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



The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **THOMAS TESSMER**, of the Marianist Residence community, San Antonio, Texas, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on March 13, 2017 in San Antonio, Texas, USA, at the age of 81 with 62 years of religious profession.

Thomas Bernard Tessmer was born on September 15, 1935, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He and a sister, Joan, were the children of Louis and Catherine (Petroviak) Tessmer. He attended St. Rita elementary school and Notre Dame High School in his hometown.

Brother Tom entered the Marynook Novitiate at Galesville, Wisconsin, and professed first vows there one year later, on September 26, 1954. He earned a bachelor's degree in math at St. Mary's University in San Antonio in 1957, and began teaching that autumn at St. Mary's High School in St. Louis, Missouri.

On July 19, 1959, Brother Tom professed perpetual vows in St. Louis. He continued teaching at St. Mary's until 1964. He then taught at McBride High School in St. Louis for one year (1964 – 1965), before returning to St. Mary's for the next five years. Father Ralph Siefert was one of his students. "Brother Tom taught me geometry," said Father Ralph. "I remember him as being a good teacher – he didn't tolerate any foolishness from us." In addition to teaching, Brother Tom ministered, at times, as a speech and debate moderator, and as a coach of football, track and cross country.

Over the summers, he worked toward a master's degree at the University of Dayton.

Brother Tom returned to his hometown of Milwaukee in 1970, where he taught for two years at Don Bosco High School. He was then called to serve as assistant principal and registrar back at St. Mary's High School (1972 – 1976).

From 1976 - 1978, Brother Tom was assistant principal at Thomas More High School in Milwaukee. At about this time, he was diagnosed with a demyelinating disease, a disorder of the central nervous system.

Brother Tom taught for one year (1979 – 1980) at St. John Vianney High School in St. Louis, during which time he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He served in an administrative role at the Marianist Apostolic Center (now the Marianist Retreat & Conference Center) in St. Louis, and then taught again briefly at Nolan High School in Fort Worth, Texas, (1981 – 1982) and at St. John Vianney (1982 – 1983).

Later in 1983, Brother Tom moved to Chaminade College Preparatory in St. Louis. While he was no longer physically able to teach, he had a facility with computers and assisted with the school's computer operations,

By the early 1990s, Brother Tom's health deteriorated to the extent he was not able to walk safely, and he began to use a wheelchair. In 1993, he moved to the St. Joseph Community in San Antonio, which at the time was a health care facility.

Charlotte Soria, a registered nurse who has long served the Marianists, first met Brother Tom when he moved into the St. Joseph Community. Over the following 24 years, the two became close friends. She said that in the early years of his time at the community, Brother Tom looked forward to visits from St. Mary's University students.

"The students would challenge him to a game of chess, and of course he always won because he was that good," Charlotte said. "He was also a great math teacher. He would offer his time to the students if they needed help."

As time went on however, Brother Tom's condition continued to decline and he would lapse into long periods of silence. "He had some good days and some really bad days," said Charlotte. "He was an example to all of us here. He went on with his life; he accepted it gracefully. I believe his faith and love of God helped him deal with his pain and suffering."

Brother Jerry Bommer, a longtime friend of Brother Tom's, was with him when he died. Brother Jerry said it was a peaceful departure.

"Multiple sclerosis, slowly, but relentlessly, sapped Tom's energy and took away his abilities," said Brother Jerry. "After more than 30 years, he had nothing left to give."

May he rest in peace.