

Remembrance of Father Jorge da Silva, SM

Born, 1927

Marianist, 1949

Ordained, 1972

Died, 2009

The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, Jorge da Silva, priest, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on November 20, 2009 in Cupertino, California, USA, in the 83rd year of his age and the 61st year of his religious profession.

In our Cupertino Marianist Community it has been customary to have an evening prayer service at which we pray for the eternal rest of a fellow Marianist and thank God for giving him life and calling him to the Society of Mary. Father Jorge da Silva had lived with us on occasions in the past when he needed special health care. And he spent his last days with us. Accordingly, on Saturday, November 21, we combined our evening prayer beginning the celebration of the Feast of Christ the King with a sharing of remembrances of Father Jorge. I introduced our remembrance with these words:

**This afternoon,
as we celebrate the first vespers of the Solemnity of Christ the King,
let us pray in a special way in thanksgiving for Jorge's life;
for all that God has done for him and through him,
especially in his sixty years as a Marianist.**

After our introductory hymn for the feast, Brother Stanley gave us an overview of Jorge's remarkable journey beginning in 1948 in Yokohama to 2009 in Cupertino, with many turning points along the way. Then, before singing the Canticle of Mary, the Liturgy's song of thanksgiving and hope, we shared some personal remembrances. I began with these comments:

In recent weeks I had many conversations with Jorge. Even before he went into the hospital for critical tests, even before he went in for surgery, and, then after he was told that he had only a few weeks to live, Jorge consistently told me, calmly and confidently, "I am ready!"

Secondly, up until last Sunday,
Jorge lived each day as intensely as possible,
even celebrating his usual Friday morning mass
at Saint Mary's in Los Gatos...

He was an inspiring example of a Marianist
who tried to do all he could as long as he could.

He was committed to being in mission until the very end of his life.

Brother Tom Deasy recalled how Father Jorge was especially helpful to him
when he began teaching in Los Angeles ... Brother Pat McMahon reminisced
about Father Jorge's return visit to Japan in the days before "handicap
accessible" became current – and Pat was strong enough to be helpful to an
ever grateful Jorge ... Father Jim Mifsud, in a clear and strong voice,
acknowledged his amazement for Jorge's many years in a wheelchair as he
himself is often wheelchair bound these days ...

Brother Joe Nu'uanu reminded us of the power of an encouraging word,
recalling how Father Jorge inspired him to continue working with the poor in
the Santa Clara Valley, launching his long career of service to Martha's
Kitchen ... others expressed their admiration for Father Jorge's positive spirit
in his time with us, and Brother Frank Spaeth added his appreciation of Father
Jorge's courageous ability to adapt, for example in learning how to drive ...

After these reflections I added a few footnotes ... one from the years when
Father Jorge lived with Brother Jerry Gorg in Los Angeles ... Father Jorge
always told me he felt responsible for Brother Jerry, while Brother Jerry told
me privately that he felt responsible for Father Jorge! Secondly, when I
checked in to see Jorge Friday morning, there was a small statue of the Blessed
Virgin Mary on his chest. Jeff, his superb caretaker, explained that Father
Jorge called this his passport to heaven.

(What I forgot to share was the quotation on my desk calendar for November
21 which I found so appropriate: *Happiness is not a state to arrive at, but a
manner of traveling.* I think this is a good description of how Jorge handled his
handicap. He had often asserted that he could do everything anybody could do
except walk!)

We concluded our evening prayer by singing the Marianist Doxology. Then in
the manner of an Irish (or Portuguese!) wake, we had a social before dinner.

During the social, with a big smile, Brother Charles Ehrenfeld told me, "I can't imagine what you guys are going to say about me!"

This morning, I wrote this reflection in my personal notebook: I find it significant that God called Jorge to Himself the evening before the feast of the Presentation of Mary. On Saturday morning, while mindful of the feast, Father Jim Imhof led us in our celebration of a Mass for our departed Father Jorge, using the Scripture readings and prayers for masses for the dead. Our evening celebration of the Solemnity of Christ the King reminded us that it is through Mary that we come to Jesus.

