



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Soci t  de Marie
Via Latina 22, 00179 Roma



January 24, 2019

Biography of Death Notice # 03

The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **Bernard STRATMAN**, of the Marianist Residence, San Antonio, Texas, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on January 10, 2019 in San Antonio, Texas, USA, at the age of 71 with 52 years of religious profession.

Bro. Bernie held many national leadership roles in the Catholic Church in the US. He dedicated his knowledge in communications to help guide and shape the future of the Church in the U.S. and nourished it with the Marianist Charism.

Bernard Francis Stratman was born on July 23, 1947 in West Point, Nebraska, to the family of Leonard Francis and Angeline (nee Disher) Stratman. He has two sisters. He attended St. Aloysius for grammar school followed by Central Catholic High School. Bro. Bernie connected to the Marianists through a Sister who was his high school science teacher. He was then introduced Bros. Joe Barrett and Al Kuntemeier. He joined the Society of Mary immediately after high school entering the novitiate in Galesville, Wisconsin, on August 20, 1965. He professed first vows there on August 22, 1966.

In 1970, Bro. Bernie earned his bachelor's degree in English from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. His first assignment was to teach at Roncalli High School in Pueblo, Colorado (1970-1971). In 1972, Bro. Bernie was assigned to the Maryhurst Communications Center in St. Louis. He earned his master's degree in instructional technology from Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, Illinois in 1977. He was assigned as a research assistant for the Diocese of Brooklyn Television Center, New York (1977-1978).

Bro. Tom Suda remembers, "Bro. Bernie and I were in the same vow group over 50 years ago. Though we never lived together in community over the 50 years, our lives crossed at many Marianist events. Bernie and I would get together and talk about our personal journeys and community life. Bernie never wanted to talk

about what he was doing, but was always interested in what I was doing. I believe it was way of staying connected to the Province because his work was on a national level.”

In 1978, Bro. Bernie was assigned to serve on the Evangelization Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishop. In 1983, he was assigned to serve the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives at the University of Dayton in Ohio. He took sabbatical at Jesuit School of Theology in Berkley, California, in 1987. In 1988, he began his service to the National Federation of Priests’ Councils in Chicago, Illinois. He was initially program director and then executive director. From 2002-2009, he served as the executive director of the Seminary Department of the National Catholic Education Association.

Upon reflecting on his 50th Jubilee, Bro. Bernie wrote, “I believe that through my efforts, I helped the Church of the United States to move on in an important direction. I was grounded in our Marianist heritage of collegiality and collaborations. Our community skills are easily transferable to our ministries. I felt that I had helped plant a tree and watched it grow. I even took pride in shaking that tree a little.”

Fr. Rudy Vela writes, “Bernie was a dear friend. I learned early on that his strength as a Marianist came from embracing the heart of Mary. He was always pondering things in his heart. A man always promoting a consciousness of God’s great love and Church. To know Bernie was to know how to read his heart. His generosity, attentiveness, and engaging values are the hallmarks of his spirituality and life. Bernie was always about projects that enabled learning and loving ministry and Church.”

In 2009, he was awarded the Cardinal Cushing Medal for Advancement of Church research from Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (C.A.R.A.) The award announcement stated, “Bro Bernie is especially well known for bringing together representatives of many groups and perspectives and facilitating successful collaboration among them.” Bro. Bernie was thrilled to share the Marianist Charism on the national level. In 2010, the NCEA awarded him the C. Alfred Koob Merit Award for his contributions to Catholic Education.

Bro. Bernie was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in the late nineties, a disease he would battle for the duration of his life. In 2009, realizing the diseases effect was becoming too great, Bro. Bernie retired to the Marianist Residence in San Antonio, Texas.

Bro. Mike O’Grady writes, “I had the privilege of working with Bro. Bernie on some Province-level committees in the mid eighties and I was impressed with his competence and insights. I could see how much he lost due to the disease. He had a good spirit. In the midst of his illness, he could laugh.”

Bro. Al Kuntemeier, who was Bro. Bernie’s vocation director, remembers, “I was impressed and inspired by his acceptance of his illness, and the patience that he seemed to have with it. I never heard him complain or be angry with God. Bernie seemed never to give up, signed up to go places and do things.”

Bro. Bernie’s service in the name of Mary has touched generations of Catholics by helping to shape the future of God’s great Church in the U.S. We give thanks to God for his life of leadership and devotion to Marianist heritage of collegiality and collaboration. May he rest in peace.