



The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **LEE SCIARROTTA**, priest of the Washington Street Marianist Community, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 23, 2010, in Dayton, Ohio, USA, at the age of 74 with 55 years of religious profession.

Lee was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on August 10, 1936, a twin son of Charles and Jennie (Indelicato) Sciarrotta. His twin Paul is a priest in the Diocese of Cleveland; his older brother Joseph is a retired medical doctor. Lee's parents came from Sicily and he said that his Sicilian background "may or may not be the best environment for a priest vocation, yet somehow the Lord uses his methods to make his mark."

He described his family as close, with his parents teaching the children to be productive citizens. "My dad made a living selling fruits and vegetables with his truck. We were not wealthy, but we never were in need."

The pastor at the Italian parish encouraged Lee and his brother to attend the Marianists' Cathedral Latin School, where he spent two years. "I observed the family spirit which existed there," he wrote. "The brothers' mutual help and kindness attracted me to this Society."

He spent a year at the postulate at Mount Saint John in Dayton, followed by a novitiate year at Marcy, New York. Lee professed first vows at Marcy on Sept. 8, 1955, and perpetual vows at the Immaculate Conception chapel at the University of Dayton on Aug. 15, 1959. He graduated from the University of Dayton in 1958.

Following his university studies, he spent five years teaching religion and Latin at North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh. In 1963 Brother Lee entered the Marianists' Regina Mundi Seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland. He was ordained on July 22, 1967, at Holy Cross Church in Cleveland, fulfilling a dream he had had since he was 10 years of age. That year he also completed his master's degree in theology in the pastoral program at the University of Fribourg.

After a year in 1967 as a vocation recruiter at Cathedral Latin, Fr. Lee spent a year each teaching at Chaminade College School in Toronto (religion and Latin), St. Joseph High School in Cleveland (religion) and Msgr. Hackett High School in Kalamazoo, Michigan (English). From 1971 to 1981 Fr. Lee did parish work at Holy Cross Parish in Cleveland and St. Catherine of Siena in Portage, Michigan.

In 1982, at the age of 46, Fr. Lee became the first pastor of St. Jude Parish in Langwarrin, Victoria, Australia. Julie Aherne, a member of the Marianist Lay Community at St. Jude, remembers his hospitality, welcoming manner and steadfastness of his faith. "After Mass he would invite everyone in for a cup of tea. I have never experienced such openness and hospitality from a priest. This was one of the reasons why I liked the Marianists. He had a special charisma."

Bro. Don Neff, who served with Fr. Lee in Australia, remembers a parish family that was having problems. When their washer broke down, Fr. Lee told them to bring their laundry to the rectory. "He lived the witness he was called to," said Bro. Don.

Upon his return from Australia in 1988, Fr. Lee began a longtime association with Emmanuel Parish in Dayton as its fifth pastor, serving for 22 years. He developed the parish's large social outreach, offering help to Vietnamese refugees and the Rwandan community in Dayton. Fr. Lee tithed 10 percent of the parish's weekly collection to more than 50 charities, including the work in Africa through the Marianist Mission. Through a trust fund set up by a parishioner, he contributed many scholarships to students at Chaminade Julianne Catholic High School as well as other urban Catholic schools and to men preparing for the priesthood. He also was passionate about right to life issues and home schooling.

"He was a saintly man who was always outreaching to people at his parish," said Bro. Don. "He was down-to-earth and friendly. He also loved being Sicilian. He said if I disagreed with him he'd send some of his Sicilian friends after me."

Mary Beemsterboer, Fr. Lee's longtime secretary at Emmanuel, said Fr. Lee was "tough on the outside but gentle on the inside," a man who was devoted to Mary, holding weekly novenas for the parishioners and keeping the church open during the day for adoration. "Fr. Lee established deep, personal relationships with many people," Mary said. "One of our staff members summed it up by saying that he was a 'people's priest.'"

Fr. Lee moved to Mercy Siena at the beginning of 2010 due to failing health, where he continued to run the parish business from his bed. Two months before he died, Fr. Lee wrote a letter to his parishioners at Emmanuel: "I love you. Although you may not see me, you are on my mind all the time. My chosen ministry in life is to do God's way as best I can. Thank you for keeping the ministry at Emmanuel going while I can't be with you."

May he rest in peace.