



What about our American Marianist Saints?

By Bro. David Betz

“May we strive to be saints showing Christ in our lives as Mary gave Christ to the world. As Mary’s missionaries it is our joy to do whatever God wills” (**Bro. Howard Hughes, SM**)

The above quote is the refrain from the hymn, *May We Strive to be Saints*, by Bro. Howard Hughes, SM. I cite this hymn because the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls are upon us. These are two days where we remember the official saints recognized by the Catholic Church and the saints in our lives who have gone before us in faith such as parents, friends, fellow Marianist brothers and sisters.

These past several weeks I have been reflecting on the question that I posed in the title. The Marianist saints that I am responsible for promoting are predominantly from Europe. They are from France, Spain, and Austria. **Miguel Quiroga** whose cause has recently been started is from Columbia, South America. And looking at the history of the SM and FMI in America, I am wondering who from our Marianist Family could be put forward as a candidate for the canonization process. There have been a number of men and women from our family who have lived exemplary lives and they contributed to the life of the Church and the Marianist world. They were, indeed, witnesses to our Marianist Spirit in sharing the Word of God and birthing Jesus as Mary did. They strove to be Mary’s missionaries in community and the apostolate. It is my privilege then to review a few of recent deceased Marianists as possible candidates:

1. **Fr. Joseph Stefanelli, SM** – one of our Marianist historians who lived a simple and holy life. He wrote the biographies of Blessed Adele and Venerable Marie Therese. His works included being a writer, translator, spiritual director, leader, formator, mentor and pray-er. For Fr. Joe, as with Blessed Chaminade, the essential was the interior.
2. **Fr. Norbert Burns, SM** - a long time teacher at the University of Dayton. Teaching was Fr. Norb’s passion. He taught in the religious studies department and his most popular class was Christian Marriage for which many students enrolled because of his common sense and “tell it like it is” presentations. Counseling married and engaged

couples was his great gift. His engaging personality made people feel welcome and accepted.

3. **Sr. Audrey Buttner, FMI** – one of the faithful Marianist sisters. She had a love for life and her desire to serve those in needs was a strength. Her friendly smile was contagious. Even in her final years she suffered physically but her perseverance and love for the Marianist Spirit kept her engaged as best as she could.
4. Other names that come to mind are **Fr. William Ferree, SM; Sr. Eileen Cehyra, FMI; Bro. Hugh Bihl, SM; Bro. William Farrell, SM; Bro. John Samaha, SM**

Now I invite you to reflect on Marianists, lay or religious, that you have known and consider the possibility of them being presented as candidates for canonization. Feel free to share these reflections with me at dkbetzsm@yahoo.com and we can publish them in this Marianist Moment. Granted most of these people would say that they were not worthy of this possibility or they would scoff at the idea but remember God works in mysterious ways and we need to listen and be open to the Spirit's action when we are presented with the possibility.