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Wednesday, June 25, 2008

**Dear Friends,**

Greetings from Cupertino!

Many thanks for being with us in thought and prayer as we remembered Father John Bolin's life and celebrated his entrance into eternal life.

It is our custom here in Cupertino to have an evening prayer of remembrance during which we share reflections on the impact our fellow-Brother had on our lives. Attached is a summary of our remembrance of Father John Bolin.

At the mass of Christian Burial celebrated by Father George Cerniglia, SM, our Provincial Assistant for Religious Life, I was the homilist. A copy of my homily is attached.

I also presided at the third and final farewell at the cemetery. Attached is a copy of what I said to introduce the service.

Stephen Tutas, SM

**Evening Prayer I of the Nativity of John the Baptist**  
**Remembrance of Father John Francis Bolin, SM**  
September 4, 1925 – June 15, 2008

This afternoon we remember Father John Bolin  
who died here at the Marianist Center on Sunday, June 15  
in his 83<sup>rd</sup> year and 64<sup>th</sup> of his life as a Marianist.  
It is a special grace that we are able to have this evening prayer  
and the Mass of Christian Burial  
in the context of the feast of his patron, Saint John the Baptist.

Brother Stanley Murakami welcomed Father John Bolin's niece Ms. Kathleen Dyckes and expressed sympathy to the family and friends of Father John and then presented a biographical sketch of our recently departed confrere, noting that he became a member of the Marianist Province of the Pacific in 1953. I then introduced the sharing of reflections by two notes from Saint Louis, the first from Ms. Mary Ellen Garcia who told me that Father John was especially welcoming every time she came to Cupertino, and Mr. Myles McCabe added that Father John not only attended his presentation on social justice, but also met with him afterwards to express his interest and offer encouragement.

I also told the community that in my morning visit with Brother Charles Boglitz, when I asked him about Father John, he responded enthusiastically by saying he had been his best provincial (after the legendary Father Walter Tredtin!) and noted his remarkable service in so many ways in the Society of Mary and in the Diocese of Honolulu.

Several other members of the community added comments...Brother Tom Deasy recalled various times he had lived with Father John – in Gardena, San Francisco and finally here in Cupertino – always finding him helpful and encouraging. Brother Stanley shared with us his appreciation of Father John's organizational skill and remarkable ability to respond promptly to every call or letter. Others commented on how conscientious Father John was about his work, and how he always strived to do the very best.

Brother John Haster recalled their years together at Archbishop Riordan when he was principal of the school and Father John director of the community. Brother Frank Spaeth remembered his time with Father John

at Marianist Hall in Honolulu – and his well prepared homilies and reports. Father Jim Imhof shared with us his experience of praying with Father John in his last hours of life, when he was no longer able to speak, but held on tenaciously to Father Jim’s hand as a sign of praying silently with him.

Father George Cerniglia, representing the Provincial Council, shared with us how he as a student attended Father John’s first mass and then commented on how helpful Father John had been in his seminary formation and afterwards, always finding him thorough and detailed. Brother Pat McMahon remembered Father John visiting him in the hospital – and then returning the visit here, asked Father John for his blessing shortly before he died.

Brother John Samaha reminded us that it was Father Leonard Fee as Provincial who valued Father John’s prudence and insightfulness and enabled Father John to be of service to so many in the new Province. Brother Bill Bolts recalled his more than fifty year friendship with Father John, recalling their time together in Gardena and Father John’s faithfulness in remembering birthdays, feast days, anniversaries. He also spoke of Father John’s service at several General Chapters.

Father Larry Mann added a delightful note that Father John, as a student at Chaminade, Mineola, had overheard the Brothers singing as they were doing the dishes – hoping that their obvious cheerfulness had helped attract Father John to the SM. Brother John Schlund spoke about Father John’s sweet tooth as he came to know him well at the Bordeaux House. I concluded the sharing by commenting on Father John’s last great service to the Province as a member of the Aging with Grace Committee where he spoke forcefully and with great wisdom in our meetings and conference calls. We then sang the Canticle of Mary and enjoyed another lively social before dinner.

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## HOMILY

John and I – and many others,  
like Brother Jim Leahy who is here this evening  
made our first profession of vows in the Society of Mary  
in Beacon, New York on August 20, 1944,  
the culmination of our year of novitiate under the direction  
of Father Joseph Martin and Brother Paul Wessling.

John and I were together  
for our first years in Saint Louis and Dayton  
but then many years passed before we were united once again,  
this time as members of the new Province of the Pacific  
where we worked together as members of the Provincial Council  
and Provincial Chapter and served on various committees.  
Then, after more than forty years  
we found ourselves together again here in Cupertino.

