



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
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March 29, 2019

Biography of Death Notice # 12

The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **John BAKLE**, priest, of the Marianist Community at Siena Woods, Dayton, OH, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on March 12, 2019 in Dayton, OH, USA, at the age of 82 with 63 years of religious profession.

Fr. John was a veteran, military chaplain, teacher, guidance counselor, pastor and administrator in Marianist high schools, youth programs and retreat centers. He was dependable, intelligent and intensely religious. He dedicated his life to sharing the Marianist Charism and extolling the dynamic presence of Christ in the world.

John L. Bakle was born on Jan. 7, 1937, in Hicksville, Ohio. He was one of two boys born to the family of Marie (nee Hoff) and George William Bakle. He spent his childhood in what he would refer to as “the hinterlands of northwest Ohio,” where he attended public school and was one of only two Catholics in a class of 50. He had never met a religious priest or brother until his father’s job moved his family to Jackson, Michigan, in the middle of his last year of grammar school.

His family enrolled him in St. Mary, Star of the Sea for the remainder of his last year of grammar school. There, at the age of 13, the idea of a vocation was first planted. His teacher, Sr. Ann Rita Kelly, took him under her wing. He and some other students were helping her clean out old boxes of junk from the cloakroom one Saturday morning when he rescued a Marianist vocation pamphlet from one of the boxes of trash. Two weeks later, he clipped and mailed the interest form to the Marianists. Three weeks later, Bro. John Jansen and Bro. Leonard Kuntz landed on his doorstep. On the occasion of his 50th jubilee of profession, Fr. John wrote, “Both my family and I were quite taken with Bro. John and Bro Len; their demeanor and their presentation on the Society of Mary. That very fall, I took the train from central

Michigan to Beacon, New York, for two years of postulate, then a third at St. Ann's at Mount Saint John in Dayton, where I had a great spiritual and academic formation at the hands of some of the finest religious teachers I've ever known."

Fr. John entered novitiate at Marcy, New York, on August 17, 1954. He professed first vows on September 7, 1955 at Marcy. He then attended scholasticate at Mount Saint John. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Dayton in 1960 and professed perpetual vows on August 15, 1961. His first assignments as a Marianist were mainly teaching: Immaculate Conception Boys School in Washington, D.C. (1956-1957); Chaminade High School, Dayton, Ohio (1957-1960); Purcell High School, Cincinnati, Ohio (1960-1962) and Assumption High School, East St. Louis, Illinois (1962-1963). He attended seminary at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, from 1963-1967 and was ordained on July 22, 1967 at Holy Cross Church Cleveland, Ohio.

His first priestly assignment was to be part of the original staff of the Bergamo Retreat Center in Dayton, Ohio. There he worked with the youth program and later served as the director. In 1969, he was assigned to Bergamo East in Marcy, New York, where he assisted with the transformation of the former novitiate into a retreat center. He served as the director of the center as well as public relations director. It was there that he became involved with the peace movement, draft counseling and defending Catholic young men before draft boards. This work led to his commission in the U.S. Army Reserve and serving as an active duty army chaplain in early 1970. Fr. Bert Buby remembers, "When Fr. John was a military chaplain, his ministry often took him away from the Province for some lengthy periods of his life. Yet he was faithful to coming to the Province retreats, sometimes wearing his uniform."

His army tours took him to Ft. Belvoir, Virginia (1970-1972; 1980-1982), Pyongyang, Korea (1972-1973), Ft. Ritchie, Maryland (1973-1976), Bamberg, Germany (1977), Kitzingen, Germany (1978-1980) and Kivorno, Italy (1982-1983). He received two Army Commendation Medals, a U.S. Forces Expeditionary Medal and two Meritorious Service Medals. Fr. Norbert Burns, recalls, "Several times Fr. John invited me to give talks on relationships and marriage to the military and their spouses. I went to several places where Fr. John was stationed. He was well respected by the military personnel." Fr. John returned to civilian life with an honorable discharge at the end of 1983 as a promotable lieutenant colonel to pursue his educational pursuits.

Upon returning to civilian life, Fr. John was assigned for a year as a guidance counselor and substitute teacher at North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh. He moved to Columbus, Ohio, in 1985 for doctoral studies. He earned his doctorate in education from The Ohio State University in 1992. While in Columbus, he was able to serve as a caregiver for his father. He was also assigned to carry out part-time pastoral duties at St. Matthias Church (1988-1991) and then served as a staff chaplain at Mt. Carmel Medical Center (1991-2001). He also served as sacramental minister to St. Stephen the Martyr Parish. In 2002, he was assigned to serve as associate pastor at St. Agatha parish in Arlington, Ohio (2002-2004). He was then assigned as associate pastor at Christ the King in Columbus, Ohio (2004-2008) and, finally, as pastor of Sacred Hearts Church in Cardington, Ohio (2008-2016). In 2016, Fr. John retired to the Siena Woods Community in Dayton, Ohio.

Fr. Thomas Thompson writes, "I knew John very well. We entered the postulate together on September 1, 1951. We had a shared love of music. He played the clarinet and I played the piano. He was very thorough and dedicated in any projects he pursued. He was artistic, worked hard and accomplished

many things. When Sacred Hearts Parish church burned down, Fr. John's leadership and dedication was instrumental in working with the people of the parish to rebuild it. He loved parish work."

We thank God for his life, for his dedication in living the Marianist Charism and in endeavoring to share it with the world. May he rest in peace.