

**Father Joseph Stefanelli – Homily – given by Fr. Steve Tutas
Friday, August 31, 2018**

My friendship with Father Joe began many years ago...When Father Jack Rielly and I came to Fribourg to begin our preparation for ordination, Father Joe had already completed two years.

I am personally grateful for yesterday's sharing...
You will recognize many of your sentiments in this homily.
After our evening memorial service, one person spoke to me about a point that wasn't mentioned explicitly – his leadership...
He was director, provincial, and a member of the General Administration.
But as I played back the comments that were made,
I realized that we did reflect on his leadership
- the personal influence he had on us...

One of the great gifts offered us who live at the Marianist Center is learning how to live - and how to die.
We are always learning...
We learn from the men whose photos line the walkway between the dining room and the chapel...
For several days now our flag has been at half mast and his photo added to the list of men who died here in Cupertino – and from whom we have all learned...

When Father Joe named this center the MARIANIST FORMATION CENTER he hoped that it would serve as the formation center for the Marianist Family: laity and religious.
It was a dream he never saw realized...
But it now serves to assure the best possible ongoing formation for our Marianist Brothers and Priests...
as we entered our 80's (the most formative years)
And he had an impact on all who came to visit him...

Father Joe dedicated many years of his life to the initial formation of the Brothers of the Province of the Pacific.
In these latter years by his words and witness he enriched the lives of those of us who are privileged to live here...

I would like to underline three gifts I especially appreciate

I call them three lessons: gratitude, calmness, faith.

GRATITUDE

Several years ago at our community prayer on a December 31,
he told us he thanked God for each day of that year - a day he hadn't expected!
It was his way of saying he lived fully in the present every day,
looking back with gratitude and looking forward with hope!

He lived each day in thanksgiving, the heart of prayer...

CALMNESS

I was always impressed by his calmness
when he was ill and I stopped in for a short visit
– he was always welcoming...

I was even more impressed by his patience with community life.
More than once he shared with us his secret for living peacefully...

Accept and Adapt!

I also remember that he took to heart one of Blessed Chaminade's favorite quotes:
"I am like a brook... All the obstacles can do is hold me up for a while,
as a brook is held up; but during that time it grows broader and deeper
and after a while it overflows the obstruction and flows along again.
This is how I am going to work."

As we heard from the Book of Wisdom
The souls of the just are in the hand of God. They are in peace
And from the psalm:
Though I walk in the valley of darkness,
I fear no evil, for you are with me

FAITH

Then there is the most important thing he taught us,
echoing Blessed Chaminade: Be strong in Faith.
He showed us day by day, how to live by faith!
Fortes in Fide is our motto as Marianists
In a homily he gave us not many years ago, he said
faith is a gift – but we must *choose* to accept the gift.
Why doubt?

If then, we have died with Christ,
we believe that we shall also live with him.
We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more;
death no longer has power over him.

His death was a peaceful passage from this life
as we believe was the way our Blessed Mother died...

I believe many of us can identify with Graham Greene
Who once said that he often prays *to* rather than *for*...