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



## A Legacy of Catholic Education

04.24.2014 | Education, Faculty, Campus and Community

University of Dayton professor Thomas Hunt, who was a lifelong advocate of Catholic education, died Thursday, April 17. He was 83.

Hunt's enduring legacy can be found in his significant contribution to Catholic education history and research as the author and editor of 27 books, including *The Praeger Handbook of Faith-Based Schools in the United States, K-12*; *At the Heart of the Church: Selected Documents of Catholic Education*; *Urban Catholic Education: Tales of Twelve Cities*; and *Urban Catholic*

*Education: The Best of Times, the Worst of Times*.

"He was a tempest, a driven soul passionate about history and Catholic education," said the Rev. Ron Nuzzi, a senior director at the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education and a co-author with Hunt on more than a dozen books.

"He contributed perhaps more than anyone else in his generation to the body of knowledge about the history of Catholic education," Nuzzi said. "He has preserved the knowledge and experiences of a time when Catholic schools and churches were filled with priests and nuns, something most students and educators have no memory of today."

Hunt found something very American and very spiritual about those early Catholic educators, who founded schools in neighborhoods to preserve the faith as their children furthered their education.

He liked to call them "front porch parishioners," echoing the University of Dayton's strongly held commitment to community.

Hunt always had a story to tell and would often discuss his formative years as a student in Catholic schools in his native Madison, Wisc., said Susan Ferguson, director of the University of Dayton Center for Catholic Education, where Hunt was a Fellow since 2007.

The powerful lessons he learned served as the foundation for a career in promoting Catholic education.

"He believed the gift of Catholic education was that the home and the school always worked together," Ferguson said. "Catholic schools were focused on faith formation of the child and building character and great respect for the family."

Ferguson recalls a story that a teacher once told the class that cardinals are blue and jays are red. Many students nodded obediently in agreement, but a sheepish young Thomas raised his hand, respectfully disagreeing.

"The teacher praised him and taught the class the value of critical thinking and always questioning what you've been told, even if it meant speaking up to someone who is in authority," she said.

Hunt went on to have a long and prestigious career in Catholic education spanning more than 50 years. He attended Loras College in Iowa, earning an undergraduate degree in history, graduating magna cum laude in 1952. Catholic University of America awarded him an S.T.L. in 1956, and an M.A. in secondary education administration in 1965. He earned his Ph.D. in educational policy studies (Social and Historical Foundations of Education) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1971. He served as a priest in the Diocese of Madison from 1956 to 1969.

Throughout his career, Hunt held a variety of positions within the education field including high school teacher, principal and college professor. He joined the University of Dayton faculty in 1996 after a long tenure at Virginia Tech. He retired from teaching in 2011 but remained a Fellow in the Center for Catholic Education until his death. He was a member of several organizations including the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the National Catholic Educational Association.

His unrivaled command of history and education and their many lessons, along with his unwavering guidance, advocacy and mentorship were, and will continue to be, a blessing to countless people.

"I am blessed to have called Tom my friend and colleague," said Jim Rigg, superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. "He was universally respected, and his numerous works on Catholic education have made an

undeniable impact upon our schools. The ministry of a Catholic education is even stronger thanks to Tom's dedication, intelligence, and generosity."

"Dr. Tom Hunt was an eminent historian of Catholic education," said Kevin Kelly, dean of the University of Dayton's School of Education and Health Sciences. "He was a prolific scholar who brought keen intellect and analysis to his work while also being a generous mentor to many young scholars. Tom's love for Catholic education was inspiring. He will be greatly missed."

Hunt is survived by his wife, Karen Hunt, of Centerville, Ohio; brother, John Hunt of Verona, Wisc.; sister, Sue Hunt Esser of Greenville, S.C.; and two daughters, Staci Hunt Ramsey of Union, Ky., and Eryn Hunt of Cincinnati; along with three beloved grandchildren, and many other family members and friends.

A Mass Of Christian Burial will be held at 11 a.m. on Thursday, April 24, in Madison, Wisc. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the Center for Catholic Education at the University of Dayton, 300 College Park, Dayton, Ohio, 45469-0531.

View and sign his guestbook at [www.ryanfuneralservice.com](http://www.ryanfuneralservice.com).

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