

Received the Breath of Life  
28 August 1913  
Southbridge, Massachusetts

Called to Accept the Marist Brotherhood  
26 July 1930

Was Commended to God  
27 December 2003  
Miami Florida

Mass of Christian Burial  
Our Lady of Wisdom Chapel  
Poughkeepsie NY

Interment  
Marist Brothers Cemetery  
Esopus, New York

#### Eulogy by Brother Joseph L. R. Belanger, FMS

He's gone. No, not Father Champagnat, as some students in awe thought him to be, but Brother Paul Ambrose, founding President of the 4-year Marist College. 50, 70, 90 years of age or more: we all are called back to our Maker sooner or later to give an account of our stewardship. "To err is human," yes. But Bro. Paul's ledger is deeply in the black.

He was librarian at St. Ann's Academy in New York City and had just completed a 2-year course for an M.A. in English at Catholic University when the Superiors chose him to be Master of Scholastics in 1943. What? A librarian to be Master of Scholastics? Yes, and the Superiors could not have chosen better. He knew people, he knew how to form them as persons and as religious. He was Master for 15 years, from 1943 to his appointment as Assistant General at the Chapter in France in Fall 1958. We received excellent training, not simply a college degree. We wrote inspirational leaflets called "Hi There!" We wrote articles for "Chips." We gave talks at the daily devotions in March to St. Joseph, in May to Our Lady, in June to the Sacred Heart, in July to the Good St. Ann. We put on plays and skits. We had daily music training. We taught sample classes. We sat in on classes in NYC to learn from professionals. We were the blood bank for St. Francis Hospital, on call day and night. Some Scholastics even got certificates in First Aid. We hiked to Esopus at the January break. And we did construction labor, plenty of it. Excellent character development. All these activities were conceived and supervised by the Master and directed by the superb team of professors he chose around him. Bro. Paul wanted his love of Marist to spread around the world, and he invited Student Brothers from everywhere: Canada, Mexico, Spain, Italy, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, the Philippines. Later President Murray granted him Presidential Scholarships and scholars came from Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, India. Marist College became as international as the Institute.

Bro. Paul was named Master in 1943 at age 29 not only to form persons and religious, but with the mandate to develop the 2-year Marist Training School, approved by Albany in 1929, into a 4-year Liberal Arts college. Paper, lots of paper, but he was a born administrator. [Didn't he arrange for his wake yesterday to be on January 2, birthday of the Marist Brothers?] Bro. Paul could dot the i's and cross the t's. He burned midnight oil. He consulted with Albany and Catholic University and fine-tuned an already solid institution. Our affiliation with Fordham University in 1929 was expanded and we were affiliated with Catholic University as well in 1944. Bro. Paul's efforts were crowned with success on September 20, 1946 when Marist Training School was accredited by Albany as the 4-year Marian College. With that

development came a building program, especially this very chapel we worship in. In 1997 billionaire Michael Bloomberg, speaking at the Marist College Commencement, walked over to Bro. Paul on the dais, shook his hand vigorously, and said, "You've provided an education for over 18,000 people. Now that's what I call an achievement!" Things get done when people do them. Bro. Paul got things done. He had the right stuff.

The Brothers voted Paul to the General Chapter in France in Fall 1958, and in November 28-year-old Bro. Linus Richard Foy replaced him as President. Bro. Paul so makes his mark in the discussions and decisions of the General Chapter that he is named that year, not Provincial of the new US Province as he expected, but Assistant General. He is surprised, perhaps even a bit disappointed, but he resolutely puts his hand to the plow. First of all, he decides to upgrade the working facilities in Rome and equips headquarters with electronic typewriters, faxes, and other modern equipment. He is appointed to work with the missions particularly. His accomplishments there are legendary. Over the years he collects more than \$1,000,000. A little money goes far in the missions. He helps found a medical clinic in Nigeria, dig a well in India, get a 4-wheel jeep in South Africa. He begs from this foundation and that. He visits all these places, takes pictures, reports in detail to the foundations before the next request. He travels more than two dozen times around the globe. Where his United States passport may be non grata, he uses his Vatican passport. The formation center in Sri Lanka is most grateful and names their site The Bro. Paul Ambrose Center.

Especially, he marks people around the world, indelibly. His Scholastics evidently, then people in Italy, Africa, Lebanon, Hong Kong, Sarawak, Pakistan. Ask Dora and Mimo and Napoleon and George Michael, ask hundreds of others. Never in their lifetime will they forget what he did for them. I myself am named to Marist College in 1959 because of him. After his first term as Assistant he is considered for Superior General, but the Holy Spirit watches over us and he is runner-up to Bro. Basilio Rueda, pre-eminent pastor and saint. Bro. Paul's skills are primarily political and administrative. His 18 years in Europe completed, he returns to the States for a few years. He fortunately stops the stupid purchase of a 3-storey dilapidated convent for our elderly and finds and purchases a much more suitable retirement home in Lawrence MA for the elderly Brothers. He serves as Director there for a few years, then is Bookstore Manager in Marist Chicago for 3 years. This is followed by 3 years of service as Director of a satellite community in Lawrence again, then this restless, zealous soul ups and goes to Liberia in 1987 at age 74 to help the Bishop of Monrovia run the diocese.

