

Father Edmund Rhodes, S.M.
November 10, 2007

Today's readings are positive reinforcements for the yearnings of our human heart and these are but a few of the promises God, our Father has given us through His Son Christ. While reflecting upon these readings let me incorporate some insights into what I "we" know about Ed.

The Lord will wipe away our tears and provide a feast of rich food and choice wines.
(Isaiah 25:6)

In the 96 years of Ed's life there must have been many tears, joys, exciting and challenges times. I'm sure he recited Psalm 25 many times: **"I will wait for you O Lord, guide me along your path."**

The quality of a person is how they meet these challenges.

This gifted young farm boy from Suffield, Ohio, knew early in his life that he wanted to dedicate his life to the service of the Lord ... and fortunately his parents saw the blessings God had in store for their son. At the age of 15 the Lord sent Ed a message, via a letter to one of his friend who had become a postulant with the Society of Mary, in Dayton, Ohio. His friend thought Ed would be interested in seeing the letter and shared the message with him and the rest is history. Ed joined as a postulant in 1925 along with Jim Kline.

By letting oneself be open to the workings of the Holy Spirit, remarkable things can happen and they did in Ed's life. Ed's professional endeavors led him into the fields of philosophy, science, math the arts and law. He has graduate degrees from the University of Dayton, Catholic University, Washington, D.C., as well as Lateran Law School, Rome, Italy, and the University of Louvain in Belgium and his professional activities took him into secondary and university education (teaching and administration) as well as parish and hospital ministry.

His recreation – free time in Florida and I imagine in other communities were many and professional. In 1995 we needed a grounds person. Bro. Mike Kraszewski had been transferred to Boston and Ed volunteered to cut the grass and trim the bushes – and suggested he was used to the "old fashioned" push lawn mower. I told him we had a gas model and he pushed it until we informed him how to get it properly started. Thinking back, he was 85 at the time. How many of us would "volunteer" to cut grass and trim hedges at that age? Studying math (calculus) and reading books written in German were other past time activities. I understand he was conversant in several languages. One puzzle for me until I asked his family was: When did have time, or take

time, to become an accomplished musician? Not only was he a classical pianist but he also played one or more musical instruments. His family told me his parents were gifted musicians and Ed's musical skills were self-developed. He had no formal training. What he set his mind to he accomplished ... even mastering the computer.

Ed enjoyed a good meal and never missed an opportunity to go to a good restaurant. In Florida he "expected" to go out for a meal Friday or Saturday evening. From what I heard on one occasion the community director, checking out the different restaurants, decided to take the "check out" this new restaurant Hooter's ... much to the disgust of Ed. "I guess he didn't like the menu or the manner of serving." His favorite restaurant, according to Ralph Mravintz, was IHOP.

I'M SURE ED HAS WIPED AWAY ALL TEARS AND AT THIS MOMENT IS ENJOYING HIS HEAVENLY FEAST.

In Romans we read: "Christ proved his love for us even though we were sinners" and Ed tried to prove his love for God by developing the gifts God gave him for the welfare of others and being available to all. He took his spiritual ministry very seriously and I'm told even to his dying days he was faithful to the saying of his breviary.

Sister Judy from Mercy Siena told me Ed kept losing his rosary and frequently asked her for another. After a while, knowing where she kept them ... he went to the cupboard and "got caught." In the process of getting the rosary he knocked over a statue of St. Joseph – didn't break it, but it blocked his escape route.

John tells us Christ told his followers he was going to prepare a place for them ... and I think we can guarantee Ed is now among his Marianist Family ... for his whole life was inspired by his love for Mary, God's Mother, the Mother of Jesus and his Mother ... and this makes him a brother of Jesus and a member of Mary's special family.

In response to a questionnaire: **How has Mary been a part of your life as a religious?** he wrote: **Not a part, she is my life as her child and brother of Jesus, her son. So definitely** – Jesus took great care and time in preparing a special place for Ed, his brother and a devoted friend of his mother.

But how did we see Fr. Ed Rhodes? In preparing for this presentation I asked a few of the brothers what could they tell me about Ed. The usual response was "He was a quiet, scholarly, sincere and simple man." As Jesus asked Peter **who do you say I am?** I am asking each of us to reflect on how we would describe this elderly, brilliant, gentle man.

Several of his caregivers said:

- He was truly a renaissance man and a man of prayer. – Fr. Tom Stanley
- Many tears were shed when people heard about the death of Fr. Ed, according to Don Winfree.
- “I’ve never met a more gentle, grateful, patient yet strong willed, prayerful person in my life. He was most sweet, independent, very pleasant and never complained.”
- “He had a unique smile that endeared him to all.”
- “He had a quiet and profound impact on the staff.”
- “He is very much missed.”

Ed, thank you for spending time with us, for being part of this family, Mary’s family. Help us to continue to grow in the disposition that will guarantee our success as individuals and Marianists and lead others to your brother Jesus and Mary – your mother, our mother.

Don Neff, S.M.
November 10, 2007