

Brother Joseph L R Belanger, fms

11 July 1925 — 21 April 2010

Received the
Breath of Life
11 July 1925 -
Lawrence MA

Called to Accept
the Marist
Brotherhood
26 July 1943

Professed first
vows 1944
Professed final
vows 1949
Bronx NY — 30
March 1969

Was Commended
to God
21 April 2010
Bronx NY

Mass of Christian
Burial
26 April 2010 at
1:00 pm
Saint Theresa's
Church
Methuen MA

Memorial Service
28 April 2010 at
3:00 pm



Our Lady Seat of
Wisdom Chapel
Marist College,
Poughkeepsie NY

Interment
Marist Brothers
Cemetery
Esopus NY

Marist appointments

July 11, 1925 born in Lawrence, MA to Leda (Matton) and Emile Belanger
1938-1942 Marist Juniorate, Tyngsboro, MA
1942-1944 Marist Novitiate, Poughkeepsie NY
1944-45 Marist Provincial House, Poughkeepsie NY (Laundry / print shop)
1945-1948 Marist College, Poughkeepsie NY (student received BA in English)
1948-1955 Cardinal Hayes High School, Bronx NY (teacher)
1955 St. John's University, Queens NY (MA in English)
1955-56 Central Catholic High School, Wheeling WV (teacher)
1958 Second Novitiate, St. Paul-Trois-Chateaus, France
1959 L'Institut Catholique, Paris, France (Certificate French)
1959-1996 Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY (teacher)
1960 Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT (MA French)
1970 New York University, NY (PhD French)
1996-1997 Lujiang University, Xiamen, China (teacher)
1997-2008 Marist College, Poughkeepsie NY (retired, research)
2009 Champagnat Hall, Bronx NY (retired)
April 21, 2010 died in Bronx NY

Eulogy by Brother Rene Roy at the Funeral Mass

I am honored and privileged to represent the Province in presenting these remarks, and it is fitting that I should do so having been a student of Bro. Joseph at Marist College for three years, ending up with a minor in French. You called him Roland, but in 1943 when he took the Marist Habit, we called him Brother Joseph Emilian. Later it simply

became *Joe Bel*. *Tout est grace*, a sentence Brother Joe loved from the novel, *Journal d'un Cure de Campagne* by Georges Bernanos: is "Everything is grace", "All is grace", or "Grace is everywhere". Joe believed and lived this. He saw his life as a gift, a blessing. Coming from a strong family of faith, love, and closeness to each other, he learned community at home even in those brief years before he entered the Juniorate in Tyngsboro at age 13. It is no surprise that both families remained major forces, major loves, his whole life. He devoted his enormous energy to the building up of both. His frequent trips to family games of 45s, or to baptisms, birthday parties, weddings and other family events attest to his strong family ties. His love of community motivated him to call together the brothers living at Marist College on Wednesdays for prayer, dinner, and relaxation in his apartment, when the brothers moved out of St. Peter's and into various locations on campus. Finally, his days at Champagnat Hall in the Bronx enabled him to find a blessing and a treasure living with some of our 'greats'

Like Saint Marcellin, he was graced with "*un Coeur sans frontières*", a heart that knew no boundaries. He began the Marist Abroad Program so that Marist College students could see what existed beyond our borders. On a personal note, when I was in Rwanda, he convinced the Belanger family one Christmas to forgo giving each other Christmas gifts so that the money that would have been spent on gifts would go to help the students in our Marist school. He was conscious of where his former student was, and made the family aware as well. His year in China further expanded his horizons... And today, words of condolence and assurance of prayers from Rome come from our general headquarters in Rome, where he is being remembered by the international community and our superior general: evidence of his global presence and effect on others.

Geographical boundaries were not the only ones he crossed...the world of ideas, art, cinema, you name it, knew no limits with him. Always, even in retirement, he had an enormous to do list. I wonder if he ever finished all he wanted to do. A man of no in-betweens, for him things were either *fantastic* (formidable), or *a disaster*. His mind, his desires, his plans, his visions, his heart, were truly unbounded. We were blessed to count him as brother for all these years. He has left a definite impact on all and an outlook on life worthy of emulation. In his own words at his 60th Jubilee, he said: I hope to spend the rest of my days like Simeon and Anna in the temple, praying and serving. I remember daily the millions of hungry in our world of plenty and I pray for peace in our contentious and greedy world. Yes, original sin exists,

but with Father Pierre Teihard de Chardin, SJ, we work daily to make a difference, to decrease chaos/evil, to increase cosmos/love.

In the final analysis, Saint Paul said it best, We are treated...as poor, yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things. (2Cor 6:10)

Thank you, Joe, for enriching so many, so far and wide. Rest now in possession of eternal life. TOUT EST GRACE.

