

Edward J Canavan

15 September 1930 - 22 May 1994

Ed Canavan was born in the South Bronx, in St. Jerome's Parish, on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, 15 September 1930. His deeply Catholic Irish parents saw that he got a strong religious education" in the family, then, despite the Great Depression, sacrificed to send him to Our Lady of Victory grammar school with the Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt. From there he went on to St. Agnes High School, on 43rd Street at that time, a diocesan school run by the Marist Brothers. Upon graduation he worked briefly, then decided to join the Marist community which had so inspired him and guided him educationally in his teen years. He completed his formation at Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY, and graduated in 1955 with a major in English.

Ed was a gifted speaker and writer, and even as a college student he wrote a Passion play called **Lux et Tenebrae**, published in his Junior Year. He loved poetry and could easily quote the classics from memory, particularly his beloved Gerard Manley Hopkins. He also wrote several hundred pages of his own poetry, critiqued by colleagues and some of it published. When a collection of personal narratives on "Why I-Became a Brother" was proposed, Ed was naturally asked to contribute, along with Dan Kirk and others.

His first assignment as a Brother was to Central Catholic High School in Wheeling, WVA. He was an inspiring and enthusiastic teacher, immensely creative, untiring in class preparations and corrections. He was never strong nor athletic—he had always been relegated to Third Camp in formation years—, yet he pushed himself unsparingly. After a few years in Wheeling he was transferred to St. Ann's Academy in Manhattan, where he was diagnosed with diabetes mellitus. Eventually, unable to keep up with the rigorous requirements of his duties, he left the Brothers and returned to his family home in the Bronx.

Ed was an ardent apostle for religious values and a compulsive teacher. He joined the Patrick Henry League and wrote many of its regular leaflets promoting his convictions on Our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and Catholic doctrine. He crusaded for truth in the media and monitored many television reports, exposing the trickery of cuts and transpositions in news clips, suggesting false dating. His health improved, happily, and allowed him to register for a Master's in Philosophy at Fordham University. He completed this in 1965 and pursued further studies at Columbia on an NDEA grant.

When sufficiently healthy to return to fulltime work, Ed sold clothes briefly for Brooks Brothers, then taught eleven years at Xavier High School in Manhattan, being twice elected English Department Chair and twice Faculty Cabinet chair. In 1971 he was invited to join the Marist College Board of Trustees, where he served several years. After Xavier, Canavan entered the Federal Government as a Social Security representative. True to form, the teacher in him wrangled an invitation to speak on the Fordham University radio station WFUV, where he taught the ins and outs of Social Security rules. His parish ran an adult education center, and Ed devoted time and energy there as well. He never married, the whole world being his concern and apostolate. He

kept requesting transfers at New York State until he got to the right place for doing the most good for the most people, especially assisting his clients in securing employment.

Ed maintained an active intellectual life, reading extensively, and joining the Community of Catholic Scholars and attending their annual meetings. At one point, like so many other concerned citizens, he thought the best way to change the world was through political involvement, so in 1965 he ran for the office of Borough President of the Bronx for William F. Buckley's Conservative Party. It was his way of presenting his version of what a Catholic politician should stand for. It is amusing to remember that it cost this "unknown" a total of \$100 to garner 13% of the vote. He always saw himself as a "Catholic with a responsibility" to live justly and charitably, to teach and help others to choose the straight and narrow path.

During his entire adult life Canavan struggled with serious health problems. He never complained, never slowed down, never spared himself. At the end the diabetes destroyed both his kidneys and for the last three years of his life put him in and out of hospitals, dialysis centers, and nursing homes. Even then, he never stopped reaching out. In his final days at Ruth Taylor Nursing Home in Westchester, his bandaged hands and feet ulcerous and blue from poor circulation, he remained ever cheerful, calling out blessings on the staff. Visitors could not leave without joining him in prayer.

Ed Canavan died on 22 May 1994, Pentecost Sunday.