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Death Notice: Brother Donald Bernard Sullivan

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Nov. 2, 2000
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NEWS RELEASE

Brother Donald Bernard Sullivan, S.M., 83, a Chaminade High School graduate and former teacher at the school, died Nov. 1, 2000, during a ceremony that illuminated his life -- a Catholic Mass. This obituary comes from the Marianist provincialate:

DEATH NOTICE: BROTHER DONALD BERNARD SULLIVAN (Sept. 22, 1917, to Nov. 1, 2000)

The Province of Cincinnati recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear Brother, Donald Sullivan, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Nov. 1, 2000, at Dayton, Ohio, in the 84th year of his age and the 66th of his religious profession.

Brother Donald Bernard Sullivan was born in Dayton, Ohio, on Sept. 22, 1917, one of John and Anna (Limbert) Sullivan's six children. He attended Chaminade High School and then went on to graduate from Mount St. John Preparatory School in 1934. After completing the novitiate, he professed temporary vows in the Society of Mary in 1935 and perpetual vows in 1940. Commenting on his character at the time of perpetual profession, his confreres described him as "sociable," "appreciative," "intelligent" and "successful in his work and devoted."

After completing a bachelor of arts degree at the University of Dayton, he began a long ministry in education, teaching Latin, Greek, English and religion, serving as moderator of the sodality, division counselor, and prefect, and managing the bookstore. For 15 years he taught at Cathedral Latin School in Cleveland (1938-44; 63-72) and 11 years at Chaminade High School in Dayton (1945-46; 52-62). He also served at the University of Dayton (1945-46), Mount St. John Preparatory (1946-51) and Most Holy Trinity High School in Brooklyn (1951-52). During this time he earned a master's degree in classical languages from Western Reserve University in Cleveland (1946) and enjoyed a religious sabbatical at the Institute of Marianist Studies in Glencoe, Mo. (1962-63). In 1946 he also had to face a four-month battle with tuberculosis, a disease that was certainly life threatening at that time. In 1977 he left secondary schools to minister as facilities manager at the Marianist Center, a part of the Bergamo Retreat Center in Dayton (1977-81). He then served as staff assistant in the Marianist Provincialate Offices at Mount St. John (1981-93).

On the occasion of his golden jubilee, a former student, Lou Jacquet, associate editor of the national Catholic newspaper, *Our Sunday Visitor*, wrote about Don in an editorial: "He always had a face that said, 'Isn't life grand?' ... It was there [Cathedral Latin] that Brother Don -- then serving as the school's bookstore manager -- had shown patience and kindness to a shy freshman working his way through the maze of orientation day. ... that day had been my first

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exposure to the genuine warmth of the Marianist brothers and priests. ... until I encountered the Marianist brand of bold discipleship for the Gospel, faith was largely something in textbooks lived out in the pews on Sunday morning. They taught me Christ had meant it to be something infinitely more than that – a lesson for which I have been forever grateful.”

Undoubtedly, Brother Sullivan was grateful for an old student’s appreciation, but he also knew how, as the proverb puts it, “God had written straight with crooked lines.” In the booklet commemorating his diamond jubilee ten years later, he revealed how living in the novitiate community (1972-84), where he was required to develop and discuss his “personal development plans” with the community and where he faced his alcoholism and steeped himself in “the very personal spirituality of Alcoholics Anonymous,” gave him a new lease on life.

From 1993 until his death he resided at the Marianist Community of Alumni Hall, located at the University of Dayton. Though retired, he continued to contribute to the good of others as a patient tutor of adults seeking a high school diploma and international students in the University’s program of English as a second language. He was also every editor’s and writer’s indispensable delight, an excellent proofreader.

A year ago Don confided to a provincial visitor that he considered himself a medical miracle because doctors had helped him survive so many ailments. To their credit he was able “to get around,” perform some daily community chores, and do three newspaper crossword puzzles (*New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Dayton Daily News*) a day. Always an avid reader, he said he had given up fiction and focused now on more serious material. Among authors he mentioned Richard Rohr, Michael Crosby, and Kathleen Norris. But his favorite was Henri Nouwen, especially what he considered the writer’s best work, *The Way of the Heart*.

Unexpectedly, in the midst of the Eucharist celebrating the feast of All Saints, he was taken all the way to the heart of God, where he also sees Mary, the woman he called “the Blessed Mother of My Lord ... who perfectly models for me what it means to do whatever he tells me.”

Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 4, at Queen of Apostles Chapel at Mount St. John. Visitation will be from 9 to 10 a.m. before the Mass. Interment will immediately follow at Queen of Heaven cemetery, Mount St. John. Memorial donations can be directed to the Society of Mary, 4435 E. Patterson Road, Dayton, Ohio 45430.