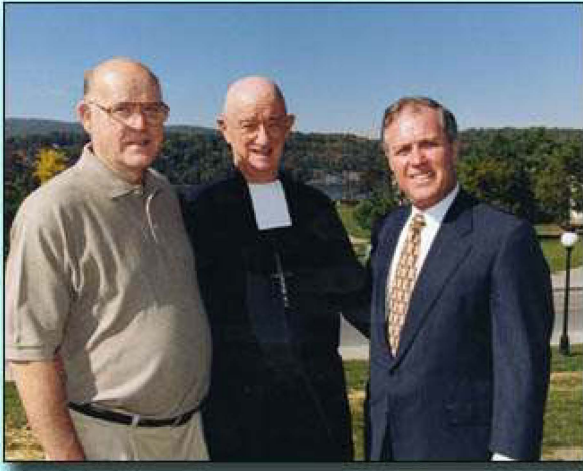
When Bro. Paul contracts malaria in Liberia in 1989, President Murray invites him to settle on campus and take up residence in the Gate House. Voluminous correspondence and dozens of international visitors keep him busy. He prays faithfully and Security sees him daily walking on campus in the early hours of the morning saying his Rosary while students sleep. He has his own key to the chapel he built and adores there quietly. Fittingly Dr. Murray dedicates Fontaine Hall to him in Fall 2000. In his late 80's Bro. Paul still retains some of his fire, and as recently as 1999 he electrifies the elite students at Baccalaureat Service by his exhortation. In Spring 2000 he begins to lose it. To Bro. Patrick McNamara, Provincial, falls the terrifying duty of telling Bro. Paul he can't drive anymore. Obediently Bro. Paul hands over the keys of the college car and moves, not quietly, to retirement in Florida.

I miss our trips home when we would recite the Rosary and sing the Lourdes Gloria Patri et Filio, and Paul would give 5-minute meditations between the mysteries. I miss our Rosary before Mass. I miss his preprandials in the Gate House. I miss our weekly dinners. We all miss some things dearly with Bro. Paul. He has left all of us memories for a lifetime, till we also are called back to our Maker for an account of our stewardship. May he now rest in peace.

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**A Tribute by Dennis J. Murray  
President of Marist College**

In his latter years, Brother Paul often told me his final wish was to be buried from this chapel. He felt this way because the campus was his home and the Marist Brothers were his extended family. There could be no more appropriate place to celebrate Brother Paul's life, because he was inextricably linked to this site overlooking the Hudson.



- He received the habit here in 1930, and professed his first vows in 1931.
  - He studied here from 1932-1934.
  - He worked here, and helped construct many of the buildings on this campus, including this chapel.
  - In 1943, Brother Louis Omer, the Provincial of the Order at the time, asked Brother Paul to become Master of Scholastics and to transform the Marist Normal Training School into a four-year college.
  - From 1943-1958, he served as Dean of the College and ultimately became President.
  - From 1958-1990, he served the Church and her people around the world, but always kept a tie to his roots in the Hudson River Valley.
  - He received an Honorary Degree from the College in 1972.
- He returned here in 1990 to assist with numerous projects that benefited the College and the Marist Brothers.
  - And in 2000, the newly constructed Fontaine Hall was named in his honor.

I believe this is the first time someone has been buried from a chapel that he helped build and which is located at a college that he helped found.

Brother Paul particularly liked this part of the campus because the Library served as a symbol of his commitment to education and the Chapel a symbol of his commitment to his faith. He called the sidewalk that connects the two buildings "the way to wisdom." He recognized that to live a meaningful life, you had to nurture both the intellect and the soul. He took particular pride in the statue of Marcellin Champagnat he had commissioned, which sits beside this connecting sidewalk.



Although I will always have many fond memories of Brother Paul, there are three that truly stand out.

The first took place at Commencement in 1990. Brother Paul had returned to the campus from Africa to recuperate from a bout of malaria and the disorientation often associated with this disease. The Commencement ceremony began on the campus green behind the Lowell Thomas Communications Center, but Brother Paul was nowhere to be found. Partway through the Commencement speaker's address, the infrequently used back doors of the Lowell Thomas building flung open. There stood Brother Paul in his majestic white cassock, his gold cross gleaming in the sun, staring at the 8,000 guests. The ceremony stopped as Brother Paul made his way to the Commencement platform. One of the graduates asked a classmate sitting next to him, "Is that the Pope?" - and he responded, "No, stupid, that's Marcellin Champagnat; he has returned home." Brother Paul was always a mighty presence on this campus.

