

The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **FREDERICK CARL GELHARD**, of the Marianist Residence Community, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on November 1, 2008, in San Antonio, Texas, in the 84th year of his age and the 52nd year of his religious profession.

Fred was born in Duluth, Minnesota, on June 8, 1925, the only son of Walter and Crescentia (Weise) Gelhard. He graduated from Oconomowoc High School in Wisconsin in 1943 and enlisted in the U.S. Navy to fight in World War II. Fred was discharged in 1946 and reenlisted in the Naval Reserve. He attended Marquette University in Milwaukee and in 1949 received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering.

Fred worked as an engineer for the next five years at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in Denver, Bucyrus-Erie Corp. in South Milwaukee and A.O. Smith Corp. in Milwaukee. "Responsibilities at home kept me from marriage," Bro. Fred wrote. "When these were taken care of, I considered religious life." A parish priest directed Fred to Don Bosco, a Marianist high school in Milwaukee. "The brothers told me enough about the Society and its work to lead me to apply," Fred said.

In 1956, he entered the novitiate of the Society of Mary at Galesville, Wisconsin. Bro. Fred professed first vows in 1957 at Galesville and final vows in 1961 in Clayton, Missouri. He began his religious career teaching math, religion and mechanical drawing at St. Joseph High School in Victoria, Texas. Bro. Fred was known for his ability to fix just about anything. After two years of teaching, he realized he could better serve the Society as a working brother.

Bro. Fred spent three years working in maintenance at the Marianist novitiate in Galesville. In 1964, he was sent to Pueblo, Colorado, to supervise the construction of Roncalli High School. Soon after, he oversaw the building of a retreat center in Glencoe, Missouri. In the late 1960s, Bro. Fred served as coordinator of maintenance for the Society's properties in the St. Louis area. He accepted a maintenance position in 1970 at Holy Rosary Parish in San Antonio, where he worked for the next eight years.

Answering a call to serve in Third World ministry, Bro. Fred was sent to Africa in 1978. For the next six years he worked on construction and maintenance projects in Zambia, Kenya and Nigeria. His projects ranged from developing a water storage tank in Zambia to drawing up plans for school buildings in Lusaka. Bro. Fred returned to the U.S. in 1984 and served for almost 20 years in various maintenance roles at the Marianist novitiate in Galesville, St. John Vianney High School and Chaminade College Preparatory in St. Louis, and Central Catholic High School in San Antonio.

"Over the years my work has constantly involved making short budgets keep physical plants operating," said Bro. Fred of his career.

Bro. Irv Wachtel, who worked for many years with Bro. Fred, admired his skill as a craftsman and engineer but was especially touched by his humility and work ethic.

“Fred wasn’t afraid to get his hands dirty,” said Bro. Irv. “He would gravitate to jobs that people were unwilling to do. If a sewer line needed cleaning, he was the first to volunteer to do it.” At the same time, according to Bro. Irv, Bro. Fred tackled difficult engineering problems and drawings with ease, often coming up with solutions that no one else considered.

Both brothers were assigned to Central Catholic High School in 1998. According to Bro. Irv, Bro. Fred made it his mission to paint every window at the school—a laborious process that took him three years to complete. “It was a huge job, but Fred had the willingness and patience to take on anything that needed to be done,” said Bro. Irv.

Many knew Bro. Fred as a quiet, serious man who made a conscious effort to live simply. He expressed deep concern about the role of the Marianists, the Catholic Church and civil leaders in social justice and Catholic education issues.

“Although a man of few words, he was a man of action who contributed to our mission through his painstaking care of the material goods God has given the Society of Mary,” said Assistant Provincial Fr. Jim Fitz.

May he rest in peace.