

# Brother Peter Chanel



Received the Breath of Life  
5 September 1918  
Blackstone, Massachusetts

Called to Accept the Marist  
Brotherhood  
26 July 1937  
St Ann's Hermitage, Poughkeepsie NY

Was Commended to God  
29 July 2005  
St. Anne's Nursing Center, Miami FL

Mass of Christian Burial  
1 August 2005  
Saint Richard Catholic Church

Interment  
Marist Brothers Cemetery  
Esopus, New York  
3 August 2005

## ***REMEMBERING BROTHER PETER CHANEL*** ***Eulogy by Brother Charles Filiatrault***

Very much like the scene of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, five of us were discussing at supper last night how Brother Peter touched our lives.

Two of the feelings that surfaced most often were Peter's love to be of service to others and his genuine simplicity. Having accompanied Brother Peter in a special way these past seven years, I would agree.

Certainly, as we review the apostolic assignments that he had as a Marist Brother, one notices that although he was a teacher for eight years, most often, he was called upon to make use of his gifts in areas that most of us would tend to avoid. He often shared with me how much he enjoyed serving the Brothers as cook, especially with Brother Danny Demers. Besides cooking for the Brothers in community, they also cooked for large numbers of Brothers during retreats and similar gatherings.

However, it is as a caregiver that Brother Peter is perhaps best known. He served the Brothers as a licensed practical nurse for twenty-six years and attended to the details of the burial of sixteen Brothers.

Certainly cooking, attending to the needs of children in a boarding school as prefect, and caring for the Brothers as a nurse are not areas that most of the Brothers would rush into, yet Brother Peter did all of these things with simplicity and enthusiasm. The reason Brother Peter accepted all of these assignments is perhaps found in a verse from Saint Paul to the Colossians: “..for us, our life is hidden with Jesus in God.” (Col. 3, 3)

When we conclude this service with the singing of the first verse of the Marist Hymn to Mary, I would ask you to recall the words of the second verse, for it perhaps best captures the life and style of Brother Peter:

“Ever, forever, this our glory shall be,  
To lead a life that is hid and unknown;  
Ever, forever, we will honor Mary  
Making her rare humility our own.  
Should we be scorned, as Jesus was before us,  
Lowly and meek, abiding in his love,  
May we for Him and for our tender Mother,  
Spurn pride and seek only things from above.”

I will always treasure the precious seven years that I have spent with Brother Peter. He was a model Religious and lived his life according to the first principle of the medical code of ethics: “Do no harm.” I will miss our Sunday trips to the boardwalk at Hollywood Beach, and to the local parks and malls, but most of all, I will miss his smile and his candid “one liners.”

Just before he died, I prayerfully recited all of the verses of our offertory hymn which perhaps can best be translated:

“One day, I will see her In heaven,  
my true homeland.

Yes! I will go to see Mary –  
My true love, and my true joy.

I will go and see her one day –  
A cry of hope  
That heals my pain  
During this earthly pilgrimage.

I will go and see her one day  
This immortal Virgin.  
Soon, I will be by her side,  
Telling her of my love.

I will go and see her one day  
Joining in chorus with the angels  
Singing her praises –  
A member of her heavenly court.

I will go and see her one day  
I will go to her heavenly throne  
And receive a crown,  
Only then will I rule.

I will go and see her one day  
Far from here I will go  
Upon her heart to rest  
And never to return.

Brother Peter Chanel Arel, FMS, (Arthur Joseph Arel) was born 18 September 1918 to Adelard Arel, a leather worker in the mills of Haverhill MA and Marie Louise Bussière, a housewife. He has had three brothers: Emile and Raymond have died and his brother Joseph lives in Haverhill MA. Emile died at 51 and had two sons, Gerard who is single and David. Two of his three sisters have died. His remaining sister is 99 and she lives in Haverhill MA. The family were parishioners of St. Joseph's RC Church in Haverhill MA.

In 1933 he joined the Marist Brothers, taking the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience at St. Anne's Hermitage, Poughkeepsie NY on 26 July 1938. He received the holy habit of the Brothers the preceding year at St. Ann's Hermitage, again on 26 July 1937.

He earned a BS in Education in 1946 from Fordham University. He was certified as an LPN from Soldier's Home in Chelsea MA in 1962, and received similar certification for New York State in 1966.

Brother Peter held the following positions: teacher, procurator, cook, prefect, Director of a House of Retirement of Marist Brothers. He lived in Rome, Italy for two years, and traveled to France, Switzerland, Australia, Japan and several other countries.

From 1960 until his retirement in 1984, he provided medical care for retired and infirmed Marist Brothers in Massachusetts, New York and Florida. He retired from active ministry in 1984 due to a heart condition. He was admitted to St. Anne's Nursing Center on 1 March 2001, where he resided until his death. While there he enjoyed visiting with the Marist Brothers on Sundays. He enjoyed having lunch with them, then going to one of the local parks, one of the shopping malls, and even at times to Hollywood Beach or to Miami Beach. He spoke both French and English. He could surprise you with his wit when you got to know him and always had a ready smile.