



**July 16, 2025**

## **Obituary Bro. William (Bill) Bolts**

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **William T. (Bill) Bolts** of the Cupertino Marianist Community in Cupertino, California, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on July 3, 2025, in Cupertino, at the age of 89 with 70 years of religious profession.

Ever a teacher at heart, Brother Bill brought his love of education to classrooms in California, Hawaii, Pennsylvania, and British Columbia over the course of a 50-year career. He served in a variety of other settings as well, such as high school administrator, pilgrimage leader, pastoral associate, and a member of his province's leadership team. He also wrote extensively on topics of local history, authoring three books along the way.

William Thomas Bolts was born on September 7, 1935, in San Francisco. He was one of four children in the family of Thomas and Elizabeth (Pierce) Bolts. He remembered first hearing the call to the religious life while in grade school "through the edification of my teachers and parish priests," as he later wrote. Then, after encountering the Marianists at Archbishop Riordan High School, his notion of vocation was further refined to focus on "the career of a religious devoted to teaching."

Upon graduating from Archbishop Riordan, Bill entered the novitiate in 1953 at Santa Cruz, California, and professed first vows there on August 15, 1954. Brother Bill then enrolled at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California, to pursue scholastic studies – earning a Bachelor of Arts in History in 1957. He professed final vows in San Francisco on July 19, 1959.

Brother Bill's first teaching assignment proved a good fit. Joining the faculty at Junipero Serra High School in Gardena, California, in 1957, he would continue to work there for the next 13 years. Along with classroom duties, he eventually served as the school's assistant principal and principal. While on staff at Junipero Serra, he completed work on a graduate degree, earning a Master of Arts in History from the University of California–Los Angeles in 1966. Brother Bill moved next to his alma mater, Archbishop Riordan, for the first of two faculty postings there. Throughout these early years of his teaching career, Brother Bill put his summer breaks to good use – teaming with the Foreign Study League and Russell College European Extension to lead study tours and pilgrimages across Europe. Over a five-year period his summer cohorts made educational stops in England, France, Italy, Austria, Ireland, Switzerland, Greece, Yugoslavia, Spain, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

Leaving Archbishop Riordan in 1972, Brother Bill enrolled at Carnegie-Mellon University (Pittsburgh) to begin work on a doctorate. After earning a PhD in History in 1975, he served briefly as a teacher at Pittsburgh's Central Catholic High School before returning to California to teach at

Archbishop Riordan from 1976-82. Called next to provincial leadership, Brother Bill was named Assistant Provincial and Director of Education for the Province of the Pacific in 1982. He served in this role until 1990, including a year spent as interim principal of Saint Louis School in Honolulu. Throughout these years he turned what he called “an abiding interest in local history” into several books, authoring *The Catholic Experience in America*, along with two smaller volumes to help mark significant anniversaries for St. John’s Parish (San Francisco) and Archbishop Riordan High School.

A two-year sabbatical (1990-91) prepared Brother Bill for a different path of ministry focused on pastoral work. For three years he served as director of the Newman Center Catholic Campus Ministry at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Then in 1994, he began a 13-year run as Pastoral Associate at Queen of Apostles Parish in San José, California, where he was involved with adult faith formation, religious education, and small Christian community engagement, among other ministries. Then, heeding the request of a brother Marianist – Archbishop Raymond Roussin SM – Brother Bill moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, to serve in archdiocesan administration and live in community with the Archbishop. When Archbishop Roussin resigned two years later due to ill health, Brother Bill also retired from active ministry, moving to the Cupertino Marianist Community in 2009.

Marianist Father Tim Kenney fondly remembers his relationship with Brother Bill, a bond that started to form almost 60 years ago at Junipero Serra High School. “When I entered, he was my principal and history

teacher,” Fr. Tim recalls. “He was well organized and had a special mind for details, and he later grew to have an influence on my vocation as a Marianist.” Now serving as Provincial Assistant for Religious Life, Father Tim is grateful for the time the two of them served together in provincial administration. “We had many conversations on a variety of topics,” he says. “It was always clear that Brother Bill was very bright and had a vision for Catholic education.”

Several of Brother Bill’s contributions to education truly stand out in Father Tim’s eyes: “He was one of the founders of the ‘Teaching as Ministry’ workshops that were brought to the Pacific Province in the 1980s,” he says. “He also had a great love for two high schools in particular – Archbishop Riordan and Junipero Serra. When Riordan was celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I asked Brother Bill to write a history of the school as part of the celebration. It was a huge success and a tribute to his generous spirit.”

“Over the years, I have been inspired by the leadership, dedication, and commitment of Brother Bill,” Father Tim says. “He will surely be among the Marianist saints guiding the Sponsorship Office in the Province as we navigate the future.”

May he rest in peace.