

**Funeral Mass Homily - Bro. Martin Aloysius McMurtrey, S.M.  
Rev. Joseph Tarrillion, S.M.  
President, Central Catholic High School**

**Holy Rosary Parish, San Antonio, Texas  
November 13, 2007**

How does one speak of Bro. Mac when we come together to celebrate such an outstanding religious dedicated to service? My thoughts are not with a few words. First of all, he truly took seriously the gospel phrase about the grain of wheat must die to produce much fruit. He was exceptional in witnessing the Central Catholic's Marianist educational Mission – "the education of students from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds." Additionally, Bro. Mac passed his love for the poor to the students by establishing "the Guardian Angels" who gathered food, toys, and clothing for the underprivileged. He was a true blessing to all of us.

I will reflect on some of the highlights of Bro. Mac's life to illustrate what the gospels can mean by "when a grain of wheat dies much fruit can be produced."

### **Religious**

Brother died in his 87<sup>th</sup> year of life and 69<sup>th</sup> year of his religious profession. As a Marianist he consecrated himself to the Blessed Mother promising to bring Christ to the world.

He attended the University of Dayton and majored in English and mathematics and minored in drafting. Later he received his Master of Arts in English from St. Louis University.

He taught for 56 years of which 49 years were at CCHS. After retirement from teaching, he continued to serve in the Relations and Develop activities for five years, until the year 2005.

In his letter asking for final vows, he wrote "I entered the postulate from third year high school... I considered my entrance then, and I still do now as a kind of perpetual profession. Since that day and even before I have never doubted my vocation." I'm sure he could still say that at his final breath.

I think Bro. Jerry Bommer describe Bro. Mac's religiosity well when he said, "For many years he taught them (his students) how to write; but no matter what the subject, he was always teaching the Gospel by his selfless love."

Another side of Bro. Mac's spiritual and human character was his straight forwardness, one might say bluntness.

He told one of his students in his religion class who won the religion class medal that he could think of no one less deserving.

Shortly after I arrived at CCHS, some mothers decided to march in front of the school with signs to protest something. While the administrators were deciding what to do, Brother saw them on Augusta St. He quietly went out to the Brothers' porch and said to them, "Get off our property, take your signs and go home," which they quickly did.

One morning when Bro. Mac was a young Brother leading prayer in a cold chapel, he opened the meditation prayer with, "Many are cold, but few are frozen." His superior didn't look kindly on that.

### **Teacher**

All of his 6,000 students, whom he remembered throughout his life, quickly learned that he was a very demanding teacher. He always strove for excellence himself and taught his students to do likewise. There was something in his teaching that made his students reach for a better performance.

In his drafting classes, the slightest mistake received a red circle. In his English program which Bro. Cramer asked him to establish, the students didn't like to triple space their papers because he would fill them with many, many corrections. He was tireless in correcting rewrites after rewrites. But every student will tell you, they learned to write and read literature. He was very proud of the several noted authors among his former students. He loved his students and he loved his subject matter. Upon his retirement he received certificates of honor from the city of San Antonio, the Bexar County Commissioner's court and the Texas legislature.

Just as he loved his students, they in turn loved to play pranks on him. As we toured the country with him visiting our alumni in Texas and on the east and west coasts, the conversations at each location were filled with the many stories.

In 1970, Msgr . Larry Stuebben asked for teachers for the CCD classes at St. Agnes Parish. Bro. Mac responded to this request for some 22 years. It was in his initial experience of CCD teaching that he decided to help economically poor students gain access to quality high school education. Initially, he did not always

receive a spirit of support from some of his superiors. Nevertheless, with the help of Tony and Mary Ann Crosby, he established his scholarship fund. Over the years, he received support and financial assistance from Bro. Herbert Janson, his co-author and business manager, the St. Louis Province, former parents of students, his many former students and friends, the sale of his and Bro. Herbert's books, pecans and aluminum can sales, and his retirement dinner which was titled "The Last English Class." The "Last English Class" contributed over \$106,000 to his fund. Over the years, \$1 million dollars have been awarded in scholarships to over 3,000 students. A plaque hangs in the Central Catholic hallway honoring Bro. Mac and Bro Herbert.

### **Author**

From a very young age, Bro. Mac desired to be an author. When his older brother became ill with appendicitis, the public library became the center of his life in order to supply his brother and himself with reading. The desire to be an author remained with him throughout his life, no matter how busy he was, he found time to write. Like most authors, he soon discovered what the rejection of scripts was all about.

One of his most cherished accomplishments in his journey of authorship was his scholarships for three summers at the Writers' Workshop at Georgetown, Washington, D.C., which influenced his writing greatly. He often spoke of the successful authors with whom he was able to mingle. Thereafter, he published many articles and three books: *Loose to the Wilds*, *The Mariachi Bishop* and *Out of the River's Midst*. He additionally published (some co-authored with Bro. Herbert) 12 books. We will shortly be adding to his publications: *The History of Central Catholic High School*.

### **Coach**

In one of his several autobiographies, he wrote, "In my second teaching assignment at Cathedral High school, Belleville Illinois, I taught six courses and coached football with Bro. Al Scherer, whose great teaching and coaching skills taught me a tremendous amount about that sport (football) in which neither of us has ever worn a uniform." (Over the years, besides football, he coached varsity and minor team basketball, moderated speech and debate teams, school papers and literary anthologies.)

We are all aware of the success he had with the varsity football teams he had at Central Catholic. In one of his articles he wrote: "Somewhere in the 1980s or 1990s, I wrote and rewrote *On to State*, the football novelette about an unbeaten

season. It is loosely based on my experiences as a football coach at Cathedral High School in Belleville, and at CCHS in San Antonio.” He told me that in this story he got even for not winning state championship the year his team lost in the final match.

Very well suited to his character, he regularly attended Central Catholic games. And...he was quick to let you know just where the coaching went wrong.

### **Conclusion**

I tried to highlight some aspects of Bro. Mac’s energetic and dynamic life. A number of details and aspect are left unsaid. All of us who have experienced him know; it was his wonderful ability to touch the spiritual and human dimensions of our lives that endeared him to so many. Our greatest gift to him will be our determined efforts to live and pass on his love of our Lord and the Blessed Mother, and his own untiring efforts to provide an excellent Marianist education for the younger generations.