



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
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October 4, 2019

Biography of Death Notice # 31

The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **Walter EBBESMEYER**, of the Marianist Residence Community of San Antonio, Texas, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 26, 2019, in San Antonio at the age of 95 with 64 years of religious profession.

Bro. Wally was a teacher and a social justice advocate who spent nearly 30 years serving the poor in East St. Louis, Illinois. He will be remembered for his gentle manner and cheerful, selfless service.

Walter Theodore Ebbesmeyer was born in Florissant, Missouri, on June 2, 1924. He was the youngest of three boys in the family of Louis and Mary (Keeven) Ebbesmeyer. Wally's father died of typhoid fever when he was just a baby, and Wally later said the family got by mostly on faith.

Wally attended Sacred Heart Elementary School in Florissant and McBride High School, a now-closed Marianist High School in St. Louis. In the footsteps of his brothers, Arthur and James, Wally followed a call to Marianist religious life. He entered the novitiate in Galesville, Wisconsin, in 1942 and professed first vows there a year later, on August 15, 1943. (Arthur and James later left the congregation.) In an accelerated wartime program, Bro. Wally earned a bachelor's degree in History from the University of Dayton in 1945.

Bro. Wally's early teaching assignments were in St. Louis at Chaminade College Preparatory (1945-1947) and at St. Mary's High School (1947-1951). He professed perpetual vows on July 15, 1948,

in Galesville. He moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he taught at Don Bosco High School from 1951-1955. He earned a master's degree in history from Marquette University in 1955.

Following a second novitiate year, Bro. Wally taught briefly at St. Joseph High School in Victoria, Texas, (1956-1957) before returning to St. Louis. He then taught at his alma mater, McBride High School, for eight years. From 1966 to 1970, he was again at Chaminade Prep.

During his many years at several high schools, Bro. Wally taught history, religion, Spanish and journalism. He moderated sodality, speech and photography, as well as school newspapers and yearbooks. At the same time, he assisted in guidance and coaching. He stepped in where he was needed with cheerful willingness.

Bro. Larry McBride was a student of Bro. Wally's, and said that Bro. Wally was a key reason he became a Marianist. "I admired him for his energy in teaching, for his love for his students and for his love of history," said Bro. Larry. He said that Bro. Wally's lack of ego was also an inspiration. "He was focused on others ... on helping them discover for themselves whatever he happened to be teaching."

The 1970s began a stretch of ministry very dear to Bro. Wally's heart. He served in East St. Louis, Illinois, an impoverished community with an almost entirely African-American population. Bro. Wally taught and served as an administrator at Assumption High School. He worked in a program called "Upward Bound," which helped local teenagers complete high school and attend college. He also served as director of his community, Vincent Gray House.

In late 1977, Bro. Wally asked for and was granted release from his religious vows. He wanted to care for his aging mother and have time outside of community life while considering his future path. For the next few years, he devoted himself to his mother while working with East St. Louis social service organizations.

Following the death of his mother in 1982, Bro. Wally asked for permission to return to the Society of Mary. After a lengthy discernment process, he professed first vows again in 1989. Three years later, he professed perpetual vows. During this time, he continued to work in East St. Louis, serving in parish ministry and at a Catholic day care center, among other roles.

In 1999, Bro. Wally, then 75, was diagnosed with kidney cancer. He later said his faith sustained him in his struggle back to health. "My constant thought was the suffering of the Blessed Mother. How she suffered as her son was crucified!" Bro. Wally said in a 2014 article in *Alive*, a Marianist magazine. "I knew that if I wanted to be like Mary, I had to face suffering, too."

Due to these health challenges, Bro. Wally moved to the Curé of Ars Community at St. John Vianney High School in St. Louis. There he assisted daily in campus ministry and was a volunteer librarian. He was a familiar, smiling face in the school halls. "What I remember about Bro. Wally was his kind and gentle heart," said Deanna Snyder, a Vianney parent. "He was very devoted to praying for his fellow brothers, living and deceased."

“Wally was always full of energy. He’d come to me and say, ‘Now what?’ looking for more to do, more ways to serve. He wanted to be busy doing Mary’s work,” said Fr. Tim Kenney, head of Vianney campus ministry and the community director at the time.

In 2013, Bro. Wally moved to the Marianist Residence Community in San Antonio. Reflecting on his long years in ministry, Bro. Wally was clear on their meaning. “I have had a wonderful opportunity to serve Jesus, son of god and son of Mary. I am grateful I have been able to do that for as long as I have,” he said in the *Alive* magazine article.

Bro. Wally would often repeat a favorite saying, according to Fr. Tim Kenney: “It’s been a great life. If I had to do it over again, I’d do the *exact* same.”