



**Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie**  
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**December 11, 2020**

### **Biography of Death Notice N. 36**

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **Edward J. UNFERDORFER**, of the Siena Woods Marianist Community of Dayton, Ohio, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 7, 2020, in Dayton, at the age of 95 with 77 years of religious profession.

Brother Edward was a working brother who could recall the days of Marianists in black fedoras and frock coats. He was a dedicated religious, deeply committed to a simple *ora et labora* (pray and work) lifestyle. He served primarily as a business manager and maintenance worker for nearly seven decades, giving most of those years to ministry at the Marianist Family Retreat Center in Cape May Point, New Jersey.

Edward James Unferdorfer was a Christmas blessing, arriving December 24, 1924, to Anthony and Anna (Spekart) Unferdorfer. He was the fourth of five children in the family, who lived in Etna, Pennsylvania, just outside of Pittsburgh. Young Ed attended All Saints parish grade school. When he was in eighth grade, a Marianist recruiter came and spoke to his class, and Ed found his calling. He entered the postulate at

Mount St. John in Dayton, Ohio, in August of 1938, when he was 14 years old.

He entered the Marianist Preparatory novitiate in Beacon, New York, in 1942, and professed first vows there a year later, on August 22, 1943. For the next two years, Brother Ed took college classes at Maryhurst Normal in Kirkwood, Missouri, and then at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio. In 1945, he began ministry as a worker on the farm at Mount St. John in Dayton. He professed perpetual vows on August 15, 1947, in Dayton.

Brother Ed returned to Beacon in 1947 and served there for the next 15 years. A willing and versatile servant, Brother Ed was the treasurer and business manager for Marianist Preparatory while also doing general maintenance and instructing the postulants in landscaping and woodworking.

In 1962, Brother Ed was sent to Hollywood, Florida, to help develop the new Chaminade High School. For the next 16 years, he was an integral force in shaping the school. "The birth years of this Marianist school presented many challenges," Brother Ed later wrote. "For me, it was too much *labora* and too little *ora*." During these years, which were tumultuous in the Church and in society, Brother Ed served as business manager and building and grounds supervisor. He also taught social studies and physical education, coached baseball and golf, and moderated the Men's Club. By taking summer classes at the University of Dayton, he completed a bachelor's degree in education in 1971.

As the 1970s drew to a close, Brother Ed moved on to another ministry, which he found rewarding and well-suited to his contemplative nature. He served at the Marianist Family Retreat Center in Cape May Point, New Jersey, from 1979 until 1989. He managed the center's finances and used his carpentry, plumbing and electrical skills to keep the facility in top shape. He also served for a time in the Cape May Volunteer Fire Department.

"Brother Ed was an absolute gem of a human being and a Marianist," said Father Ted Cassidy. "He was as strong as solid rock and as loving as the most caring father or brother you can imagine. Brother Ed was a holy man who showed authentic humanity through hard work, profound Marian consecration and basic common sense."

In 1989, Brother Ed was called back to Hollywood, Florida, to serve as community director and facility manager at the newly co-ed Chaminade-Madonna High School,

Chaminade High having merged with Madonna Academy in 1988. He remained there until 1991.

Then it was back to his beloved retreat center at Cape May Point, where he served happily for the next 26 years. Anthony Fucci joined the retreat center team as director a few years into Brother Ed's second stint there. He said Brother Ed was clear with him on one point right away. "He wanted to let me know that, despite the Marianist leadership telling him he was semi-retired – he was about 73 at the time – that I was to treat him as a full-time member of the staff. He was here to work and was not ready to retire!" Anthony said. "For the next 20 years, he not only worked a full schedule, he also became a father figure to me. He always seemed to have just the right words of wisdom and encouragement at just the right time."

Jessica Sherwen, program director of the Marianist Family Retreat Center, first knew Bro. Ed from her many years of coming to the retreat center as a child. "It was truly a blessing to get to know him as an adult collaborating in a ministry that we both love so much. He was supportive of me personally in so many ways. It would brighten my heart to look out my office window and see him in his workshop in the service of the Lord, in imitation of St. Joseph, himself." Bro. Stan Zubeck said, "Like St. Joseph, his patron and model, Bro. Ed loved to work with wood. Not a day passed without him playing a repertoire of hymns about Mary and Joseph on his harmonica."

In 2017, at age 92, Brother Ed asked to move into a Marianist assisted living community. "Weakness and fatigue are beginning to limit my mobility and stamina," he wrote to his provincial. "It is with lots of prayer and meditation that I plan this move. I find it necessary but difficult to move on. My mission here is complete."

Sister Laura Lemming, FMI, has been Brother Ed's close friend since they worked together at Cape May Point 40 years ago. She said Brother Ed was always doing little kindnesses for her and offering her words of encouragement. She said, "We never said goodbye without reminding each other of our pact to pray for each other and to remember that the Blessed Mother was smiling on us."

His days of *labora* over, Brother Ed quietly continued his lifelong ministry of *ora*. He died just a few weeks shy of his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday.

May he rest in peace.