- *Br. Rene Roy, F.M.S.*

Statement by Dennis Murray, President of Marist College

It is with a great sense of loss that I announce Brother Joseph L. R. Belanger, FMS, '48 passed away yesterday at the age of 84. A pillar of Marist College, Brother Joe was a master teacher, scholar, intellectual, and innovator who served and resided at Marist for more than 50 years. Students, colleagues, and all who knew him were touched by his great intellect, deep faith, and unbounded enthusiasm for life. A dedicated Marist Brother for 66 years, he served God, his religious congregation, and his fellow human beings with passion and humility. Brother Joseph Lucien Roland Belanger was born July 11, 1925, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and took his first vows as a Marist Brother on July 26, 1944. He was awarded a bachelor's degree in English with honors from Marist in 1948, and subsequently earned an M.A. in English from St. John's University and an M.A. in French from Middlebury College. A medievalist who focused on French epics, Brother Joe was awarded a Ph.D. in French from New York University in 1970.

Upon graduating from college, Brother Joe spent seven years teaching English and French at Marist high schools in Wheeling, West Virginia, and in the Bronx. He joined Marist's faculty in 1959 and was made a full professor by 1975. While his principal courses were in French language, literature, and civilization, throughout the years he also taught courses in English, French literature in translation, American literature, world literature, Greek mythology, occidental mythology, global studies, and college writing. He was also very engaged with The Science of Man, Marist's innovative three-year degree honors program.

Brother Joe retired from full-time teaching in May, 1997, and was subsequently named Professor Emeritus of French. In recognition of

his academic contributions during Marist's formative years, he was designated a Marist College Heritage professor in 2004. Known for excellence in the classroom, Brother Joe received the Trustees Award for Distinguished Teaching in 1993. He chose to use the award funds to underwrite student scholarships and to enhance the lower level of the Lowell Thomas Communications Center with framed artwork.

Brother Joe's influence extended beyond the classroom. He helped shape the College through service on many faculty and college committees, and assisted with the founding of the Modern Languages Department and the French major. He initiated the campus' first theatre efforts, leading the way for a vibrant tradition that has engaged legions of Marist students. In 1961, he began a 30-year commitment to the Foreign Film Program, which is still offered at Marist. A proctor or resident director of Sheahan Hall for several years, he organized student weekend retreats near Phoenicia, New York. For many years, he volunteered with the College Advancement Office to obtain support for the Marist Fund and to set up several student scholarships, as well as an annual endowed lecture on literature named for a retiring colleague, Dr. George J. Sommer.

Among Brother Joe's most significant legacies is his founding in 1963 of the Marist Abroad Program (MAP), which transformed hundreds of students' lives and helped bolster Marist's reputation for academic excellence through its high standards. More than 45 years later, Marist's International Studies Program - spawned by MAP - supports Brother Joe's commitment to encouraging students to think in new ways and to value global awareness. His own life identified him as a citizen of the world. He went around the globe twice - visiting such places as Africa, Japan, and Australia - and made 30 trips to Europe. In 1996, at age 71, he traveled to Xiamen, China, to teach English for about a year; upon his return he wrote a book, "China Prism: Yellow-Red-Green" and produced a video to advance understanding about China.

Ever mindful of the College's Catholic heritage and the enduring influence of the Marist Brothers, the College's founders, Brother Joe established The St. Marcellin Champagnat Endowment for Catholic Activities. The endowed fund is named for the founder of the Marist Brothers, whose canonization in 1999 inspired its creation. Brother Joe was a tireless fund raiser for this project, which annually supports a lecture that deals with theology and spirituality, and confronts issues of faith and action currently facing Catholics in the United States and the world. The fund also annually sponsors several high-quality seminars on Catholic topics. In another measure to promote understanding

about the College's heritage, Brother Joe collaborated with the President's Office in developing and installing permanent plaques around the campus to highlight Marist founders and the history of early buildings.

A devotee of Edgar Morin, Brother Joe arduously and voluntarily translated two books by the internationally-known French philosopher and sociologist. Morin's master work, *La Methode*, was published in more than a dozen languages, but it remained unavailable in English until Brother Joe translated Volume 1, published in 1996, and Volume 2, now in production. He strongly believed that Morin's understanding of what it means to be human should be made accessible to American and other English-speaking readers. He tenaciously took on this last project in his early 80s, and despite health challenges, completed the translation and its revisions. "What it means to be human" was an ongoing point of thought and meditation for Brother Joe, who was a disciple of Teilhard de Chardin, the subject of a course he taught at Marist for many years, beginning in 1959. In 2005, he was the moving force behind a major symposium held at the College, with significant underwriting from the Templeton Foundation, which was part of the international commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the famed existential philosopher's death.

Brother Joe taught thousands students at Marist, and over the years many spoke of the intellectual and professional impact he had on them. Just recently, David L. Donoghue '64 endowed The Brother Joseph L. R. Belanger, F.M.S., Scholarship to show his appreciation for the guidance and inspiration Brother Joe provided him as a student and lifelong friend.

For those who have known and admired Brother Joe, and especially his students, the following words of self-description from a story profiling him in 1990 are a meaningful characterization: "I love life - there is so much to read, to know, to do, to live!" Brother Joe often exuberantly referred to people, books, and accomplishments he admired as "Superb!!!" Brother Joe's life was indeed "superb," and we thank him for all he did for the College.