ST

November 21, 2009

Jorge da Silva was born on April 15, 1927 in Yokohama, Japan, to Ernesto da Silva and Anna Florentian Guterres da Silva. An older brother, Hugo, is his only surviving sibling.

Jorge came in contact with the Marianists while a student at the then St. Joseph College in Yokohama. Following the war and his graduation he joined the U.S. military before entering the novitiate at Beacon on January 12, 1948.

He professed first vows in the Society of Mary at Beacon on January 13, 1949, a novitiate classmate of Howard Hughes, John Samaha, Frank Spaeth and Bob Wade.

His professional background saw him earn a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Dayton, and a master's degree in education from Loyola University in 1964.

Jorge began his teaching ministry at Chaminade Mineola in 1952. A year later he transferred to the Province of the Pacific with assignment to Junipero Serra High School in Gardena. Little did he know at that time that he would be spending the next thirteen years at Serra as teacher, counselor, assistant principal and eventually principal.

In 1966, he came north to Archbishop Mitty High School for four years before entering the Marianist Seminary, which at that time was located in St. Louis, Missouri. Following his ordination on June 12, 1971 at St. Anthony's Church in Gardena he returned to the seminary for two years as chaplain.

Jorge began his long presence in the Santa Clara Valley when he returned to Archbishop Mitty High School as Chaplain in 1974. After the Marianists withdrew from Mitty in 1989 Jorge asked to live in an apartment. At first he was located near Santa Clara University until he finally settled down on Monterey Avenue in Los Gatos.

After 30 plus years of involvement with high school apostolate he began to minister solely to adults, in particular the lay members of the Marianist family who used to gather for Sunday Mass at Mitty – now they continued this custom at St. Thomas of Canterbury Church. Besides bible classes and other group gatherings he made time for those wishing spiritual direction. At times he was asked to be with the novices at the Dayton novitiate (mini-class or retreat).

I first met Jorge in 1953 the year he transferred to the Pacific Province. I was a senior in the postulate at Chaminade High School in Cheviot Hills. On a number of occasions we met the brothers at Serra or they would drive over to Cattaraugus Avenue.

In the summer of 1954 I entered the novitiate and on one occasion Jorge drove up to Santa Cruz to visit the two novices from Serra. Jorge was already troubled with back problems. One evening after supper we were playing volleyball. During the course of the game Jorge fell and we collectively held our breath until Jorge moved and was able to get around unassisted. At sometime during the next year or two Jorge became wheelchair bound, a cross he would carry until yesterday evening.

I never lived with Jorge in community. Whenever we met he was always smiling and asking how I was. He, in my recollection, never had a laundry list of complaints about his handicap. Several years ago he was in Good Samaritan Hospital for an entire year. Yet whenever we visited him he was always in good spirits, never moaning about his condition. Instead of us consoling him he, I thought, tried to make us feel good. I've always wondered how he was

able to be so positive and upbeat after all these years in a wheelchair. St. Luke is the only who uses the word 'daily' in the expression "to pick up one's cross daily, and come follow me." Here was an example of living out this exhortation of the Lord.

We remember Jack Rielly's "MO" in preaching – how he would suggest a word or phrase to summarize the thoughts to be shared; a word that we could remember throughout the day. Perhaps "smile" is the word, which would remind me of Jorge.

Smiling is infectious,
you catch it like the flu,
When someone smiled at me today,
I started smiling too.
I passed around the corner
and someone saw my grin
When he smiled I realized
I'd passed it on to him.
I thought about that smile
then I realized its worth,
A single smile, just like mine
could travel round the earth.

I have no doubts that when the Lord met Jorge last night it was with a smile and with the greeting, "Well done, enter the kingdom prepared for you from all eternity."

Brother Stanley Murakami, SM