

## Brother John Michael Murray fms



Received the Breath of Life

Called to Accept the Marist Brotherhood  
1968

Was Commended to God  
12 December 2004

Mass of Christian Burial  
Chicago, Illinois

Interment  
Marist Brothers Cemetery  
Esopus, New York

▲ To conserve space, larger headstones with room for four burials have been introduced, starting with Brothers John Murray and Joseph DiBenedetto.

### **Remembering Brother John Murray**

Eulogy given by Brother John Klein  
at John Murray's funeral

In his letter to the Corinthians St. Paul writes, "...Therefore, we continue to be confident. We know that while we are in the body we are away from the Lord. Thus, we walk by faith and not by sight." For the past thirty-six years as a Marist Brother, John Murray has been on a journey walking by faith in his Lord and trust in the protection of Mary. His journey during these past five months, in particular, challenged both him, his family, and his Marist Brothers to remain confident and to continue walking by faith because, at times, it proved difficult to discern God's hand in John's physical condition. One could not help but ask where was God in all this. Yet, John's journey that took him to Cold Spring, New York, Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Midtown Manhattan and here in Chicago provides an assurance that God has been here all the time.

John was in the first graduating class from Marist High School and was one of the first graduates to enter the Brothers. From his first days in Cold Spring in 1967 to this past July his wit, intelligence, love a good story, and his generosity characterized all that he did. As one of John's relatives commented yesterday afternoon, "He was so young and yet he accomplished so much in such a short period of time."

John was first and foremost a teacher. He loved his students at Central Catholic, at St. Agnes, and, of course, here at Marist. Through his Religion and his English classes and his direction of school plays he made Father Champagnat's words, "To teach students you must love them and love them all equally..." a reality. Nonetheless, when Brother Dennis Dunne, the provincial in 1981, asked him to succeed Brother George Leo as provincial treasurer he willingly left St. Agnes and assumed this formidable role. His diligence and organizational skills in this capacity laid the foundation for the current sound financial state of our province. In many ways, John's legacy is still making an important difference for his fellow Marist Brothers.

The Constitutions of the Marist Brothers offers a rich insight into the call to religious life. It states, "God chooses individual men and women and calls each one personally into the desert, where he speaks to their heart. He sets apart those who listen to him, and through

his spirit, leads them into a continuous process of conversion and growth in his love, to send them out on mission." It was this call that John heard and strove to respond to for over three and one half decades. Like for all of us, his life was not without struggle and difficulty. At the same time, despite the challenges and "ups and downs" something kept calling him back to his Marist roots. That something is unquestionably God. And it is this mysterious God that has been at the center of John's final struggle these weeks that began in the heat of summer and ended as winter's cold began to descend on Chicago.

Where was God in all of this? I believe that God permitted John to remain with us because his work as a teacher was unfinished and that even as he lay in his room at Christ Hospital John continued to teach us.

### **What were those lessons**

- That the only thing that ultimately matters is compassion and that to be compassionate with others we first have to be compassionate with ourselves. John's illness provided both his family and his Marist Brothers an opportunity to be compassionate and to connect with him in a new and profound way. One would only have to spend time with John's cousin, Sharon, and witness her tender care of her "Jack" to see the face of God in all of this. The brothers in his community responded to John's plight with an attention and care and compassion that translated the ideal of community life into something real and tangible. Conversations that I had with Gerry Brown, Paul Forgues, and Julian, for example, reminded me that in community life, in the words of our Constitutions, "We accept that we are all different yet complementary. Each one takes an interest in the life and work of the others. We try to develop an intuitive awareness of others, a delicacy of heart which is quick to realize when a brother is having difficulties, and to help him."
- John taught us the importance of fidelity. Not just our fidelity to our commitments but that God is always faithful to us.
- John taught us that we are all bound by invisible, yet powerful links, to one another and that we need each other.

On Sunday morning John's lessons came to an end. Yet, in a special way, he continues to teach us, for his lessons will live beyond him. On Sunday morning John undoubtedly heard the words, "...Well done good and faithful servant. Come and enter your rest." On Sunday morning John appreciated with incredible clarity the words of Father Champagnat, "How consoling it is, when one has to appear before God, to know that one has lived under the protection of Mary and in her Society!" May our Good Mother keep you safe, John, and give you peace with all our Brothers and with your parents who have preceded you. Well done...good and faithful servant.