



**Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie**  
*Via Latina 22, 00179 Roma*



**December 23, 2020**

### **Biography of Death Notice N. 38**

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **James L. Facette** of the Sawmill Road Marianist Community in Dayton, Ohio, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 17, 2020, in Dayton at the age of 86 with 67 years of religious profession.

Brother Jim was a beloved teacher, missionary, administrator, and passionate advocate of environmental stewardship. Devoted to his vocation as a Marianist, he expressed gratitude for the profound gift he'd been given in community: "the pursuit of justice, peace, and earth conservation within the Gospel spirit of our charism."

James Louis Facette was born on July 31, 1934, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was one of two children (brother, Richard) in the family of Chester and Christine (Verhaalen) Facette.

He first encountered the Marianists as a student at Don Bosco High School in Milwaukee. He recalled the Brothers he met there as "strong role models" and found that he was drawn to their "qualities of community spirit, apostolic devotion, and

service to both the Church and the world.”

After high school, Jim entered the Society of Mary in 1952 and professed first vows a year later at the Marynook Novitiate in Galesville, Wisconsin. From there, Jim attended the Scholasticate at Maryhurst in St. Louis, Missouri, and then went on to earn a bachelor of science (with a major in Mathematics) from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, in 1956.

He then began a high school teaching career that would ultimately span more than 25 years, with a first assignment at St. Michael's High School in Chicago, Illinois. He professed perpetual vows on July 13, 1958, in St. Louis. In 1961, he earned a master of arts degree in Science Education from Washington University in St. Louis. Along with teaching religion, physics, and math, Brother Jim was involved with coaching and other extracurricular activities at several additional high schools – including McBride in St. Louis, Villa St. Jean in Fribourg, Switzerland, and Don Bosco and St. Thomas More in Milwaukee.

Inspired by an exhortation of the Holy Father asking religious communities to connect more deeply with third world countries, Brother Jim volunteered for a mission assignment in Peru in the late-1970s. He described the 12 years he spent there as a time of conversion and re-education – opening his mind and heart to see how structural forces (economic, political, and cultural) affected the lives of the poor. He worked to address these inequities while in Peru. Upon his return to the United States in 1991, he turned much of his ministerial focus to social justice efforts at Marianist communities and parishes in New Orleans, Louisiana, as well as San Antonio and Helotes, Texas.

A deep, and deeply spiritual, commitment to the environment complemented Brother Jim's dedication to social justice issues. He spoke of the first Earth Day in 1970 as “a watershed moment for me.” It was, in his words, “the beginning of a clearer consciousness of the importance of the earth and the need to treat it with respect.” That growing awareness influenced the rest of his life as a Marianist.

Brian Reavey, former director of the Justice, Peace & the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Office for the Marianist Province of the United States, worked alongside Brother Jim on the JPIC Advisory Committee and saw his impact first-hand. “Jim approached everything in the spirit of persistence, prayer, and perseverance,” Brian says. “Thanks to Jim's initiative, many Marianist communities and the Provincial Office in St. Louis

signed up for alternative clean energy from wind and solar sources, thereby promoting greater environmental justice and sustainability across the country.”

Brother Jim’s passionate dedication to the earth and the Integrity of Creation was a vital part of his prayer and spiritual reading. This engendered in him what he called a post-traditional spiritual worldview. Through reading and reflection, he came to believe “there is a drama that is unfolding before our eyes. The whole universe – both cosmos and culture – is going somewhere, and we wonder if we shouldn’t be part of that.” The Christian story, he wrote, “is ultimately a story of the future, a subtle spiritual whisper that calls out to us from both the depth of biblical revelation and the heart of the cosmos itself, suggesting that what goes on in this world may be connected in some small way to the evolutionary destiny of the universe.”

Those who knew Brother Jim well understood that his spirituality was not a matter of idle musing. Rather, it led to action and engagement, says Brother Philip Aaron, who lived with Brother Jim at the Sawmill Road community. “Jim was truly a Child of The Universe,” Brother Phil says. “From his volunteering with Five Rivers Metro Park and the Marianist Environmental Education Center to his personal prayer life, he was consistent in understanding that all of life is connected. He always sought to be conscious of his responsibility to safeguard the earth.”

Sawmill Road community director Brother Alex Tuss says, “In Jim’s life, a passionate commitment to the earth and the environment – and an equally passionate commitment to social justice – animated his service, his prayer, and his spirituality as a Marianist. As he himself said, ‘We must regain an intimate relation to the earth. If we don’t do that, we will not be able to deal justly with each other.’”

Brother Lawrence McBride first met Brother Jim as a student of his in a high school physics class. Through the years, they became good friends and occasionally corresponded about ecology concerns. “I never saw a side of Jim except one which was filled with tenderness and concern – both for those around him and for Mother Earth,” Brother Larry recalls. “He was sensitive to all the issues involved in the degradation of nature because he knew that, as the physics he taught so well explains, we have to respect and reverence our material universe in order to respect ourselves. Jim was a constant campaigner for that respect, and he gained the respect of many because of his witness.”

May he rest in peace.