My second remembrance took place in Rome in 1997 while preparing for an international conference on FDR and the Roman Catholic Church. Our small delegation was invited to join the Holy Father for a private Mass at 7a.m. in the chapel of the papal apartment. His Holiness asked Brother Paul to proclaim the First Reading during the liturgy. As I watched Brother Paul standing shoulder to shoulder with Pope John Paul II, I could feel the special bond between them - two men who devoted their entire lives to the service of God, the Church, and the people of the world.

The final recollection I'd like to share about Brother Paul is how college students related to him, regardless of their nationality, faith, or culture. It didn't matter if they were from India, Japan, Africa, China, or the Bronx - they all knew that Brother Paul had served in their communities and lived his faith. Young people have an uncanny ability to distinguish between the phony and the genuine, and they knew Brother Paul was the real thing.

Brother Paul has impacted this campus in many ways. We have adopted his Marist values of commitment to education, sense of community, and service to others. But like all great teachers, the greatest gift he gave us was the lesson of his life.

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Reflections by Dennis J. Murray,  
President of Marist College:

It is with profound sadness that I write to inform you of the death of President-Emeritus Brother Paul Ambrose Fontaine, FMS. Brother Paul, the founder of modern-day Marist College, died in Florida on December 27, 2003 at the age of 90.

Brother Paul's life was a testimony to his faith in God and his dedication to others. He spent more than 75 years of his life as a Marist Brother, led the College's effort to receive its charter as a bachelor's degree-granting

institution, made 33 trips around the world on behalf of Marist missions, and served two popes as a personal emissary to Africa and Asia.

Born Leonard Edward Fontaine in Southbridge, Massachusetts in 1913, Brother Paul entered the Order's junior novitiate in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts at the age of 13. In 1927, he arrived in Poughkeepsie at the site of what was then a high school and formation center for future Marist Brothers. In 1929, the Marist Brothers' Normal Training School was only allowed to offer freshman- and sophomore-level college courses. Following his studies in Poughkeepsie, Brother Paul transferred to Fordham University to complete his bachelor's degree in education. He also received a bachelor's degree in library science from Villanova University and a master's degree in English from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

In 1943 at the age of 29, after teaching in several schools, Brother Paul was called by his provincial to become the new Master of Scholastics at the Marist Brothers' Normal Training School. Three years later, he successfully petitioned the New York State Education Department to grant a charter, transforming the Training School into a four-year institution then called Marian College. Brother Paul remained here an additional 13 years to build the campus, the faculty, and the academic program. In 1960, the charter was amended to change the name from Marian to Marist College.

Brother Paul left Marian College in 1958 when he was elected Assistant Superior General of the Marist Brothers worldwide. Working in Rome, his talents as the "master builder" of Marist College were put to good use as a member of the commission that supervised the major renovation of a facility that became the new Marist Brothers' General House. He also supervised construction of the English-speaking second Novitiate in Fribourg, Switzerland, and established Marist schools and expanded apostolates in India, Japan, Pakistan, Sarawak, and Sri Lanka.

In 1989 while serving in Liberia, Brother Paul contracted malaria. I asked him to return to Marist to recuperate and make the Kieran Gate House his retirement home. He returned to the College, but he never retired. He continued to be a strong presence on campus and around the world until moving to Florida in 2001. He once told a reporter, "My philosophy is, 'You rest, you rust.' Look at a plow. If it's being used every day, it's nice and shiny. If it sits idle for any length of time, it gathers rust. People are the same way."

Brother Paul embraced change, as long as it did not mean losing contact with the heritage of this institution. Having him with us as President-Emeritus, Life Trustee, and a campus resident allowed us to reach into our future without losing contact with our past. He had the humility and simplicity of greatness. As President, I have been afforded the opportunity to meet many world leaders, and Brother Paul ranked up there with the best of them. On a personal level, I will miss his deep affection for Marist and our students, his sage counsel, and his sense of humor.

Many of us have special memories of Brother Paul. One that stands out in my mind occurred on November 8, 1997. Before a private audience with Pope John Paul II, we were invited with a handful of others to join the Holy Father in his private chapel in the papal apartment for 7 a.m. Mass. His Holiness asked Brother Paul to proclaim the First Reading during that liturgy. As I watched Brother Paul standing shoulder to shoulder with Pope John Paul, I could feel the special bond between them -- two men who devoted their entire lives to the service of God, the Church, and the people of the world.

During his life, Brother Paul received many awards and honors. In 1972, Marist College awarded him an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. In 1997, Pope John Paul II awarded Brother Paul one of the highest honors of the Roman Catholic Church, the "Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" (for the Church and the Pontiff). In 2000, Fontaine Hall, the home of our School of Liberal Arts, the Marist Institute for Public Opinion, and the Office of College Advancement, was named in honor of Brother Paul Ambrose Fontaine.

Knowing the life Brother Paul lived, I am confident he has joined the communion of saints and will be interceding for all of us in heaven.

Brother Paul is survived by his sister, Lucille Civilik, and numerous nieces and nephews, including Brother Paul Bernard, F.M.S. He was predeceased by a brother and a sister.