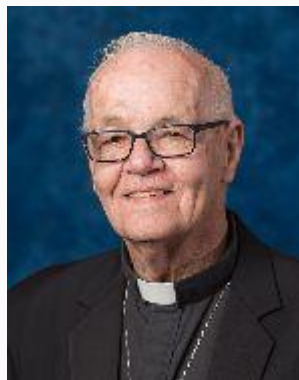




**Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Soci t  de Marie**  
**Via Latina 22, 00179 Roma**



**February 14, 2023**

### **Biography of Death Notice N. 2**

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **Donald James Wallace**, priest, of the *Comunidad Marianista San Jos *, San Juan, Puerto Rico, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on January 25, 2023, at the Marianist Residence Community in San Antonio, Texas, USA, at the age of 86 with 67 years of religious profession.

Father Don was a beloved teacher, chaplain, counselor, administrator, and community director. Revered for his prayerful spirit, attentiveness, and determination, he touched the lives of many by generously sharing his deep faith, devotion to Mary, wisdom, and ministry of presence.

Donald J. Wallace was born on September 19, 1936, in Brooklyn, New York. He was one of four children in the family of J. Ward and Anne (Faughnan) Wallace. He attended St. Christopher Grade School in Baldwin, New York – where he first felt the stirrings of a call to the priesthood. Donald initially encountered the Marianists as a student at Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York. While at the school, he met Marianist Brothers, who would inspire what would become

his life's work as a missionary serving outside the continental United States.

After graduating from Chaminade, Don entered the novitiate at Marcy, New York, and professed first vows there in 1955. He then began scholastic studies at Mount Saint John in Dayton, Ohio, earning a bachelor of arts in theology at the University of Dayton in 1958.

Later that year, Brother Don began teaching religion, English, Spanish and Latin at Hamilton Catholic High School in Hamilton, Ohio. It was his first stop in an education career that would eventually span nearly 50 years. In 1959, he professed perpetual vows in the Society of Mary, fulfilling a desire he'd had since his own high school days when he'd been deeply impressed by the Brothers "and their example in and out of the classroom, their charity, union, and family spirit."

Called to the priesthood, Brother Don entered the Marianist Seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1963. He was ordained on March 17, 1967, and returned to high school teaching positions shortly thereafter. In all, Father Don would serve on the faculty at six different schools in Ohio, New York, and Puerto Rico, while also taking on roles as chaplain, guidance counselor, club moderator, and athletics administrator at several of those schools.

Ever fond of his Irish heritage, Father Don fully embraced the life of a missionary priest during the 55 years he lived on the island of Puerto Rico. He taught at *Colegio San José* and *Colegio Ponceño* for many of those years and was engaged in a wide range of ministerial and support activities outside the classroom. His work strengthened the efforts of groups such as *Equipistas* (peer ministers), the Marianist Youth Movement, the School Pastoral Committee, and the Religion Committee of the Parent Teacher Students Association. In addition, he worked closely with local Lay Marianist communities, provided sacramental support for *Colegio San José's* retreat center in Orocovis and served as chaplain for a nearby cloister of Carmelite Sisters.

Father Don impressed many generations of students and family members with his humble zeal for evangelization. When students asked to be baptized or initiated fully into the Catholic Church, he would meet one-on-one with them each week for catechesis until they were ready to receive the sacraments. Father Don also promoted the school community's participation in missionary collections

twice each year – encouraging all to pray for and contribute to the success of scholarship programs for low-income students.

Demonstrating his solidarity with the poor, Father Don lived for a time in a small community in one of San Juan's poorest barrios. During the 1980s, he also spent the summer months serving at *Apaseo El Grande* in Mexico. These experiences provided insights and lessons that he would continue to share with students for many years afterward.

Long after his teaching career concluded in 2005, Father Don continued serving the high school community in a variety of roles, such as guidance counselor, chaplain, assistant chaplain, and committee member for campus ministry and student aid.

With his health declining, Father Don moved in August 2022 to the Marianist Residence in San Antonio, Texas. Fr. Wallace viewed this as a temporary assignment to regain his strength so he could return to Puerto Rico. Brother Giancarlo Bonutti, director of the Marianist community in San Antonio, was impressed with the priest's determination and resilience. "He came here to rehabilitate his balance in walking," Brother Giancarlo says. "Just months after arriving in a wheelchair, Father Don began walking with a rollator, then with only a cane, and then without it. But little did we know the extent of the cancer his body was hiding. After a hospitalization in January, he seemed to gain a second wind – boosted by in-person visits from his sibling, Bob, and his Marianist brothers, along with phone calls and video chats from those who knew him well."

Father Don's sister Patricia and her family members – Lew, Matt, and Nancy – recall with great love the time he spent in their company through the years. "Don was a devoted, doting big brother and a bemused, playful uncle," they say. "Though his life was in Puerto Rico, Don always planned his years around visits to siblings in Spain and the US; time he spent soaking in family and absorbing books. We'll remember him as history's least-demanding houseguest who asked for nothing and was up for anything, a winking card cheat whose mischief was impossible not to forgive, an unwavering adorer of nephews, nieces, and their children, and – above all – a thoroughly gentle soul."

Many others recall how they were blessed by Father Don's friendship, ministry, and professionalism. Among them: Marianist Father Paul Fitzpatrick, who lived

in community with Father Don in Puerto Rico for a number of years. "He was a very quiet dynamo at school, very highly regarded and respected by the students, almost revered," Father Paul says. "He did not have power that came from threats or force. Rather, the students gave him authority because of the wisdom, witness, and the gentle yet strong integrity of his life." Community life, meanwhile, provided occasions for joyful memories. "All of the other five Brothers were strong extroverts, while Don was a very strong introvert," Father Paul smiles. "With that in mind, the community made him secretary at Community Meetings so he could share what he was thinking as he typed up the minutes. It worked!"

Mrs. Elaine Torrens, a friend and colleague from *Colegio San José*, remembers Father Don as "radiating inner peace for all. Little moments had great big impacts with him," she says. "He was a superb religion teacher, and he nourished our minds with overwhelming thoughts. He helped the students, families, staff, and faculty in our school communities to be the people that our world needs them to be."

José Matos Auffant, Executive Director of TECABOCA Camp and Retreat Center in Mountain Home Texas, met Father Don as a student – and later as a faculty member – at *Colegio San José*. He remembers how the priest often "amazed" the school community with his spirit of service. "We all owe a great debt of gratitude to this quiet, humble, and dedicated Marianist from New York, who embraced the Island of Puerto Rico and nurtured the faith *ad multos*," José says. "His legacy will endure in the many religious he inspired and accompanied, in the numerous Lay Marianists he sponsored and formed, as well as through countless faculty, staff, students, alumni, and parents who interacted with him over the years."

Marianist Brother Reinaldo Berrios treasured the spiritual gifts that Father Don offered during their 35 years together in community life. "He was a man of faith, a man who inspired trust, and who knew how to keep every detail in his heart," Brother Reinaldo says. "He spoke little but was a very good observer – someone who always thought and meditated before speaking. A believer, and a man devoted to Mary, I will always remember him as an honest person, wise, erudite, simple, and committed – ever faithful to what he professed and always available to help those in need."

May he rest in peace.

