

HOMILETIC EULOGY FOR BROTHER ELMER S. DUNSKY, SM

When Brother Paul Sibbing and Father Walter Tredtin were looking for the three men needed to found a first Marianist Community in Southern California in 1946, they decided on a young Brother who had many of the skills needed by such a small initial team. Talented in languages and music, he had mastered Spanish – Santa Monica is bilingual. Already principal of distinguished Colegio San José, in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, he had administrative acumen. A capable athletic director, it was said that he could have had a professional baseball career, but as he said once in later years, “No, I felt a calling to do something else for the Lord, in Mary’s Family.” Brother Elmer would co-found Marianist educational endeavors three more times in his long career. In 1950, Junipero Serra High School in Gardena. Twenty years later, reorganization of Chaminade Preparatory, in the San Fernando Valley. As crowning achievement, the Teacher Credential Program of Chaminade University of Honolulu. To prepare for the latter, Brother Elmer earned a doctorate in education.

If Brother Elmer accomplished many things himself, his broader legacy was what he made possible for his younger Marianist Brothers to accomplish. Supportive mentor that he was, he recognized our talents and potentialities, and as member of the Provincial Council, encouraged us to be creative, make full use of our abilities, branch out. To facilitate this broadening of professional relevance while Head of Temporalities, he worked hard to increase benefactions set aside to provide our men opportunities for graduate studies that otherwise would have been prohibitively expensive. Several of us present tonight will always be grateful to Elmer for this. His moral leadership in the Pacific Province helped bring about for us in this dynamic part of the world the corporate mood and attitude that every one of our talents could only enhance and be taken up in the corporate ministry of the family – care for the poor, new projects in education, fine arts, our presence in civic and cultural life. I am sure he was a leader in giving insight and vision to Marianists in the Pacific. This was for Elmer an extension of self; for he dearly loved and cared for us all, and was deeply beloved by his students and our families.

Once, commuting in the car in Southern California to see some of his many friends (including some with whom he had associated in the Sister City program

of Canoga Park and the cultural center, Taxco, México), Elmer began describing to me the ministries of the members of his current community in Honolulu. That was the conversation. Elmer, a true Brother, was as proud of their achievements as if they were his own.

Once in the 1960s, when I was still at Riordan, Elmer phoned me, asking help in clearing brush from an empty lot donated to the Province. During the course of the afternoon he admitted, "Well, Ted, your parents just wanted me to make sure you really wanted to go to the seminary, because you like it so much at Riordan." Exceptionally beneficial sunshine that afternoon! My father, on hearing of Elmer's death, gazed out into space for a half-minute, then said, "We were such good friends." Dad went on to remind me of a great water polo match we had with Elmer one summer. An appropriate anecdote, for that game was the essence of Elmer, full of spirit, enjoyment. Life is good, a game we can and will win.

In the past few days, a number of us have exchanged memories by e-mail. Nothing was more important to Elmer than to know his confrères were happy in daily life, fulfilled in work, cared for in health. While many a college graduate from the teacher program at Chaminade University will single out in memory, Elmer – including Santa Clara City Councilman, Kevin Moore, present with us this evening – Elmer's legacy is at least equal with his confrères – older men with whom he worked and lived, contemporaries with whom he built, and young Brothers whom he encouraged and whose progress he followed.

We chose the Beatitudes as Gospel tonight, because Elmer was a man with composite strengths: Peacemaker, by being obviously at peace with himself. Poor in spirit, because richly endowed with purpose. Pure of heart, in a "what you see is what you get," transparent manly form that just also happens to be a quintessential quality of his American generation.

Years ago at Maryhurst, we scholastics wrote a little play ... it was pretty corny! One of whose songs said, "Our life's essentially Marian, whether cook, chaplain, tailor or librarian." The Society of Mary defines itself as men diverse in personality, talent, insight; forming a cohesive religious family appropriate to those who believe that on the Cross, Jesus gave us all his Mother to be heart, center, inspiration and core of all we are. With challenges to Church and state,

education and life itself, more complex and daunting than ever, Elmer lived through this time of change. He adapted, carried on, encouraged, believed, hoped and yes, truly enjoyed. Into our lives come some who, meeting the standard, help us believe we can. They want us to succeed. They make great counselors, because they discern what is best in us. As one of these great men, we will we keep in lifetime memory, Elmer Sebastian Dunsky. Imaginable now that Elmer's eternity will perfect this trait. If so, then in the perpetual first inning of eternity, he is experiencing a whole new way of concern for the welfare of each of us on his family team. May we follow him to the happiness Our Lord has promised him and us in the Beatitudes, in the Gospel.

-Laus Deo.