bob noted. “He certainly was a model for me as a man of prayer.”

In his homily at the funeral Mass for Brother Joe, Marianist Father Tom Schroer asked, “How could you not love Joe Barrish? I think if the aides and nurses took a secret ballot for who was the most loveable member of our community, Joe would win hands-down. He seemed to accept himself as he was – quite a grace and a wonder to behold! Seeing Joe in his elder years renewed my belief that our Marianist vowed life is worth living. As Joe himself wrote on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> jubilee: ‘My life has been a true grace, a grace of being fully alive – and fully Marianist.’”

May he rest in peace.