

July 22, 2022

The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother Jerome L. MATZ of the Marianist Residence Community in San Antonio, Texas, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on July 12, 2022, in San Antonio at the age of 81 with 62 years of religious profession.

Brother Jerome “Jerry” was a beloved teacher, professor, college administrator, survey researcher and sociologist. Known for his gracious spirit of hospitality and inclusivity, Brother Jerry also took great satisfaction in his decades of survey research that supported the efforts of various religious congregations, dioceses, parishes and business organizations to strengthen their sense of mission.

Jerome L. Matz was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on August 7, 1940. He was the younger of two sons in the family of Alphonse and Marion (Blanz) Matz. He graduated from Immaculate Conception Grade School in 1954 and then entered Don Bosco High School in Milwaukee, where he first encountered the Marianists. He found the Brothers there “extremely impressive and edifying,” crediting them for nurturing his desire to pursue teaching as a profession.

After graduating from Don Bosco in 1958, Jerry entered the novitiate at Galesville, Wisconsin, and professed first vows there a year later. He then pursued scholastic studies at Maryhurst in Kirkwood, Missouri, and at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio. He professed final vows in the Society of Mary on August 18, 1963, in St. Louis, Missouri.

After Brother Jerry earned a bachelor’s degree in history from St. Mary’s University in 1962, he began his teaching career at three Marianist high schools in St. Louis (St. Mary’s High School and Chaminade College Preparatory) and Victoria, Texas (St. Joseph’s High School). Next, he pursued graduate studies at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, earning a Ph.D. in sociology in 1968.

For most of the next 36 years, Brother Jerry would serve on the faculty and in leadership positions at St. Mary’s University. His tenure there included extensive experience teaching courses in sociology, along with several different terms as chair of the sociology department. In addition, he served as dean of the School of Arts & Sciences from 1981-83. For three years in the late 1970s, Brother Jerry held the position of assistant principal at St. Mary’s High School in St. Louis while also completing additional graduate studies in that city.

Throughout his professional career, Brother Jerry eagerly put his expertise in sociology to work on behalf of many religious associations and congregations, including the Society of Mary. He served as research director on more than 35 different surveys – helping client organizations identify and understand their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. After retiring from the faculty at St. Mary’s University in 2005, he continued to live at the LaRisa Marianist Community in San Antonio until moving to the Marianist Residence Community there in 2009.

Described as a practical man by those who knew him well, Brother Jerry had some distinctive hobbies. Brother Larry Scrivani reports that in recent years Brother Jerry had taken to collecting rock crystals, “especially exotic ones.” He also avidly pursued “the collecting of business cards, even to the point of belonging to a club of collectors who had a nomenclature for categorizing and grading the cards,” recalls Brother Larry. Fond of traveling by car to neighboring states, Brother Jerry would often impress his companions with the ability to “remember the main highways and their junctions, as well as sights along each,” Brother Larry says.

Dr. Janet Armitage, current chair of the sociology department at St. Mary’s University, remembers Brother Jerry as “a kind and generous colleague. His door was always open, and he was quick to offer supportive words. He prized personal relations, and this came across in his teaching and student recruitment. He loved bringing full-time and longstanding adjunct professors into introductory courses to build camaraderie and invite students to study sociology at St. Mary’s,” she says. “He will be missed.”

St. Mary’s University Ombuds Dr. Bob O’Connor counted Brother Jerry as a friend for many years but remembers one period in particular as illustrating the impact the Marianist had had on his life. In the mid-1980s, when Bob took on an interim leadership role at a newly formed drop-out prevention program, he discovered that “the job required much more database management than I had needed teaching theology.” He decided to lean on Brother Jerry “to guide me through the rocky shoals of my new job. Not only did my incessant questions not strain our friendship, but because of Jerry’s demeanor and ever-present smile, they strengthened it,” Bob says.

A former student—and frequent visitor in recent years to the Marianist Residence Community—Chicagoan Alan Szafraniec was always impressed by Brother Jerry’s attentiveness as guest manager for the house. “Jerry picked me up and delivered me countless times to SAT [San Antonio International Airport],” Alan says. “I’m eternally grateful for such unwavering hospitality. And it wasn’t only airport runs. During my stays, we often had meals together with my close friend and former co-worker [Marianist Brother] Bernie Stratman—and Jerry would act as host. He was a person of inclusion. He was a great conversationalist. During my weekend visits, after Bernie would go to his room in the skilled care part of the residence, Jerry would invite me to watch TV with him and Brother Larry Corbin. It got to be that I looked to visiting Jerry as much as I did with Bernie,” Alan says. “It’s all about welcoming, sharing, hospitality and grace. Jerry was a stellar example of those virtues.”

May he rest in peace.