

5-8-2007

'Father Beanie' Services Set

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

"'Father Beanie' Services Set" (2007). *News Releases*. 2140.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/2140

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



'Father Beanie' Services Set

05.08.2007 | Faculty, Catholic Services for Kohmescher, who died Saturday, will begin with a viewing at 6:30 p.m. Friday, May 11, in the Immaculate Conception Chapel on campus, with a funeral liturgy at 7:30 p.m., followed by a reception in the Kennedy Union Torch Lounge. Burial will be 9 a.m. Saturday May 12, at Queen of Heaven Cemetery at Mount St. John, 4400 Shakertown Road.

Kohmescher, 85, greeted thousands of prospective UD students and their families, many of them coming to campus for the first time, assuring them that they would find a home at the University.

"He made people feel very comfortable and put them at ease. He was so approachable and made such an impression on them," said Carin Andrews, UD's campus visit coordinator. Andrews said Kohmescher's welcome illustrated the Marianist values of the Catholic university.

"For those students who might be afraid they wouldn't fit into a Catholic school, or for those who might think that priests are not approachable, he just exemplified the Marianist way," she said. "His message was 'Sure you're going to fit in because we're just regular people at the University of Dayton and we're just community here.'"

Recent graduate Brandon Artis, who conducted campus tours for the admission office for two years, said the tall, balding priest had an uncanny ability to remember faces and names.

"One of the most unique things about Father Matt was that he never forgot anyone. He would see graduates from 20 or 30 years ago and knew their names right off the bat," Artis said. "I was always amazed at his ability to go up and interact and hold a great conversation. You truly knew he wasn't talking to you just because he wanted you to come to UD. It was because he truly cared."

Andrews said last year the office of admission hosted more than 4,900 families on campus visits, and Kohmescher welcomed at least 90 percent of those before he became too ill to continue in December.

Prior to falling ill, Kohmescher volunteered daily at the admission office, acted as unofficial grandfather to students at Founders Hall and enlisted others as "Fuzzies," which earned him another light-hearted moniker as "Father Fuzzy."

In a 1983 interview, shortly after stepping down as chair of the religious studies department after 20 years, Kohmescher explained that being a Fuzzy simply meant that he tried to make the world a better place through a smile, gesture or helpful act and encouraged others to do the same by taking the Fuzzy Pledge.

"The older I get, the more compassionate and understanding I become," he said in a 1998 interview. "I've learned you can't change the world by (complaining) about it. Even if you pull all the weeds, if you don't plant flowers you still end up with just mud."

While for the past 20 years, Kohmescher's primary identity in the UD community has been as the kindly, approachable priest, he also leaves behind a legacy of courage and vision that shaped and expanded religious studies at UD in a time of great transition for the Catholic faith.

Kohmescher served on the faculty of the religious studies department (then called the theology department) from 1960 through 2001. He served as chair of the department from 1962 to 1983, according to University records, when for the first time, Protestant and lay people were hired to teach theology.

According to the Rev. Bill Anderson, one of the first Protestants hired by UD to teach religion, Kohmescher was "right out there on the cusp" of great changes, prompted by Vatican II. Kohmescher wanted a graduate program, and needed faculty with the appropriate degrees, so he hired four Protestant theologians and three former Catholic priests.

"This was very controversial, and he took a tremendous amount of heat. For a long, long time, his name was mud in many Catholic circles in Ohio," said Anderson, who taught at UD until 2000. "He was single-minded and single-focused and had the vision, strength and courage to help UD develop the strong program that it has today."

Kohmescher was born in 1921 in Cincinnati. He entered the Marianist Novitiate in 1938 and was ordained July 18, 1948, at the Marianist International Seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland.

He was awarded a bachelor's degree in philosophy at the University of Dayton in 1942; a doctorate of sacred theology from the University of Fribourg in 1950; and a master's degree in administration and counseling from Western Reserve University, Cleveland, in 1956.

Kohmescher began his teaching career at UD in 1960, serving as associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences through 1962, when he was named chair of the theology department. He was named Distinguished Service Professor in 1990.

He authored two books, *Good Morality is Like Good Cooking* (1987) and *Catholicism Today: A Survey of Catholic Belief and Practice* (1980), which was reprinted twice.

For interviews, contact Cilla Shindell at 937- 229-3256 or via e-mail at shindell@notes.udayton.edu.