Brother Joe had a large and loving family who visited Marist countless times for special celebrations and college activities. Last October, Brother Joe welcomed to campus his brother Ernest, Class of 1959, who traveled from Spain for his 50th reunion. In addition to Ernie, he is survived by brothers Emil and Raymond and sisters Irene Golden and Rita Cote. He was predeceased by his two sisters: Bernadette Elston, Juliette Smart and his brother: Philippe Belanger.

Eulogy by Brother Don Kelly given 28 April 2010

Joseph Lucien Roland Belanger was born July 11, 1925 at home in Lawrence, MA. Today I have been given the privilege to talk about Br. Joe, but where do I begin to sum up his life? How do I begin to describe a man as profound as Br. Joe, a man we knew at Marist as Br. Joe Bel?

Br. Joe was teacher, a scholar and an intellectual, and most of all Joe was a good friend. He never did anything half way. At times he would describe things using superlatives, like the best, or the worst, or using that common adjective "superb". This was his favored phrase.

People were an important part of Joe's life. He was always concerned about helping others. He traveled often to see his friend Br. Cornelius Russell in a nursing home in New York City. When I had my heart attack Joe came every week for 10 weeks to see me in Long Island. It was not just me or Br. Cornelius. Over the years Joe went out of his way to reconnect with his many friends he made in the Marist Community. On May 5, 1986, Br. Joe wrote "It is not the goal of life to be a Roman Catholic. It is not the goal of life to be Christian. It is the goal of life to be Christ-like." He said, "to be Christ-like, for me, means to give one's life for one's neighbor."

He had a tremendous love for his family illustrated by his monthly trips to New England to play cards. Family was important to Joe; during the summers he organized many family gatherings here at Marist with his numerous nieces and nephews. Frequently Joe told us about their lives. His love of family extended beyond his immediate family, and included the Boston Red Sox and New England Patriots. He was a die hard New England fan and he often stayed up way past his bedtime to watch games on TV. Joe also enjoyed playing tennis with his four brothers, Raymond, Philip, Emo, and with Ernest.

Joe's love of knowledge and life is illustrated in many ways. He loved his books and took great pride in his collections. He went to many talks in various locations throughout the world. He organized a conference at Marist on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a famous Jesuit philosopher who is buried not far from here. He was instrumental in creating a lecture series on literature named for Dr. George Sommer. Joe did French translations for the Daughters of Wisdom. Combining his religious background and his French proficiency, Joe not only gave the sisters the translations, but the spirit behind the words. He translated for the Marist Motherhouse in Rome every week from French to English and

vice versa. I would say to Joe, do not send the translations to Rome so quickly, because they would only send him more work, but this was not Joe's style of doing things. At times I would needle Joe by saying that if it was not written in English, Joe, it was not worth reading. Of course, this would get him going.

As an intellectual Joe was diverse in his many interests. Here are just some of his accomplishments at Marist. He started the foreign film program and the Marist Abroad Program. He would have weekly dinners in his apartment for the brothers and others in the Marist Community where discussions would evolve. He carefully selected the dinner guest to create stimulating conversations. Together with Brian Desilets, he organized weekly retreats in Phoenicia for the students. Br. Joe set up the St. Marcellin Champagnat Endowment for the annual lecture series in Catholic Studies. After retirement at the age of 71, Joe packed up his bags and charged off to China to teach English. He then wrote a book about his experiences.

Joe had a sense of humor. When he needed a new a TV set, I convinced him to go with me to Best Buy. After picking out a nice set, I paid for it. In his yearly Christmas letter he mentioned that he got a new TV from a benefactor. I asked him since when did I become a "benefactor". Joe said I did not want people to know you had any money, so I called you a "benefactor".

Br. Joe was a good listener. He was never afraid or embarrassed to give his position on issues. Over my last 26 years at Marist he was seldom wrong in his point of view.

The one thing that kept Joe alive this past year was his translation of Edgar Morin's second master work, *La Methode*. I said to Joe on Good Friday, you cannot die, the translation is not finished. Joe said, yes it is, the rest of it can be finished by someone else. He was beginning to look for greener pastures and to return to his Maker.

Br. Joseph Bel was small in stature but powerful in spirit. He really lived by one of the models of the Marist Brothers; do good, but do it quietly. Joe taught by his actions, not just his words. To be a teacher is more than a classroom activity. It is a way of life and Christ serves as the model because Christ's teaching was more than his words. It was the way He lived, his very life. He said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." For the Brothers, Christ serves as a model, as a teacher. The Brothers' way of life is modeled on that of Christ. As teachers, the Brothers not only instruct in the classroom but they teach by their very

way of life. Their very spirituality is not just an internal spirit but a gift to the world. And this is what Br. Joe was, a gift to the world.

Br. Joe was one of the true original founders of Marist College and with his death we have a passing of another generation. For 84 years Joe lived his life to the fullest and he was active to the end. He was at Marist College for over 50 years and it is fitting that we bid him farewell from here. Br. Joe, I have no doubt that you are in heaven today with Marcellin Champagnat.
