

EULOGY FOR BROTHER ARCADIUS, C.F.X.

*If you allow yourself
to be formed by God
through the common,
ordinary,
unspectacular
flow of everyday life,
you will gradually experience
a liberation and a freedom
never before imagined.*

To appreciate the magnificence of Br. Arcadius's 88 years, let's look at what was ordinary and unspectacular in Arcy's life.

Arcadius was a collector.

He collected
postage stamps,
photos and photo albums,
greeting cards - both cards received in the past and cards to send in the future,
pipes - the kind that are smoked - and the accompanying paraphernalia,
gadgets - staple removers, clocks, thermometers and pedometers,
African art,
religious images,
newspaper clippings about alumni of St. John's Prep and St. Mary's in Lynn,
news articles about lefthandedness,
books on Lithuania,
books on Church history,
books on Africa.

And he constantly gave things away.

Like the Blessed Virgin Mary, he held much in his heart.
But he was always ready to open his heart and he shared what was within:
his faith in God,
his joy,
his knowledge,
his memories,
his delight,
his anxieties and complaints.

Often, when telling a story, Arcadius could seem to be upset about something that never happened – but which *almost* happened – a half century ago. And yet, with a friendly reminder to *let go*, he would quickly let go, spring back, and move on to another topic.

In 1998, from Congo, I managed to call my parents on a high tech satellite phone that had been left in my custody. It was the last time I spoke with my father before he died. I spoke longer with Arcadius, who was visiting him at our home. Article 13 of our Constitutions reads, “The brothers shall show special consideration and solicitude for the sick and the aged of the community.” What Arcadius did for my parents, he also did for me. When he was healthy, Arcadius was a leading practitioner of Article 13.

Though we each spent a quarter century or more in Africa, we were together there only once, in December 2000, shortly after my arrival in Kenya. Fifteen years after his departure from Kenya, Arcadius returned there with the General Superior Br. Matthew Burke, Kenyan veteran Br. Mike Hegarty, and new missionary Br. Phil Spoelker for the dedication of our formation house in Bungoma, St. Joseph Centre.

During his month-long visit to the region where he had lived, in the country’s far west, he met up with dozens of former students, many of them priests, brothers, or sisters. Their gratitude and affection were striking. In the ensuing years, both in Bungoma and in Nairobi, I kept on meeting men and women that he had taught, who always remembered him fondly, with anecdotes that I could never retell with the same rich detail that Arcadius could muster up decades after the fact. A priest in Kakamega Diocese once told me he even had a nephew named Arcadius – after our Arcadius – but we then discovered that the family hadn’t got the spelling right. The next time I saw him, he said his nephew had corrected the spelling of his name. A namesake of Arcadius lives on in Kenya.

I have met several elderly Sisters of Mary of the Kakamega Diocese who credited Br. Arcadius with helping them learn to be good students early in their religious formation.

When I first arrived in Zaïre in 1985, I discovered that apart from General Superiors and their Vicars, the American brother best known to the Belgian brothers and the older Zairians (now Congolese), was Arcadius, who visited Br. Victor Kazadi when Victor was a student in Kinshasa, and who visited the Flemish and Zairian brothers in Likasi and Lubumbashi, in Katanga Province. These places are on opposite ends of the country. I can well imagine Arcadius transcending the language barrier like a disciple at Pentecost.

His visit marked one of the few contacts between our missions in Kenya and Congo until we stepped up collaboration in the 21st Century.

At our recent General Chapter meeting in Rome, thirty-four brothers participated. Seventeen of these were Americans and seventeen were Africans, from both Congo and Kenya. And most of the African Xaverians have already spent time living in each others’ countries. Living to witness this development gave Arcadius clear joy.

In 1983, Arc was happily reunited with Br. Victor Kazadi when they both attended a General Chapter in England, representing Kenya and Zaïre. In 1988, when Br. Placide Ngoie came to the U.S. for the first time, Arc delighted in being able to welcome him and later the many African brothers who would follow, including eventually Chapter delegates, graduate students, and General Council members. And he welcomed Victor several times more.

Two years ago Arcadius passed through troubling bouts of dementia. The daydreams or delusions that he recounted often involved African Xaverians, indicating happily where he had left a big share of his heart. Almost miraculously, with the stabilizing of his sugar, his oxygen, and other functions, he regained his mental acumen, and this year he became once again a voracious reader.

Arcadius, today we bid you farewell as you rejoin your parents Stanley and Anna, your sister Alice, your brothers-in-law Joe and Ed, and other family members in eternal life, and as you join your brothers in the cemetery that you watched over with such care. We pray for Aaron Kelley, the St. John's Prep Eagle Scout, who brought you joy by cleaning our headstones and planting daffodils; we pray for the donor who enabled the current renovation of the cemetery with new grass and walls and walkways, even if it's not quite ready for your arrival; we pray for your sister Doris Alkonis Rogalski, whose devotion to her little brother has been constant since you were born; we pray for the Prep Librarians who accompanied and encouraged you in recent decades: Marge, Jennifer, Maryann, and others; we pray for our Xaverian House nurse Robin Rowell, who has done so much to keep you well and with us, and for the staffs of the many hospitals and nursing homes where you have found care these last few years.

Arcadius, we have loved you and you have loved us. *Kwa heri ! Goodbye.*

Brother David P. Mahoney, C.F.X.
St. Richard's Church, Danvers, Massachusetts
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