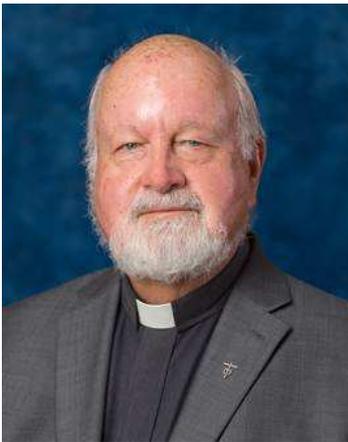


CURIA GENERALIZIA MARIANISTI
Via Latina 22 - 00179 Roma, Italia
Tel. (39-06) 704 75 892 - Fax (39-06) 700 0406
E-mail: gensecsm@smcuria.it

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Death Notice No. 35 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Marianist Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **JOHN MCGRATH**, priest, of the Novitiate Community (Dayton, Ohio), who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 26, 2015, in Dayton, Ohio, USA, at the age of 80 with 61 years of religious profession.

Fr. Jack was a scholar, leader and a man of deeply religious spirit. He lived the Marianist charism as a high school teacher, college professor and “grandfather” figure to young brothers. “Fr. Jack left a deep and distinctive mark on the Society of Mary,” said Fr. Marty Solma, provincial. “But it’s his friendship and religious spirit we’ll miss most.”

John “Jack” Anthony McGrath was born January 17, 1935, in Brooklyn, New York, but grew up in Manhasset, New York. He was one of four brothers and a daughter in the family of Francis and Theresa (Wilson) McGrath. His father died when he was 14.

Jack attended Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York, and was so impressed with the Marianist brothers that he entered the novitiate after graduation in 1953 and asked to be considered for first vows in 1954, at the age of 19.

He wrote in his letter to the provincial:

“. . . the example and instructions of the brothers, the impelling spirit of the Society, reflection, and the inner workings of grace prompted me to believe that God desired to give me the privilege and honor of a religious vocation to the Society of Mary. It is especially the state of a son consecrated to his mother and a soldier dedicated to his queen, in other words, filial piety of a Marianist toward Mary, that led me to choose this congregation above all others.”

He professed first vows on September 8, 1954, at the Marianist Novitiate in Marcy, New York. In 1957, Bro. Jack received a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from the University of Dayton. His early ministry included teaching math, religion and American history from 1957 to 1962 at Chaminade High School in Dayton and at his alma mater, Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York. During that time, on August 15, 1958, Bro. Jack professed perpetual vows in Dayton, Ohio. He then pursued a master’s degree in American history at Ohio State University and received it in 1962.

In 1962, at the age of 27, he began the fulfillment of a dream he had had since the age of 10 – to be a priest. He entered the Marianist seminary, Regina Mundi, in Fribourg, Switzerland, and was ordained on March 26, 1966. During his seminary years he earned an STL – Licentiate of Sacred Theology – from the University of Fribourg. “Seminary days were life-changing,” Fr. Jack wrote. “Living with Marianists of eight nations, getting the mind stretched by theology, and all during the new Pentecost of Vatican II, brought me closer to the truths of faith.”

“I first got to know Jack well in the seminary in Switzerland. He became a dear friend and a mentor,” said Fr. George Cerniglia. “He was always searching for truth and grappling with the changes of Vatican II. What a wonderful theological mind he had!”

Fr. Jack lived in the Netherlands as a student from 1966 to 1968 and was awarded a DRS – Doctor of Divinity (systematic theology) – from the University of Nijmegen in 1968.

He returned to the United States and began many years of ministry in provincial administration for the former Province of New York. Fr. Jack served as assistant for religious life at the Provincial house in Baltimore, Maryland, from 1969 to 1974. The following years were busy: He lived in Toronto from 1974 to 1977 as a student at the University of St. Michael's College, traveling to Baltimore to serve as a provincial councilor. He earned his doctorate in historical theology from St. Michael's in 1979.

In 1977, Fr. Jack began a ministry he said "called on every strength I had." He was appointed provincial of the Province of New York, serving until 1985. "The fraternal good of our brothers and our charism demanded a personal broadening and deepening which may not have happened otherwise."

Fr. George, who served with Fr. Jack when he was provincial, called him a 'work horse,' but someone who would never ask anyone to do something he wouldn't do himself. "In so many ways, he called out the best in us," said Fr. George.

During the early to mid-1980s, Fr. Jack served on the University of Dayton board of trustees, the national board of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and the U.S. Catholic bishops advisory council and executive committee.

In 1987, after a sabbatical at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California, Fr. Jack began a long association with the Religious Studies Department at the University of Dayton. He helped develop the undergraduate curriculum in Religious Studies, the development of the Ph.D. program in theology, the development of the cluster in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, and the Forum on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition Today. He served as assistant professor in Religious Studies and as the University Professor of Faith and Culture.

"Fr. Jack holds a special place in my heart because he encouraged me to apply for the faculty position in the Religious Studies Department at UD and invited me to become a Marianist Educational Associate," said Sandra Yocum, an associate professor at UD. "He embodied the Marianist charism, especially Mary's ability to point us in the direction of Christ with her faithfulness and humble compassion. We will miss him greatly – his laugh, his good counsel, and his living out the Marianist mission of bringing Christ's life into our world."

Bro. Brian Zampier, who lived with Fr. Jack for 10 years at the Washington Street Community in Dayton, said he was a delight to live with. "A classic quote from Jack, that many will remember – as he wagged his forefinger back and forth – was 'Fruit is *not* dessert!' He will continue to be an inspiration of wisdom and Marianist creativity in my life."

Fr. Jack was executive director of the Association of Marianist Universities from 2010 to 2012. During the past several years, he served as assistant district superior in the Society of Mary's District of India and taught in the University of Dayton program in Bangalore. "India is one of the last places I expected to find myself in older age, but it has called me to yet another area of ministry and growth, working with young brothers of another culture to make the Marianist mission their own," Fr. Jack wrote. "The living Christ has so much to offer all these hundreds of millions." District Superior Bro. Augustus Surin worked with Fr. Jack in India. "He was a simple man who was very concerned with the poor," said Bro. Augustus. "Fr. Jack was grounded in faith and reality, and was integrated in mind, body, soul and heart."

He returned to the United States in 2015, assisting with the formation and mentoring of young brothers at the Marianist Novitiate in Dayton. "Jack had a great sense of humor and a spontaneous laugh, as well as a few well-known dismissive 'harumphs' about ideas or situations he felt were below par," said Fr. Chris Wittmann, director of novices. "He used his gifts to build others up and to build up the community. Many younger Marianist brothers, colleagues and former students looked to him as an example. In recent days I have heard, 'He was a surrogate father to me.' 'He was the grandfather I never had.' 'He was one of my Marianist heroes.'"

On December 21, Fr. Jack suffered a stroke in Dayton and died the day after Christmas.

In that long-ago letter in 1954, asking to be considered for first vows, 19-year-old Jack McGrath wrote: "To give honor and glory to God, this I saw as my purpose for existing."

May he rest in peace.