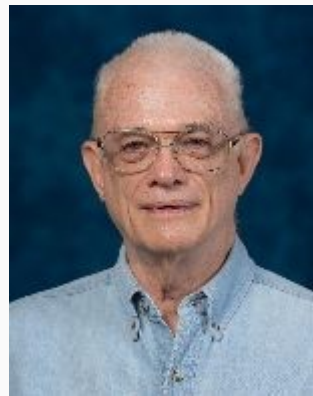




**Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie**  
*Via Latina 22, 00179 Roma*



**March 6, 2025**

### **Biography of Death Notice N. 06**

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **James R. VORNDRAN** of the St. Leonard Community in Centerville, Ohio, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on February 22, 2025, in Centerville, at the age of 84 with 65 years of religious profession.

Embracing a lifelong willingness to try new things, Brother Jim ministered in a wide variety of ways as a Marianist—teaching in the United States and two different African nations; serving as a religious formator; nursing in clinical settings; directing and managing community centers; and offering pastoral care and spiritual direction, among other roles as a vowed religious. He also developed a talent for heritage handweaving and a deep affection for mysticism and centering prayer.

James Richard Vorndran was born on July 9, 1940, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

He was the only child in the family of Benno and Louise (Baumgartner) Vorndran. While attending the parish grade school – St. Ambrose – he recalled feeling the stir of a religious vocation even as a second grader. Jim first encountered the Marianists at North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh. Inspired by the example of the Marianist Brothers who taught at North Catholic, Jim entered the novitiate at Marcy, New York, in 1958 and professed first vows there on September 2, 1959. Brother Jim then pursued scholastic studies at the University of Dayton. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Education at UD in 1963 and professed final vows there on August 15, 1963.

Even before completing his undergraduate degree, Brother Jim agreed to “go out early” and begin teaching high school. It was only after agreeing to the assignment that he learned that the subject would be typing – a fact that “came as quite a shock since I never had learned to type,” he wrote on the occasion of his 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee. Noting that it was the first real surprise in his life as a Marianist, the experience “gave me a sense of courage and a willingness to try new things. In the end, my students actually did learn to type – and so did I!”

Brother Jim spent the next two years teaching at Marianist-sponsored high schools in Covington, Kentucky, and Dayton, Ohio. Then came the next surprise in “a string of many surprises”: the invitation to take on (as a 23-year-old) a teaching assignment in Africa. His missionary work began at Mangu High School in Thika, Kenya, where Brother Jim served as a classroom teacher and librarian until 1965. He moved next to Chaminade Secondary School in Karonga, Malawi, where he served as a teacher until 1969. During this time, Brother Jim also became the country’s National Chief Health Science Examiner and learned to speak two local languages: Swahili and Tumbuka. His book, *An Outline History of Malawi*, was published by Malawi’s Department of Education in 1970.

Returning to the United States, Brother Jim spent the next 15 years in formation work and administrative duties for the former Cincinnati Province. During this period, he served as both Assistant Director and Director of Novices, Director of Aspirancy and Post-Novitiate, and Director of Foreign Affairs. In 1985, he returned to Pittsburgh and began work on a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Duquesne University, earning it in 1989.

While living in the Troy Hill Community in Pittsburgh, Brother Jim served as a staff nurse and clinical computer instructor at Shadyside Hospital. He also became the project manager for the hospital's home computer selection process. In 1996, he moved to Dayton and, over the next ten years, took on roles as business manager and community director for three different Marianist Communities. Brother Jim also helped to create and lead the Founders Family Center, a collaboration among eight religious orders that provides support and resources for underserved residents on Dayton's west side. During this period, Brother James was diagnosed with macular degeneration – a progressive retinal disease that would ultimately render him legally blind. Still, he continued to “try new things,” for a time becoming the medical coordinator for Marianists living in the province's extended care facilities.

In 2005, Brother Jim moved to the Maui Marianist Community in Hawaii, where he served as Pastoral Associate at St. Anthony's Parish until 2013. He retired from active ministry and moved into the Marianist Community in Cupertino, California. While there, he stayed active in volunteer work – including a teaching stint at the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired which was featured in *The Mercury News* in 2016. With his health declining, Brother Jim moved back to Ohio and joined the Siena Woods Marianist Community in 2019.

Marianist Brother Bob Metzger recalls that Brother Jim was always open to whatever ministry he was being called to by the province. “He was very talented and enjoyed learning new experiences,” Brother Bob says. “Jim was an ardent believer in Centering Prayer as it greatly affected his spiritual life, and he enjoyed teaching this method of prayer to others. He never let his blindness stop him from listening to the latest books on theology and spirituality or keeping up with current events from around the world. He will be greatly missed as a dear friend and Marianist Brother.”

Amy Taulbee, staff aide at the St. Leonard Community, particularly enjoyed Brother Jim's sense of humor. “We were always laughing and joking around,” she says. “And Brother Jim was concerned about having his hair cut – he would ask all the time to get a trim! He liked his music and audiobooks. He was just a funny man and is very missed.”

Brother Jack Somerville felt blessed to be at Brother Jims' side during his final days. "Three days before Jim's death, we were alone together in his room," Brother Jack says. "We thanked each other for our mutual honesty, brotherhood, and friendship. It was our way of saying goodbye and bringing to closure the gift of our life together as brothers."

May he rest in peace.