



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
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January 7, 2022

Biography of Death Notice N. 30

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **John Alex LEIES**, priest, of the Marianist Residence community, San Antonio, Texas, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 22, 2021, in San Antonio, at the age of 95 with 77 years of religious profession.

Father John dedicated his life in service to God and advancing Marianist, Catholic education. He served at St. Mary's University for nearly 50 years in several administrative and academic roles, most notably as President. He also will be remembered for his deep faith, humility, wide-ranging knowledge, work as a prolific publisher, and wonderful sense of humor.

Fr. John was born in Chicago on April 24, 1926, the son of Alexander and Thecla (Eggar) Leies. Fr. John had two sisters, Marie (Perry) and Carol (Ferrari), both deceased and a brother who died at a young age. Two of his uncles (Brother Herbert Leies and Father John G. Leies) were Marianists, however, he rarely had the occasion to see them as he grew up.

It was at St. Michael High School in Chicago, where he had daily interaction with Marianists. There, he came to admire Marianists including Bros. Ed Goerd, Gene Feld and Ed Dunne and desired to follow their way of life. In 1943, he entered novitiate in Galesville, Wisconsin. Fr. John made First Vows on August 15, 1944, and pronounced Perpetual Vows on July 15, 1948, both at Marynook in Galesville, Wisconsin. He was ordained on July 22, 1956, in Fribourg, Switzerland. He received a bachelor's in Education from the University of Dayton, Ohio, in 1947. As part of his priestly formation, he received an STB in 1954, an STL in 1956, and an STD in 1958, all from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

Before entering the seminary in 1952, John was a teacher at Don Bosco High School in Milwaukee from 1947-52. After completing seminary studies in 1958, he returned to Don Bosco H.S. as a chaplain and teacher until 1961, then served the former St. Louis Province as Assistant for Religious Life until 1964. He then traveled to Lima, Peru, to serve as administrator of Colegio San Maria for four years. In 1968, he returned to the U.S. with the ministry at Chaminade H.S. in St. Louis, where he was a teacher and school chaplain for six years. In 1974, he was assigned to St. Mary's University in San Antonio, where he ministered for the rest of his life. He served as professor, chaplain, Chair of the Theology Department, Administrative Vice-President and President of the University. In 2007, he began his semi-retirement, always willing to help in any way possible. His long and distinguished service at St. Mary's was recognized with the conferral of the title President-Emeritus in 2017.

"It is hard to think of St. Mary's in these past 50 years without thinking of 'Father John A' as he was affectionately called to distinguish him from his uncle, Father John G. Leies," Marianist Fr. Bill Meyer said, noting that "Father John A. ... exuded consummate energy and enthusiasm for Catholic, Marianist higher education. His pastoral presence was generous and very kind, always insightful with wise counsel."

On the occasion of his 75 jubilee of profession, Fr. John wrote, *"I believe that a religious vocation is always, first and foremost, a work of grace, a calling from God. I thank the Lord and His mother for the graces of these past years, 63 of which I have served as a Marianist priest. As a Marianist, I have been able to work with many dedicated people (priests, religious, lay), young and old. I have been called to engage in teaching, counseling, administration and various forms*

of sacramental ministries. While not being totally aware of what my work has accomplished, I have felt that it has contributed through the grace of God to the growth of the Church. This has given me a sense of helping to fulfill God's plan for the world."

May he rest in peace.
