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Death Notice No. 26 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **JAMES FITZGIBBONS**, of the Marianist Residence community, San Antonio, Texas, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on November 6, 2017 in San Antonio, Texas, USA, at the age of 81 with 61 years of religious profession.

Brother Jim was a warm, generous, well-traveled teacher and formator. He served in Zambia, Nigeria, Peru and India, as well as at several U.S. ministries.

James Patrick Fitzgibbons was born on December 19, 1935, in Syracuse, New York. He was one of three sons in the family of Raymond and Helen (Tague) Fitzgibbons. He was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph throughout elementary and high school at St. John the Baptist Academy in Syracuse.

Jim felt drawn to religious life at a young age, and in a conversation with his parish priest, he learned of the Society of Mary. He visited the Marianist novitiate at Marcy, New York, and entered officially a few months later, in August of 1955. He professed first vows on September 8, 1956.

Although Brother Jim had planned to pursue a career as a working brother, he was urged by his superiors to obtain a bachelor's degree. And, because he took seriously his commitment to embodying Mary's "yes," he rose to the task. He earned a degree in history from the University of Dayton in 1959. He professed perpetual vows on August 15, 1960 in Dayton.

Brother Jim taught for a year at Cathedral Latin School in Cleveland, Ohio, before being called to serve at St. John's Home in Rockaway Park, New York, in 1960. St. John's was a home for children who had been abused or neglected, or who had fallen into delinquency. For the next three years, Brother Jim served as a counselor and mentor for a large group of teen boys. He was then named director of child care for the home; he ministered in that role until 1965.

He later wrote that the skills he gained at St. John's Home made it easier for him to embrace his next assignment: missionary work at a new school in Zambia. From 1965-1978, Brother Jim was a teacher and later, assistant principal, at Matero Boys' Secondary School in Lusaka. "Jim was one of the founders of Matero, and he did more than anybody," said Bro. Carmine Annunziata, who served with him during these years. "Jim seldom thought much about his gifts, but he was an excellent teacher."

Brother Jim returned to the United States for one year to study religious formation. He then went back to Africa, this time to Ekpoma, Nigeria, as director of novices at the Marianist Novitiate. He served in that role for nearly six years.

“Yes” was again Brother Jim’s response when he was called to a distinctly different geography. After spending several months studying Spanish in Bolivia, Brother Jim moved to Callao, Peru, in 1986. There he taught English, worked in formation and assisted with maintenance at Colegio San Antonio.

Now age 55, Brother Jim returned to the United States and from 1991-1995, he served at Martin House, an inner-city ministry among the poor in Trenton, New Jersey. Brother Jim taught English as a second language and high school diploma programs to newly arrived immigrants. When the Marianists withdrew from Martin House in 1995, Brother Jim returned to St. John’s Home, where he served in maintenance roles with his trademark generous spirit.

In early 1998, Brother Jim was sent to yet another station on the Marianist map. He served for the following four-and-a-half years as an English teacher and mentor to aspirants in Bangalore, India. “Jim was very kind and close to his young students,” said Father David Fleming. “He was very patient with their struggles with the English language ... he brought a light touch to whatever he did.”

In 2002, Brother Jim returned to Zambia for about 18 months to meet a need at Matero Boys’ School. He then spent part of 2003 in a spiritual renewal program in New Mexico.

Now into his fifth decade of service, Brother Jim was called to minister at the Marianist Family Retreat Center in Cape May Point, New Jersey. He did whatever was needed, meeting maintenance needs and assisting with retreats. “He worked with a quiet spirit – very much behind the scenes. He asked for very little and was always perfectly satisfied,” said Anthony Fucci, the center’s director. “But boy, did he have a sense of humor! He was quick-witted and had impeccable timing.”

In 2007, Brother Jim was asked to return to India, this time to Ranchi and the Nirmal Deep Community, where he taught and mentored novices. He later wrote: “The time spent there was a special experience ... but my real joy was in seeing the spiritual growth in the Indian candidates.”

It was in his first year of religious life that Father Chinnaiah Polishety met Brother Jim. “Brother Jim had a wonderful relationship with the brothers in India,” Father Chinnaiah said. “In Jim, there was loyalty, love, patience and persistence in all that he did. He still inspires with the life he lived.”

Brother Jim was struck with a severe case of shingles in 2011, and was hospitalized in India for three weeks. Shortly before his 76th birthday, he returned to the United States to continue recuperating, with the hope of returning to India. He spent about a year at the Mercy Siena health care community in Dayton.

In late 2012, Brother Jim suffered kidney failure. His need for dialysis precipitated a move to the Marianist Residence Community in San Antonio. His health continued to decline.

“Jim has been a witness to patient suffering and faith during all these years,” wrote Father Martin Solma, calling Brother Jim a “tireless missionary and advocate for the poor.”

In marking his jubilee in 2016, Brother Jim said that his life had been both “challenging and rewarding.” He wrote: “As I review my first 60 years as a Marianist, I can see clearly how I have been blessed by the Lord Jesus and his mother.”

May he rest in peace.