

## EULOGY FOR JOHN BLANK, S.M.

We read in John Blank's 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee booklet:

"As a person grows older and enters the so-call golden years, one gets a clearer picture of how the hand of God works in one's life journey. From my very first breath, being born on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11, 1922, is where it all started."

John was born in Cincinnati to Charles and Mary Blank. He clearly had a strong devotion throughout his life not only to our Blessed Mother but also to his parents, Charles and Mary Blank.

In his room at Mercy Siena, John had a picture of his parents hanging on his wall. He had the same picture in his billfold, and in his files he requested the following be included in his memorial card:

"Thanks to mom and dad, especially, and all who helped me in my calling to the Marianist way of life."

We read further in his 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee booklet that in May 1932, "I came home from school at noon with a stiff neck . . . and by evening the stiffness had spread throughout my body along with the pain." He was soon diagnosed with infantile paralysis/polio at the age of 10.

What he remembers most during that time is his mother buying a miniature Lourdes grotto, placing it in his room and lighting a candle continually at the grotto. Every evening his family would come into his room and pray the rosary.

"I couldn't even pray with them, just simply watched the candlelight flickering on the ceiling. I believe it was the faith of my family, in particular my mom, that pulled me through this critical time of my life."

It is not surprising then that John had such a tremendous devotion to Mary, the rosary, his parents and his family.

Besides his parents, the family consisted of three brothers and two sisters:

August or Augie, the oldest (he has a son here from Arizona, David, and a daughter, a Benedictine sister from Ferdinand, Indiana, Sister Mary Austin); Mary; Emma (whose son Philip Schlachter is here; as well as Edward and Robert); Joseph (whose daughter Olivia Kay and son Louis are here). And, of course, the youngest boy, also a Marianist, Brother Charles Blank, who died in 2002, and alongside whom John will be buried later this evening at Queen of Heaven Cemetery.

John entered the Society of Mary after graduation from Purcell High School and professed first vows August 25, 1940, at Mount Saint John and perpetual vows at the University of Dayton on August 15, 1944.

He graduated from the University of Dayton with a BA in 1943 and in 1955 from Catholic University of America with a master's in religious education.

Being a high school teacher most of his life John was excellent relating to youth. Interestingly enough, when he was in the seminary briefly in Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1946 and 1947 he befriended a young boy at our school, Villa Saint Jean, who was living in exile there with his family and whose name was Juanito Bourbon. This same young man, Juan Carlos, as he is known today, was proclaimed the King of Spain on November 22, 1975, two days after the death of Generalissimo Franco.

John has a picture of the youngster bidding farewell to him when John was leaving Switzerland and also an undated note along with other correspondence with the future king in the album. The note says: "Believe it or not, I have never forgotten you. You cross my mind sometimes. Usually when I remember things you've said, that have to do with situations I face in my everyday life."

Obviously, John was an excellent teacher.

John taught in several of our high schools stateside for almost twenty years including Chaminade High School in Dayton and in Mineola, N.Y.; Trinity High School in both Brooklyn and Sioux City, Iowa; Cathedral Latin and St. Joseph in Cleveland as well as Moeller High School in Cincinnati.

Internationally, he taught over 35 years in our high schools, including St. Joseph in El Meten, Lebanon, St. Paul's College in Altona, Australia, and St. Joseph's in Yokohama, Japan.

Not surprisingly, then, he could both speak and read French, German and Japanese, besides English.

From 1997 to 2002 John served in parish ministry at Emmanuel Catholic Church in Dayton. He then lived in retirement at Alumni Hall at the University of Dayton before illness brought him to Mercy Siena.

It is a tribute to John's maturity, honesty and courage that almost at the very beginning of what was supposed to be a temporary stay at Mercy Siena John told me that he thought he needed to stay permanently at Mercy Siena since it was so difficult for him to navigate the distances at UD for his meals.

Interestingly enough, the polio condition in his leg had returned and was causing considerable difficulty walking, along with other health issues.

We thank the Mercy Siena staff for their care . . . also the Marianist communities at both Alumni Hall and Mercy Siena for their support of John, and especially Judy Moehl and Kim Evans, our capable medical support personnel, for their sensitive and loving attention to John, especially in his latter days and hours.

May he rest in the peace of the risen Christ.

**Tom Schroer, SM**