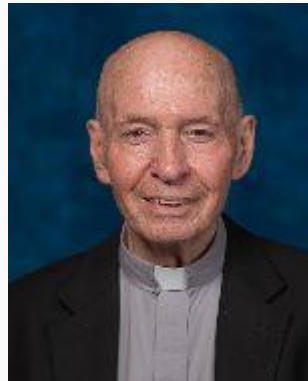




Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Soci t  de Marie
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March 31, 2022

Biography of Death Notice N. 9

The Province of the United States recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **Robert Edward HACKEL**, priest of the Marianist Community in Cupertino, California, USA, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on March 20, 2022, in Cupertino at the age of 89 with 70 years of religious profession.

Father Bob (as he was best known) was a beloved teacher, chaplain, community director, missionary and associate pastor. Beyond faithfully exercising his priestly duties in a variety of assignments, Father Bob is remembered for his interest in politics and his fascination with “feathered fowl” – an appreciation he first developed on his parents’ farm, where they raised geese and ducks.

Robert Edward Hackel was born on April 24, 1932, in St. Louis, Missouri. He was one of two sons in the family of Edward and Ann (Roedman) Hackel.

Baptized in 1932, young Robert attended grade school at St. Mary Magdalene Parish in St. Louis. He then briefly attended McBride High School before transferring to St. Mary’s High School – both Marianist schools that provided his

earliest contacts with the brothers. After graduating from St. Mary's in 1950, he entered the novitiate that August at Marynook in Galesville, Wisconsin, and professed first vows there in 1951.

Brother Bob began his scholastic studies at Maryhurst in Kirkwood, Missouri, before moving on to St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History there in 1954.

For the next several years, Brother Bob served as a classroom teacher – first at St. Joseph's School (Victoria, TX); and then at Chaminade College Preparatory and St. Mary's High School in St. Louis. He professed perpetual vows on July 14, 1956, at Marynook. Called to the priesthood, Brother Bob began seminary studies at Fribourg, Switzerland in 1960. He was ordained on April 3, 1965.

Over the next four decades, Father Bob worked primarily in high school assignments – including teaching and chaplaincy positions at St. Mary's High School (St. Louis), St. John Vianney (Kirkwood, MO), Nolan Catholic High School (Fort Worth, TX), Thomas More High School (Milwaukee, WI), Gross Catholic High School (Omaha, NB), Central Catholic High School (San Antonio) and St. Louis School (Honolulu, HI). He taught Latin, religion, history and social studies at various points in his career as an educator, and typically assisted nearby parishes by offering sacramental ministries on weekends. Father Bob also spent several years in parish work, both at Our Lady of the Pillar in St. Louis and as a missionary in Eastern Africa.

In the mid-1970s, Father Bob pursued graduate studies at Marquette University, earning a master's degree in Political Science in 1975. Known among the brothers for an intense interest in politics, Father Bob was pleased that his many years of writing to Harry Truman eventually led to him receiving personal replies from the former President. Father Bob is also remembered for his interest in small-scale farming – raising plants, flowers, geese and ducks; he occasionally worked these subjects into his homilies. His personal correspondence would often include a drawing of a rooster as his signature image.

Father Richard Villa, who served with Father Bob for five years at Nolan Catholic High School, says, "Father Bob was a person of gentle disposition, always offering to be of service to the brothers. He was beloved by students and faculty alike – each day greeting them with a generous smile and warm words of

affection. He was also the 'St. John Vianney' of Nolan – a wonderful confessor with a reputation for having endless compassion and understanding.” Of Father Bob’s affection for fowl, he says, “In his early years at Nolan, Bishop Gorman gave him two ducks as pets. I have no idea what became of them, but for certain, they did not wind up on the dinner table: Bob would have been horrified.”

Nor was this duck-keeping situation a one-time occurrence. According to Father Al McMenamy, “Wherever Bob was in different communities, he almost always had a set of ducks – taking great care of them,” Father Al says. “I also remember a favorite quote of Bob’s: ‘Nothing is too good for the brothers!’ He always wished for things to be just right for our brothers.”

On the occasion of his 70th jubilee, Father Bob wrote of his own deep appreciation for the Society of Mary. “Requests for me to assist in some of its ministries have always been a great grace,” he said. “As a priest, the sacrament of reconciliation has been a sign of the Father’s love in bringing Christ to all of us. The joy and challenges of community life have been a means of growth and maturity and have given me skills to communicate better and show fraternal appreciation.”

May he rest in peace.
