Remembrance, Father Joseph Lackner, S.M.
May 11, 2013
Immaculate Conception Chapel
University of Dayton


Good morning and welcome to the celebration of the life of our brother, Father Joe Lackner. Joe would just love it if we were all singing and dancing in the isles. On behalf of our Provincial, Father Marty Solma, who could not be with us, I thank you for your presence to help us offer thanks for Joe’s life in the context of the Eucharist that Joe loved so much.

There are some special welcomes that I would like to offer:

- Fr. Joe’s sister, Ms. Helen Hampton, and her children, son Michael and his wife Jamie; a son George and a daughter Diane and her three children. We share our sympathies and thank you for sharing Joe with us all these years.

- Father Timothy Kim, S.M., from Korea. He took care of Joe during the final weeks of his life. The Province owes you and the Korean Marianists a great debt of thanks for your kindness to Joe — a true example of Marianist brotherhood.

- We also want to thank the Marianist Family, especially the parishioners of Holy Family Church in Incheon, Korea, for their three-day prayer vigil after Joe died.

- Father George Cerniglia and Brother Thomas Payne who traveled from Hawaii to represent Joe’s community in Hawaii, the Hale Malia Community in Honolulu.

- Also to Brother Dennis Schmidt, a member of the Provincial Council who traveled to Seoul, Korea, to be with Joe and to keep us informed and who worked with Father Tim on all the details to get Joe home. Although to Father Joe, home...
was wherever he was as he was a true citizen of the world. Looking around, we can see that diversity reflected in the congregation today.

- A warm welcome to the members of the Korean Catholic community of Dayton whom Joe served in many ways. Thanks for your presence today.

- The Marianist brothers from East Africa, Mexico and India whom Father Joe served as Assistant Provincial for Developing Regions for eight years.

- To the University of Dayton administration, faculty, staff and graduates whom Joe worked with many years as head of campus ministry and as a fellow faculty member. Father Joe was looking forward to returning to the University this fall.

- And of course, to Joe’s Marianist brothers, Marianist sisters and lay Marianists — welcome, as you also experienced Joe’s kindness, his wonderful ways of celebrating the Eucharist. Joe never just “said Mass. For Joe, it was a performance in the best sense of that word of celebrating Thanksgiving! Joe was a giant in so many ways.

Born on Feb. 11, 1942, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, Father Joe was the oldest of three children of Joseph and Anna Lackner. He attended Cardinal Pacelli Elementary School and Purcell (now Purcell Marian) High School in Cincinnati, where he first encountered the Marianists. He participated in the sodality at Purcell and first learned about Father (William Joseph) Chaminade and the Marianist charism. He professed first vows on Aug. 22, 1960 (Feast of the Queenship of Mary) in Marcy, N.Y., and perpetual vows on Aug. 15, 1965 (Feast of Mary’s Assumption) here in Dayton, Ohio. Father Joe had a deep love of the Blessed Virgin, and one of his hobbies was to write Acts of Consecration. They were good and used by many. He
was ordained a priest on Jan. 22, 1972 (anniversary of the death of Father Chaminade) in Cincinnati, Ohio.

His early ministry was teaching in high schools in Kentucky and Ohio. He then moved to university teaching at Parks College in Illinois, Saint Louis University in Missouri and Thomas More College in Kentucky. In 1976, he began his long association with the University of Dayton where he taught theology and education courses and served as director of campus ministry from 1980-1988 and as a residence hall campus minister from 1988-1993. He also taught at Xavier University in Cincinnati, St. Mary’s University in San Antonio and Chaminade University in Honolulu as well as in the UD program in Bangalore.

Joe was a lover of books and ideas, an insatiable learner. He held two bachelor’s degrees and a master’s degree from the University of Dayton; a master’s in Biblical languages and literature and a doctorate in historical theology from Saint Louis University as well as a doctorate in private school education from the University of San Francisco. To say that Father Joe was always learning is an understatement, and he loved to teach. His writings on Marianist spirituality and Marianist education are widely read and in spite of all this intellectual stuff, Joe was a down-to-earth-sort-of guy. You just had to experience his telling the "12 Days of Christmas." He was also very open to where God and Mary were calling him as he said “yes” in serving the former Cincinnati Province as Assistant Provincial, Director of Education and as the Assistant for Developing Regions in the Province of the United States.

Our brother Joe was known for his warmth and sense of humor, his great fraternal spirit, his wisdom, his generosity, his compassion, his gift of presence, his homilies (stressing the Incarnation, God’s presence among us) his love of travel and learning of other cultures, his love of movies especially late at night. His idea of camping out was at campsites known as the
Marriott or the Hilton. He would agree with comedian Phyllis Diller who once remarked, “My idea of exercise is a good brisk sit.” And we all know how Joe loved to get up in the morning. I remember Joe at Kings Island when our Council completed service in 2002 and celebrated it by spending the day at this amusement park. Joe would go on any ride that he could fit — and he would try to fit. If he couldn’t, he would laugh and wait for us to complete the ride. His humility, his love of life and his love of people all point out how he knew that God loved him and his response was to share that love with others.

We gather this morning with Jesus and Mary, with the angels and saints, to “sing and dance with Joe” at this thanksgiving celebration for Joe’s Life — and (to share) the memories of his sharing of his gifts with all of us.