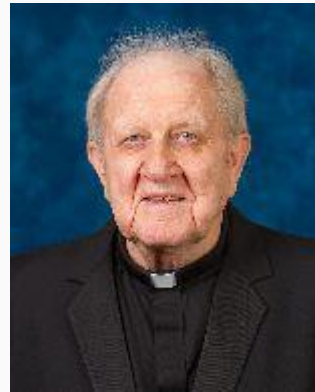




**Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie**  
*Via Latina 22, 00179 Roma*



**June 17, 2021**

### **Biography of Death Notice N. 14**

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **Joseph (RASZKIEWICZ) RASKY**, priest, of the Marianist Residence Community in San Antonio, Texas, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on June 8, 2021, in San Antonio, Texas, USA, at the age of 89 with 69 years of religious profession.

Father Joe was a beloved teacher, associate pastor, hospital chaplain and Marriage Encounter retreat leader. Remembered for an ever-cheerful demeanor and competitive spirit, he willingly devoted all his talents and energy to a variety of ministries – because even as a novice, he had realized “the more I give myself to Mary, the happier my life becomes.”

Joseph Gregory Raszkievicz was born on May 25, 1932, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was one of ten children in the family of Stanley and Mary (Drost) Raszkievicz. Baptized in 1932 at his home parish of St. Joseph, young Joe attended two parochial grade schools and then encountered the Marianists at Don Bosco High School. Admiring the brothers and priests who taught there, he often wondered how they could be so happy after giving up everything. “I decided to find out by joining,” he wrote on the

50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination.

After high school, Joe entered the Novitiate in the summer of 1950 at Galesville, Wisconsin. He professed first vows in 1951 and perpetual vows on July 14, 1956, in Galesville (also officially changing his surname to “Rasky” at this time). During his scholasticate years, he studied first at Maryhurst in Kirkwood, Missouri, and then at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas, earning a bachelor of arts in 1954 with a major in English.

Beginning in 1954, Brother Joseph taught English and Latin at several high schools in the St. Louis area – Assumption (East St. Louis, Illinois), St. Mary’s and Chaminade College Preparatory. He also coached the speech, debate and track teams at those schools. Then in 1960, he entered the Marianist Seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland, and was ordained to the priesthood on April 3, 1965.

Following ordination, Father Joe served briefly as chaplain at McBride High School in St. Louis, before being named associate pastor at Holy Rosary Parish in San Antonio, Texas. He provided priestly ministry to the parish from 1966 to 1978, while also serving as its CCD coordinator and studying to earn a Master's in religious education from St. Mary’s University.

For the next three years, Father Joe was assigned to Marianist schools in Callao and Lima, Peru, where he ministered as chaplain.

Returning to the United States in 1981 for a sabbatical year, he then entered a new phase of ministry, becoming a hospital chaplain from 1982 to 1991 – first at St. Joseph Hospital in Kirkwood, Missouri and later at St. Joseph Hospital in St. Charles, Missouri. This hospital work also offered Father Joe the opportunity to become more deeply involved in the Marriage Encounter movement – a retreat-based ministry he’d been connected to since 1977.

Father Joe served as priest-coordinator for Marriage Encounter in the St. Louis area for several years, and at the peak of his involvement, took part in up to 28 weekend retreats per year. He brought his love of the Marriage Encounter apostolate with him to a new assignment in 1991, when he joined the guidance counseling staff at Central Catholic High School in San Antonio.

While serving at Central Catholic for the next 22 years, Father Joe also expanded his

Marriage Encounter work to include two different five-year terms on its national board – along with continuing to participate on retreat teams. Father Joe retired from high school ministry in 2013, and that year entered the Marianist Residence Community in San Antonio. However, his work with Marriage Encounter continued until 2018 – at which point he estimated that he had taken part in more than 500 Marriage Encounter weekends through the years.

A gifted athlete, Father Joe was named to the All-Conference basketball team as a high school student in Milwaukee. But perhaps Father Joe's most cherished accomplishment in sports was the hole-in-one he carded in 1970 at the Willow Springs golf course in San Antonio – a feat witnessed by three of his Marianist brothers.

A true competitor to the end, Father Joe won the last hand of Sheepshead (a card game popular with Milwaukeeans) he played, just a few days before his passing. Among those he vanquished was Brother Jerry Sullivan, who said of Father Joe: "He enjoyed when he won, and he was a sharp player." Fellow competitor Brother Ed Loch agreed, noting, "he was in good spirits when he left for bed."

Brother Ed also fondly recalls a lifetime of friendship with Father Joe. The two were high school mates and would later live together in community at Central Catholic and at the Marianist Residence. "We were good friends," Brother Ed said. "He helped me become acclimated here, and he was well known for his work with Marriage Encounter, especially among the Spanish-speaking."

Marriage Encounter leaders Ed and Linda Torres give thanks and praise for Father Joe's many years of faithful service as a presenting team priest for Worldwide Marriage Encounter in both the Spanish and English languages. "His love of Mary and God's people will be remembered and cherished."

The Torres' also note that Father Joe's signature move – "*el passaporte*" – became a beloved tradition across the Marriage Encounter community. During one weekend experience some years ago, Father Joe had commented about the joy of seeing couples kiss each other following a presentation. That very weekend, a couple presented Father Joe with an origami sculpture – in the shape of bright red lips.

Dubbing it "*el passaporte*," Father Joe then started using the origami lips to blow each couple a kiss of appreciation after their talks. "Couples understood this as his love for us, in the radiance of his smile from ear to ear," the Torres' said. "And this practice has

carried over from the Spanish experiences to the English-speaking experiences to this day.”

Reflecting on the nearly 70 years he'd spent as a Marianist, Father Joe in early 2021 wrote an appreciation of his call to religious life: “I am filled with gratitude to God for my vocation and grateful to the brothers and priests who have helped me along the way. I have especially enjoyed the lay people of the Marriage Encounter community and the Marian consecration groups who have been an inspiration to me. I am grateful for the Good News of the Gospel, which shows me how wonderful God is. I feel privileged, and I rejoice that I can proclaim these truths to the world.”

May he rest in peace.