



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
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July 2nd , 2024

Biography of Death Notice N. 7

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **Joseph Donald CAHILL**, priest of the Marianist Residence Community in San Antonio, Texas, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on June 18, 2024, at the age of 95 with 74 years of religious profession.

A gentle-mannered and well-traveled priest, Father Don was a pastor, chaplain, counselor, and teacher at numerous schools, parishes, and communities. He wanted to use his priesthood to bring others closer to Christ and his Mother.

Joseph Donald Cahill was born in Detroit, Michigan, on August 5, 1928. He was the first of seven children of Thomas and Mary (Sheedy) Cahill. He attended Holy Redeemer Grade School and High School in Detroit, where he first encountered the Marianists. There, Don befriended Father Glennon McCarty, Brother

Theodore Hoeffken, and Brother James Pieper, who encouraged him to follow his calling to religious life and remained life-long friends.

After high school, Don worked as a salesman for Mutual of Omaha for a year, then during the summer of 1948, chose to join the Society of Mary, writing that he would eventually seek the priesthood because it provided “more opportunities to help guide and save souls.” He entered the novitiate at Marynook in Galesville, Wisconsin, later that fall and professed his first vows on September 24, 1949. He then attended scholasticate at Saint Mary’s University, earning a bachelor’s degree in history in 1952, and professed perpetual vows in Galesville on July 16, 1955.

Subsequently, Father Don taught religion and social studies at Saint Mary’s High School in Saint Louis, Missouri. He taught for another year at Central Catholic in San Antonio.

In 1957, Brother Don wrote to his provincial superior asking to begin seminary studies. He echoed his earlier writing prior to taking first vows, explaining that through the priesthood, he could better realize his ambitions in religious life, “the twofold objective of saving (my) own soul and helping others save theirs.” He was ordained in Fribourg on June 11, 1961, then returned to Holy Redeemer in Detroit to celebrate his first Mass with his family present.

The next three decades Father Don’s ministry spanned five states and numerous schools, parishes, religious communities, and hospitals. He found that these assignments provided the opportunity he had long sought to encounter and help many souls.

After his ordination, he was assigned to St. John Vianney High School in Kirkwood, Missouri, as a chaplain and teacher in 1962. He would go on to complete three more stints at Vianney (1969-71, 73-74, 94-02). Father Don also taught and served as chaplain at McBride in Saint Louis (1965-66), Nolan in Fort Worth (1966-69), Thomas More in Milwaukee (1974-75), and Bishop McGuinness in Oklahoma City (1978-79).

Father Don took summer classes and earned a master’s degree in guidance and counseling from Texas Christian University in 1970. He later studied in preparation to become a hospital chaplain and especially valued a course on

clinical pastoral education, which he credited with teaching him to better serve the needs of others and to approach people with an openness to such needs. Father Don performed chaplain duties at hospitals in Milwaukee and La Crosse in Wisconsin, from 1975 to 1981.

Father Don served as an Assistant Pastor at Holy Rosary Parish in San Antonio, Texas (1965-66) and St. Mary's Parish in Fort Worth (1982-83), but he conducted the bulk of his parish work at Our Lady of the Pillar in Saint Louis (1981-82, 84-91, 94-04). For many years, he spent weekdays teaching scripture to freshmen at Vianney in an arrangement he considered "the best of both worlds."

Into his eighties, Father Don was a chaplain at the Cure of Ars Marianist Community on the Vianney High School Campus. Although his teaching career had officially ended, he still filled in as a substitute and spent hours working in the school library. In his 60th year as a priest, in 2021, Father Don reflected on the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation. "Those sacraments were graces for me, and I hope and pray they were graces for all those who shared them with me."

Father Don had a strong desire to express God's love in his preaching. Marjory Di Leo, a parishioner at Our Lady of the Pillar, recalled, "his always simple-but-strong message to us all was: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit love each of us, and through Our Blessed Mother interceding for us, we can move forward each day."

Brother Richard Dix of the Marianist Community in San Antonio remembers the energy Father Don put into his priestly work. "Don was a worrier. Of course, this is probably what made him such a good school chaplain, hospital chaplain, and parish assistant. One could be absolutely certain that a Mass or event would be well done and organized. You could also be sure that Don had spent hours preparing and worrying about it."

Michael Lamanna, Father Don's nephew, remembers his first interaction with his uncle when he was eight years old. "He let myself and my brother Bob participate as altar servers at a daily Mass." He continues, "When I was confirmed, I chose Donald as my confirmation name. I believe that because of that, I was always being watched over and protected by him. The most memorable thing about my uncle was he always had a way of speaking and preaching that made you feel

that God loved and forgave you. He never spoke of condemnation, only forgiveness. Another thing is his amazing sense of humor.”

Father Don’s niece, Cynthia Betancourt, also fondly recalls his sense of humor. “His laughter was infectious, and I can still hear it in my head to this day. When you were in his presence, you felt at peace and joyful. He was very loved.”