With you I want to thank God  
for all that God has done for John over all these years  
and for all that God has done for others through his devotedness.  
He has been a wonderful companion and leader.

The readings we have just heard  
speak powerfully to us about the mystery of the resurrection  
and I believe faithfully reflect some of the features  
of John's outstanding life and ministry.

First of all, from the Book of Wisdom  
we have those marvelously reassuring words:

*The souls of the just are in the hand of God,  
and no torment shall touch them.*

Those of us who live here in Cupertino have some idea  
of how much John suffered in his last days.  
He had been in declining health for some time  
but he kept going as long as he could,  
fighting to be present and active  
in community prayer, meals, socials, meetings.

It was a remarkable witness  
of his wholehearted fidelity to the Rule of Life  
as we have committed ourselves to live it  
here at the Marianist Center community.

Then suddenly, after falling in chapel  
just before Brother Joe Wasy's funeral,  
John was bedridden the last ten days of his life.  
On Friday evening, June 13, we said goodbye to each other  
assuring each other we would be united in prayer across the miles.  
I had hoped to see him on my return from Saint Louis  
to tell him about the meeting  
– he was always keenly interested in Province affairs –  
but God called him on Sunday, June 15.  
As the Book of Wisdom proclaims:  
*He was tested, as gold in the furnace,  
and as a sacrificial offering God took him to himself...*  
The author of the Book of Wisdom  
also reminds us that *the souls of the just are in peace* –  
and I understood those words as never before  
as I remembered the agony John had experienced in his last days.  
But what a gift it is that after a lifetime of devoted service  
and a final sharing in the passion of Christ John is now at peace...  
Eternal rest is the culmination of so many gifts  
that God had given John over the course of his lifetime of service.  
I have always been fascinated  
by those words from the book of Wisdom: *They did appear to die...*  
But even more forceful are the words of the preface  
in the Mass of Christian Burial:  
*For your faithful, life is changed, not ended.*  
Death is not the end of life - rather, it is the beginning of new life.

We confidently believe that John is now in the hands of God,  
free from torment, in peace...  
With all the faithful departed, John will live with God forever.  
And what a wonderful promise:  
*"Great will be their blessings....  
they will shine out...like sparks in stubble!"*

In the second reading - from Paul's great letter to the Romans –  
we are challenged by the words of the apostle:  
*Do you not know  
that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus  
were baptized into his death?*

How heartening it is to realize  
that *just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,*  
*so we too might walk in newness of life.*

This passage from Paul's letter to the Romans  
is used not only for Masses of Christian Burial  
but also and above all for Easter.

We sing it often – we keep it in mind!  
*If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*  
Jesus is truly alive! - And we are alive in him!

Finally, the gospel speaks not only of eternal life,  
but of a life of faith here and now.

I believe this gospel faithfully reflects  
what John tried to be and do all his life.

I really appreciated yesterday's community remembrance  
and in the many tributes sent online.

The scope of John's ministry was extensive;  
it was also intensely personal.

This selection from John's gospel  
begins with the astonishing proclamation  
that Jesus does not reject anyone who comes to him.

Jesus is always ready to receive each of us, to listen to us,  
to give us light and strength to continue on the journey.

Jesus knew that it was the will of the Father that all be saved –  
that no one be lost!

Jesus came to meet the needs of everyone at all times.

His mission was universal, all embracing, inclusive!

And what does Jesus offer to those who come to him?

Jesus tells us that it is the will of his Father  
*that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him*  
*may have eternal life...*

Father John Bolin was welcoming and encouraging  
keenly aware that God touches our lives through one another.  
And God gave new life to so many of us through him.

Let us thank God for having known John  
and for calling us together this evening to celebrate his life  
– and the gift of eternal life.

## CEMETERY

After our community remembrance on Monday,  
the Mass of Christian Burial yesterday,  
we now come to the third and final farewell.

But it is not the final act in John's life, or in ours.

For John, this day of burial here with his fellow-Brothers  
in this Gate of Heaven cemetery  
is John's final resting place,  
the end of his life on earth,  
but not –not – the end of life!

For John, as for our other Ancestors of Courage buried here,  
life has been changed, not ended.

And so we thank God for John,  
for his great devotedness and sense of mission,  
for his companionship and leadership,  
for all that God has done for John,  
and through him for others.

As we look back with gratitude on his remarkable life  
we also look forward with hope  
-hope that because John believed in Christ  
he will live forever;  
-hope that as we believe in Christ,  
we, too, like John, will some day share in the resurrection.

In that spirit, let us pray the first Glorious Mystery.