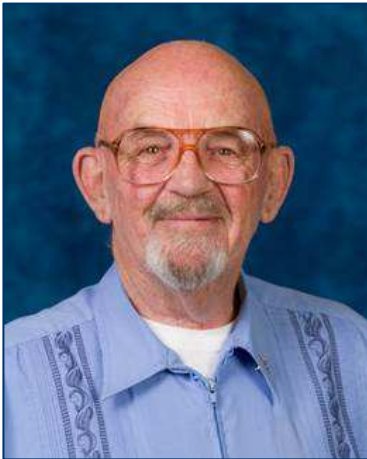


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December 22, 2016

**Death Notice No. 32 (To all Unit Administrations):**



The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **FRANCIS (SKIP) MATTHEWS**, of the Cupertino community, California, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 14, 2016 in Cupertino, California, USA, at the age of 77 with 57 years of religious profession.

Brother Skip, as he was always known, will be remembered for his great compassion and joyful spirit. He was a generous caregiver who ministered to the sick, the poor and the in-need.

Francis John Matthews was born on April 20, 1939, in Los Angeles, California. He and a brother, John, were the sons of Francis and Mary (Kennedy) Matthews. His grandfather, a former Navy captain, gave him the nickname "Skipper."

Brother Skip attended American Martyrs elementary school and Junipero Serra High School, where he first met Marianists. Both schools are in the Los Angeles, California, metropolitan area.

He entered the novitiate at Santa Cruz, California and professed first vows there a year later, on August 15, 1959. He chose the path of "working brother."

During his novitiate, Brother Skip worked with the brothers of St. John of God at their hospital in Los Angeles, learning the fundamentals of nursing and caring for elderly patients. After spending about a year as a cook at the novitiate, he was sent to Honolulu, Hawai'i, where he was a caregiver at the Marianist infirmary from 1961 – 1968. During this time, he returned briefly to Santa Cruz, where he professed perpetual vows on August 26, 1962.

Provincial Father Leonard Fee wrote a letter to Brother Skip, barely age 23, in May of 1962. He wrote "... to thank you and encourage you in the splendid work you are carrying on in favor of our retired and sick brothers. Keep your good sense of humor and your optimism."

Brother Skip made a second novitiate in 1968 – 1969 at Marycliff in Eureka, Missouri.

In 1970, Brother Skip was taken up on his offer to serve in the missions. He was sent to Lusaka, Zambia, where he ministered at Matero Boys School, running errands and coaching sports. After only a few weeks, however, he was asked to assist at a local hospital run by the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. What was proposed as a two-month assignment ended up lasting nearly a decade, with Brother Skip also continuing to serve at Matero.

In late 1981, Brother Skip returned to the United States to assist with family issues, and during this time he was on staff at his former high school, Junipero Serra. It wasn't long, however, before Brother Skip requested to return to Zambia. Beginning in mid-1983, he again lived at the Matero community, but spent most of his time ministering at a Sisters of Charity hospice. It was the dawn of the AIDS crisis, and Brother Skip cared for many who were dying of the dreaded disease.

The characteristically cheerful Brother Skip must have found renewal in his after-hours ministry among the students at Matero. The late Brother Frank Annunziata lived with Brother Skip at the time, and recalled Brother Skip's animated refereeing at Matero basketball games. "People just enjoyed watching Skip in action," Brother Frank wrote. "It was probably the only situation where people came to watch the referee instead of observing the game."

A back injury forced Brother Skip to return to California in 1987, where he had multiple surgeries. He again began work at Junipero Serra High School, mostly assisting with athletics. During this time, he also began ministering among the homeless and drug-addicted on Los Angeles' infamous Skid Row. He was a regular volunteer at the "Hippie Kitchen," a program of the Catholic Worker organization dedicated to feeding the homeless.

When the Marianists withdrew from Serra High School in 1994, Brother Skip was assigned to ministry at Chaminade College Preparatory, also in the Los Angeles metro area. At Chaminade, Brother Skip assisted in campus ministry, filled in as a substitute teacher and worked in the cafeteria. Brother Adam Becerra, fsp, the school's director of mission integration, called Brother Skip's ministry one of "hospitality and service."

"Brother Skip was the face of Christ for our Chaminade community," Brother Adam said. "He was the official greeter so that students started their day with an encouraging word and smile. He reminded students, educators and parents how God is present in the simplest ways."

"It is hard to put into words the effect Brother Skip had on our Chaminade family, particularly on our middle school campus," said Michael Valentine, principal of Chaminade's middle school (students approximately ages 11 – 13). "He was not only an amazing role model for our students, but a valued friend to faculty and staff members. Brother Skip lived his Marianist values every day."

During this time, Brother Skip continued a Skid Row ministry of quiet but powerful impact. In the weeks before Christmas, working with donated supplies, he would station himself at a decorated table on the sidewalk. There he would offer passers-by, mostly the homeless, the opportunity to send a card to a loved one. If needed, he would write the card for the person. Brother Skip sent around 900 cards per year in a ministry he continued for two decades.

Brother Skip also was a steadfast volunteer at Good Shepherd Shelter, a Los Angeles safe house for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. He excelled at garnering donations of goods, money and gift cards to aid the shelter's clients. Sr. Anne Kelley, the shelter's former executive director, was a fan and friend of Brother Skip's. "Even last month, he still managed to send us (donations)," said Sr. Anne. "Like his patron St. Francis, he taught the Gospel by example, using words only when necessary."

In 2013, Brother Skip received the annual Brotherhood Award from the Council of Religious Brothers in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Brother Brandon Paluch, many years Brother Skip's junior, remembered his good friend and mentor this way: "Skip always took the first step; he went out of his way and got involved. He loved," said Brother Brandon. "I'll miss his hugs and the way he ended every phone call with, '*We'll see ya when we see ya.*' We know your new address Brother Skip," said Brother Brandon, "and we pray we can one day join you there. We'll see ya when we see ya."

May he rest in peace.