

Memories of the Dayton Novitiate Bro. Charles Johnson

- The blessing of living with Bro. John Soehnel before he passed away in 1986. Bro. John was blind and a longtime member of the novitiate community. I was very homesick my first night at the novitiate. I was sitting on the green benches right outside the door and Bro. John came out and sat with me. We talked for a bit and then asked what I looked like. I began to describe myself when he walked over to me and started to feel my face with his hands. He asked me to stand up and hugged me and said, "Oh, you are fat." This was 1986.
- My work period was to read to Bro. John. I would read his mail to him and then I would read a Marianist document or book to him. It took me about three weeks before I realized that he had heard these books before. He wanted me to read and hear these stories. I recall how he would always correct my pronunciation of the French names of the early Marianist priests and brothers.
- We use to play pinochle with Bro. John. We would use Braille cards and he would keep his hand on a kitchen tray on his lap. You would have to tell him what card you played and then he would play his cards. Bro. John use to beat us and then gloat about it. It was very difficult to get beaten by an 80 year old blind man who would make fun of you after you lost.
- It was a sad day when Bro. John passed away. We all still remember that day.
- a small bedroom with a gigantic wardrobe
- a fine view of the grotto, hearing the flow of the water at the grotto during the silence of the night
- a fine novitiate class: 8 professed vows and 6 are still in the order
- fine perpetually professed role models (I can name them later if you want)
- time: time to pray, to be, to learn, to cook, to grow, etc...
- having rooms "pierperized" during the holidays (Tom Pieper decorating)