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In Memoriam Father Vincent R. Vasey (1916 - 1985)

Frederick Davis

On Saturday evening, May 18, 1985, at about 9:00 p.m., our beloved colleague and mentor, Father Vincent Vasey, died. Although he had experienced some health problems during his sabbatical leave in Europe during the autumn of 1984, his death, coming only three hours following the graduation Mass for the class of 1985, and only sixteen hours before the graduation ceremony itself, was a distinct shock to all of us—even those who knew best the state of his health.

After returning from Europe in December of 1984, he assumed a full teaching load and was able to complete a definitive biography of the founder of the Marianists, the Venerable William Joseph Chaminate. It is a tribute to the dedication of our colleague that, despite his weakening health, he fully completed all of his teaching responsibilities before entering Miami Valley Hospital on April 22, 1985, for gallstone surgery. Although the gallstone diagnosis proved accurate, the routine surgery also disclosed cancer of the bile ducts—a rare type of cancer to which Father Vasey ultimately succumbed.

It tells you as much as anything about the character of Father Vasey that he chose to enter law school, after a distinguished career in other disciplines, at fifty-eight years of age. How many of us, at that age, would be willing to undertake that kind of an assignment? Nevertheless, as with everything else Father Vasey did in his life, he gave it his all and went on to achieve distinguished success in this later vocation.

A major goal of this career change, one would suppose, would have been to bring to the University of Dayton School of Law (then only in its third year of operation) dimensions of stability, intellectual depth, and mature judgment. If, in fact, that were the goal, it was more than reached. Upon his graduation from the Notre Dame Law School in December of 1976, Father Vasey joined the University of Dayton Law Faculty where he continuously taught until his sabbatical leave in the autumn of 1984. He combined qualities of rigor with sym-

pathetic understanding—attributes which enabled him to make outstanding contributions to the Summer Qualification program. The Summer Qualification program, designed to enable students with a sincere desire to become lawyers to make up for technical shortages in their academic backgrounds, has proved to be one of the most successful programs at the University of Dayton, largely, I suspect, because of the efforts of such persons as Father Vasey.

At the University of Dayton School of Law, Father Vasey taught a variety of challenging courses, including Agency & Partnership, Comparative Law, Domestic Relations, History of the Common Law, Jurisprudence, and Legal Process. He brought to all of his courses a grace and dignity consistent with the highest traditions of law teaching.

Father Vasey was not only beloved by his students, but also by his colleagues. His rich background in literature and philosophy enabled him to offer insights and perspectives otherwise beyond the reach of most of us. His presence at faculty meetings assured a manageable agenda, a restrained discourse, and a rational exchange of ideas and views.

As a Dean without previous experience in that capacity, I relied heavily on Father Vasey's judgments and views. In faculty recruiting he was invaluable as he would frequently draw upon his rich experience with people in order to highlight factors which might otherwise have been overlooked.

He had a *bon mot* or aphorism for almost every occasion (e.g., *fatta la legge, trovato l'inganno*—"immediately after the law is enacted, human wits are at work to defeat its purpose"). But these *bon mots* and aphorisms were never designed to ridicule—only to take some of the sting out of a disappointment or frustration resulting from an unwished for, but inevitable, turn of events.

We will miss Father Vasey, and we realize that we are the poorer as a result of this loss. At the same time we rejoice in the riches he has left us. In a very real sense, his association with us is indissoluble and continuous. We are and shall be forever grateful for it.