

Eulogy for Brother Joseph Poui Nu'uanu, S.M.

Monday, January 28, 2013

By Brother Tom Redmond, S.M.

In the name of the Marianist Community and the family of Brother Joseph Nu'uanu I want to welcome you and thank you for coming to this liturgy and celebration of life in memory of Brother Joe.

Brother Joe entered the Marianist Community a year after graduating high school at St. Louis School in Honolulu where he met the Marianists. Coming from a large family of ten siblings, Brother Joe must have felt right at home in the midst of many brothers in our community life.

Listening to him share about his grandmother and her artistic eye for floral arrangements developed in him a sharp eye not just for beauty but for balance and simplicity in his arrangements. Brother Joe shared his artistic touch to our Marianist community in the placing of art throughout the house, the floral decorations in chapel, and in the planning and organizing many celebrations.

For 22 years he taught history to high school students in our Marianist schools, St. Louis High School in Honolulu, his alma mater, St. Anthony in Wailuku, Maui and at Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco. It was during his five years at St. Anthony on Maui that he became immersed in his Hawaiian culture, organizing school pageants for the Aloha Week celebrations that even went into the hotels as shows for the tourists.

After his tenure as a high school teacher he took a well-earned sabbatical then began a long career of 18 years in social ministry, first as an in-take counselor for families needing emergency housing, then as the Director of Martha's Kitchen in San Jose. From being a teacher and mentor to high school students he shifted gears and became a servant and student of the needy, the hungry, and the poor, learning from them that the most important things in life are what bind and hold us together as one.

Though he lived the past 32 years of his life here in the San Francisco Bay Area he kept in close contact with family both in Hawaii and throughout the Mainland. Each Tuesday evening he'd gather with others in study and in celebration of Hawaiian art and culture. Several of his friends from this group are here.

About twelve years ago Brother Joe had heart by-pass surgery, which the doctor said then, would give him another ten or so years of active life with the social work and his

artistic creations that meant so much to him. It was last September that Brother Joe began to experience again the effects of his weakening heart. The past three and a half months were a difficult transition in his life, from being active and involved with many people and projects, he struggled with the reality that he could no longer do what he loved to do. I wonder, if, unconsciously, his ministry to and being with the poor helped him in the process of letting go of being in control. For as the weeks went by Brother Joe was more and more open to the wonderful care of our nursing staff. He guided his newest student, Jan (on our nursing staff) in the arrangement of flowers in our chapel.

During the past few weeks Brother Joe discovered a renewed energy from the visits of his nephews, and nieces, and sisters. Also, the sight, scent, and the savoring of Hawaiian food renewed his appetite. I believe this nourishment of family and of local food helped him relax and begin to honestly face the fact that he was dying.

Our dedicated staff in nursing, in the kitchen, and in housekeeping are due a big thank you for your devoted and loving care and presence to Brother Joe, especially during these last few months when he needed a lot of attention.

The fraternal care and prayerful support of his brothers in community these months was well received by him. He found in community life what we all seek, the realization that we are not alone in our journey. And it is very good to have Father Bill Meyer with us from our Provincial Administration in St. Louis, MO, and several of our brothers from West Hills.

The past four days since his death, my prayer has been one of thanks to God for revealing something of the divine through the joy and beauty that Brother Joe shared with each of us in unique ways. Aloha no, Joe, until we all meet again in the kingdom of ultimate joy and beauty!