



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



**June 10, 2021**

### **Biography of Death Notice N. 13**

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **Joseph A. HARTZLER**, priest, of the Marianist Center Community in Cupertino, California, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on May 27, 2021, in Cupertino at the age of 65 with 45 years of religious profession.

Father Joe was a beloved teacher, retreat leader, theologian and associate pastor. Remembered for his sense of humor and incisive intellect, he used his scholarly talents to promote and strengthen collaboration between ordained and non-ordained members of the church – working to enhance what he described as “a specific charism of the Society of Mary.”

Joseph Arthur Hartzler was born on November 11, 1955, in San Francisco, California. He was one of four sons in the family of Melvin and Tresea (McCann) Hartzler.

Baptized in 1955 and confirmed in 1966 at his home parish of St. Anthony in San Francisco, young Joe attended the parish grade school. He first encountered the Marianists at Archbishop Riordan High School. There he was deeply touched and influenced by the Marianist spirit – and ultimately chose to become what he saw in the

## Brothers.

After high school, Joe attended California State University at San Francisco for a year and entered the Society of Mary in the summer of 1974 at Los Gatos, California. He professed first vows in 1975 and perpetual vows on August 12, 1980, in San Francisco. During those years, he studied at the University of San Francisco, earning a bachelor of arts in 1978 with a major in theology.

Beginning in 1978, Brother Joseph taught religion at St. Anthony School in Wailuku, Hawaii – where he also served as a campus minister and head of the religion department. Then in 1982, he returned to California and worked in campus ministry and taught at Archbishop Mitty High School in San Jose.

Called to the priesthood, Brother Joe next began graduate studies at the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto, Canada. He received a Master of Divinity degree in 1987, securing the number one ranking in his class. He was ordained on June 28, 1987, in Burlingame, California. Father Joe then continued his studies, earning both a Master of Theology and a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from Regis College at the Toronto School of Theology in 1988.

Father Joe served briefly on the parish staff at St. Anthony in Wailuku, Hawaii, in 1989, before being named associate pastor at Queen of the Apostles Church in San Jose, California. There he provided priestly ministry to a parish of 2,000 families – including catechetical instruction in the parish grade school. He also headed up a fundraising campaign that secured \$1.3 million in pledges for capital improvements to parish facilities.

In 1991, Father Joe returned to the classroom full-time, joining the staff at Archbishop Riordan High School as a teacher, counselor and chaplain. He also continued his studies in the mid-1990s – entering a doctoral program at the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto. He earned a Ph.D. in Theology from that school in 1999.

After earning his doctorate, Father Joe taught at the Franciscan School of Theology at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. It was while he worked in this ministry that the first signs of his Alzheimer's disease became apparent. He continued teaching as he was able and then moved into community at the Marianist Center in Cupertino, California, in 2009.

Remembered as an insightful teacher and a great homilist, Father Joe made a deep impact on the people around him throughout his life. A seminary classmate recalls fondly how he had “experienced first-hand [Father Joe’s] brilliant mind and inquisitive spirit.” A high school teaching colleague saluted him for being “a lively presence among the students, faculty and staff.”

Father Tim Kenney, who served with Father Joe at Archbishop Riordan High School, says, “Joe had a unique sense of humor, a creative and reflective mind, and always challenged the students he was teaching, whether in secondary school or university.” In his role as principal at the school, Father Tim recalls, “I was always impressed by the ways in which Father Joe showed compassion for the underprivileged and his patience with those students who were not always enthused about the study of theology.”

Upon learning of Father Joe’s illness, one former high school student wrote him a letter of thanks. “You’re still my hero,” the student said. “I’ve learned so much from you, including how to tell a great story. You also did teach me that God truly loves what he creates. Thank you for teaching me first that I always had a way back home by listening to love itself.”

Father Joseph Chinnici OFM, President Emeritus of the Franciscan School of Theology (FST), characterized Father Joe’s personal and professional contributions in this way: “He was a tremendous asset to FST both personally and in teaching and working with faculty,” he said. “His pedagogy at that time was quite developed, and he added a good deal to the methods we adopted so as to better teach – his influence felt beyond the classroom. And I was so glad he stumbled into my own office and asked for a job! God bless Joe; he will definitely be welcomed by the Lord, freed from all this suffering, and come to full stature. He can intercede for all of us.”

Perhaps demonstrating a continuing desire to teach even in his diminishment, Father Joe is remembered by the Cupertino Marianist community for frequently sharing a favorite quote from theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God.”

May he rest in peace.

