

URIA GENERALIZIA MARIANISTI
Via Latina 22 - 00179 Roma, Italia
Tel. (39-06) 704 75 892 - Fax (39-06) 700 0406
E-mail: gensecsm@smcuria.it

April 25, 2010

Death Notice No. 8 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **THOMAS SCHOEN**, priest, of the Mercy Siena community and closely associated with the Sawmill community in Dayton, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on April 14, 2010, in Dayton in the 78th year of his age and the 59th year of his religious profession.

Thomas was born in Sioux City, Iowa, on June 13, 1932, the only child of Anton and Marie (Nichols) Schoen. He had his first thoughts about religious life while attending Cathedral of Epiphany grade school. Thomas was further influenced by the Marianist brothers who taught him at Trinity High School in Sioux City. When Trinity closed after his junior year, Thomas asked to finish high school as a postulant in the Society of Mary at Mount Saint John in Dayton.

He professed first vows in 1951 at Marcy, New York, perpetual vows in 1957 at the University of Dayton and was ordained in 1987 at Immaculate Conception Chapel in Dayton.

The University of Dayton played a major role in Thomas' life. An excellent student, he graduated from UD in 1954 with a bachelor's degree in math and physics. After spending three years teaching math and physics at Chaminade High School in Dayton and receiving a master's degree in mathematics in 1959 from the University of Cincinnati, Thomas returned to UD in 1959 to serve for almost 50 years.

He began his ministry at UD teaching and advising students in mathematics. On campus, he had a quiet, unassuming manner and a fascination with computers. His pioneering spirit in computer technology led to the development of the Computer Science Department at UD – one of the 10 oldest in the country. “Fr. Tom was known as ‘Mr. IT’ before IT even existed,” said Jim Buckley of the UD Computer Science Department. “His importance to the university, the college and the department cannot be overstated.”

Thomas was chair of the Computer Science Department for its first 17 years (1961 - 1978). His name became synonymous with computer science on campus. “The discipline he imposed upon himself was also imposed on his students, and they were the better for it,” said Jim Buckley. “In his simple and humble way, he gained the affection of all who came in contact with him.”

Kathy Tamer, who received a bachelor's in computer science in 1973 and is now vice president and chief information officer for United Space Alliance in Houston, remembered Schoen as "a pathfinder, a leader and a taskmaster."

"As his computer science student in the early years of computing, he opened our eyes to the wonders of computers and challenged us to excel beyond what we felt possible," she said. "Although not obvious to us as freshman, he cared as much for us as people as he did as students."

"You can imagine my surprise when I walked into his office 30 years later and he recognized me," Tamer said. "I am grateful for the many lessons I learned under his tutelage and will remember him always."

Although Thomas had a successful ministry as a teaching brother at UD, he had always felt called to the priesthood. In 1984, he was accepted into the Marianist seminary program at the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto, Canada. In recommending Thomas as a candidate for ordination, several Marianists spoke of his fine attributes.

"Tom has a respectful and non-judgmental attitude toward others," said Fr. George Cerniglia. "He has a remarkable amount of tolerance that allows others the space they need to grow and develop." Fr. Chris Conlon admired his humility and grace. "Thomas has an excellent mind and understands things quickly but does not use his abilities in any way to intimidate, but rather to help others," said Fr. Chris.

After his ordination in 1987, he returned to UD to teach computer science until 2006 when he took a medical leave. In 2009, Fr. Thomas was named professor emeritus at UD and presented with a citation describing the instrumental role he played in bringing UD into the computer age.

In his free time, Fr. Thomas was an indefatigable reader of mystery novels, especially the "Brother Cadfael" series, a dedicated bridge player, and a die-hard Chicago Cubs fan. Fr. Thomas and his friend Fr. Tom Stanley played many hands of bridge and another game Fr. Thomas invented called "ghoulies."

"Ghoulies resulted in extremely weird hands for each player and the idea was to see how well each of us could bid those wild combinations," said Fr. Stanley. "It always seemed to me that this exercise represented Tom's approach to life. Life deals a lot of 'ghoulies' to us. Tom never lost his cool when faced with them. He simply tried to make sense out of them and draw some advantage from them."

May he rest in peace.