9-11-1966

Rev. John A. Elbert, S.M., Dies Suddenly at 71

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

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/2976

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, msclangen1@udayton.edu.
DAYTON, Ohio, September 11, 1966 --- Very Rev. John A. Elbert, S.M., former Provincial of the Society of Mary's Cincinnati Province (1948-58) and 13th President of the University of Dayton (1938-44), died suddenly Sunday, September 11, while saying mass in the University's Health Center chapel. Father Elbert, who was 71 years old, was celebrating mass for the sick and was preparing to give communion when he died.

Father Elbert, whose ready wit and ever-present smile served him well as Provincial and UD President, had been a professor of philosophy at UD and was a member of its Board of Trustees since the conclusion of his term as Provincial in August, 1958. He also had served as Dean of the Graduate School of the College of Arts & Sciences for a time when graduate work was resumed at UD in 1960.

Funeral mass, with Very Rev. James M. Darby, Father Elbert's successor as Provincial, as celebrant, will be conducted Wednesday, September 14th, at 4 P.M. in UD's Immaculate Conception Chapel. He will be buried at Mt. St. John's religious residence for the Cincinnati Province.

Of Father Elbert, Father Darby said from Pittsburgh where he was on a Provincial visitation:

"With the loss of Father Elbert we definitely experience the close of an era. He was strong in mind and heart in the great traditional sense. His life and service may be seen as a major contribution toward an understanding of our mission as well as in the grasp of the basic strategy for making it known, loved and appreciated far and wide.

"There's no question that the lives of those he touched as educator and Father of religious family were profoundly moved toward the finer things in life and above all toward a deeper appreciation and love of Christianity in its profoundest sense.

"The Society of Mary will long remember this zealous priest."

Very Rev. Raymond A. Roesch, S.M., President of the University of Dayton, had this to say on Father Elbert's passing:

"Father John Elbert was a true Christian philosopher interested in the elusive relationship between philosophy, science and theology. Always intellectually active, he produced writings continuously up to this past week. As a professor, college president and religious superior his fairness and straightforward approach was much in evidence."
Father Elbert continued - 2

His enthusiastic role on our Board of Trustees reflected his wisdom and experience as we formulated policy. By his death we have lost an inspiring colleague, a fervent priest of God, and a dedicated scholar."

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Father Elbert, who also served as President of Trinity College, Sioux City, Iowa, when he was only 37 years old, came to Dayton from St. Barbara's School, Brooklyn, in 1911. A year later he became a member of the Society of Mary, graduating from the University of Dayton (then St. Mary's Institute) in 1915. He received his masters degree from his alma mater in 1916 and was assigned to West Catholic High School in Philadelphia. He served there until 1918 when he returned to teach at the University of Dayton Prep School.

Father Elbert went to Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1921 to study for the priesthood. He was ordained in 1926 and spent two years as a professor of philosophy at UD. In 1928 he was appointed first principal of Purcell High School in Cincinnati and held that post until 1931.

During his tenure at Purcell he studied for his doctor of philosophy degree at the University of Cincinnati. He was awarded the degree in 1932 and was appointed President of Trinity College when that school was conducted by the Society of Mary. He held the post until he was named UD President in 1938.

During his six-year term as UD President, Father Elbert gained an affiliation with the Dayton Art Institute and St. Elizabeth Hospital. He also established the first graduate curriculum, saw the student enrollment go above 1,000 for the first time, and approved the establishment of a Student Council.

With great devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, Father Elbert founded the Marian Library, now the largest library on Mary in the world, in 1943. The library is on the UD campus with more than 22,000 books and pamphlets pertaining to Mary.

Father Elbert spoke often at graduation ceremonies and from the lecture platform. He gave the baccalaureate address at the University of Cincinnati in 1942. He wrote six religious books from 1932 through 1941 and contributed many articles to magazines and for pamphlets.

He is survived by a brother, Charles E. Elbert of Forest Hills, New York, and a sister, Mrs. George Van Liew of New Brunswick, New Jersey.

-30-