

March 13, 2007

**Death Notice No. 8 (To all Unit Administrations):**



The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **JOSEPH MEIERDIRKS**, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on March 3, 2007, in Dayton, Ohio, in the 87<sup>th</sup> year of his age and the 46<sup>th</sup> year of his religious profession.

Bro. Joseph was born on July 31, 1920, in Covington, Kentucky, to Joseph and Camille (Grote) Meierdirks. His family had a long tradition of religious association. Bro. Joseph's ancestors helped form and build Mother of God Church in Covington.

Influenced by his family and his mother's devotion to Mary, Bro. Joseph considered a religious vocation with the Society of Mary prior to his high school graduation. His father, however, had other plans for Bro. Joseph. In 1938, at his father's behest, Bro. Joseph enrolled in the chemical engineering program at the University of Cincinnati. Bro. Joseph stayed with the engineering program until 1942, when he enlisted in the United States Air Force Cadet Program.

During World War II, Bro. Joseph guided planes over the Pacific as a navigator in the 13<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force. He also worked in the signal unit of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force advanced headquarters and with the 13<sup>th</sup> Bomber group, where he reported bomb hits and damage. Bro. Joseph received several medals for his heroism in World War II, including: The Asiatic-Pacific Service Medal, Awards of the Air Medal, Awards of Oak Leaf Cluster Medal (a battle honor for his unit), and a Purple Heart for wounds suffered while flying over the Yap Islands in the western Pacific Ocean on July 15, 1944.

In 1945 he was honorably discharged from the military. Bro. Joseph resumed his education, electing to change universities and his major. He attended Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, graduating with a bachelor's degree in materials engineering in 1947. For the next 12 years, he was employed in technical positions at corporations such as General Electric, General Engineering and Consulting Laboratories, Cannon-Muskegon and Crucible Steel.

In 1960, Bro. Joseph's career took another turn when he was accepted into the novitiate program with the Society of Mary at Chaminade Preparatory in Marcy, New York. "There was something lacking in my life," Bro. Joseph said of his decision to enter religious life at age 39. "I wanted to help young people through teaching, and I wanted to do it through a religious order." Bro. Joseph professed first vows in 1961 in Marcy and final vows in 1967 at Bergamo

in Dayton. During this time, he received a bachelor's degree in education with a theology emphasis from the University of Dayton.

Bro. Joseph's teaching ministry began in 1962 at Purcell Marian High School in Cincinnati where he taught mathematics and technical drawing. Over the next decade he also taught at North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, Covington Catholic High School in Covington, Kentucky, Archbishop Moeller High School in Cincinnati, and St. Joseph High School in Cleveland. After a two-year sabbatical from teaching, Bro. Joseph worked at the University of Dayton in various staff positions and as a research engineer until 1979.

"Bro. Joe had the creative mind of a scientist," said Fr. Joe Lackner, who lived with him in Cincinnati and Kentucky. "He had a passion to know and an insatiable desire to investigate new things. He also had a deep spiritual life and was very devotional."

For the next 17 years, Bro. Joseph worked as a pastoral minister at Holy Family Parish and St. Vincent Ferrer Parish in Cincinnati, St. Peter Parish in New Richmond, Ohio, and St. Bartholomew Parish in Miramar, Florida. In this capacity, Bro. Joseph visited hospital patients and shut-ins and assisted with Bible study groups, RCIA activities, retreats and other pastoral duties of the parishes. "Those whose lives he touched, especially in parish ministry, remained very loyal to him," said Fr. Joe.

In 1996, Bro. Joseph retired to The Franciscan at St. Leonard care center in Centerville, Ohio. In his retirement years, Bro. Joseph developed a keen interest in the NASA space program and Mars efforts which he researched on the Internet. In 2003, he moved to Mercy Siena healthcare center in Dayton where he died from heart failure and an infection.

May he rest in peace.