

OLIER MEDAL PRESENTATION

Today we have remembered all of our alumni of St. Mary's and St. Charles – those both living and deceased.

At this time in our program I would like to recall a member of the class of 1953 and a faculty member at St. Mary's from 1959 to 1971 – Father Raymond E. Brown

Ray died, early by human standards but, of course, at the right time in God's plan, on August 8, 1998—just ten years ago and just ten weeks after his 70th birthday.

Ray has left a number of striking legacies as a scholar-teacher, a faithful priest and a dedicated Sulpician.

Ray was a consummate scholar and teacher. While he began his teaching career at the high school level (which he claimed helped him to hone his teaching ability) he spent most of his life teaching at the graduate level. His early teaching years were spent here at St. Mary's with seminarians and then later he taught graduate students at Union Theological in New York as well as the The Gregorian University and The Biblicum in Rome.

He was an enormously insightful and productive scholar who gained an international reputation by the time he was forty years old. His first published work was for his master's degree in philosophy at The Catholic University of America in 1949, entitled "A Scholastic Investigation of the Time-Space Continuum of Relativity." This thesis was followed by an important STD dissertation on the *sensus plenior* in 1955 and then by his doctoral dissertation from Johns Hopkins University in 1958 entitled "The Semitic Background of the Pauline *Mysterion*."

It was, however, his major works on the Gospel and Letters of John in the Anchor Bible Series that led to his international reputation by the time he was forty years old. The companion volumes of *The Birth of the Messiah* and *The Death of the Messiah* marked his middle years as a scholar. At the same time as he published scholarly works related to the New Testament, Ray also showed a great interest in aiding his fellow priests in their task of preaching the Word of God. His popular monographs on preaching covered the entire lectionary cycle and have been recently republished by Collegeville Press in a single volume entitled *Christ in the Gospels of the Liturgical Year*. The works of his later years include his monumental *An Introduction to the New Testament* and the posthumous publication of *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* edited by Frank Moloney. A list of his publication prepared by Father Michael Barre, S.S. in 2005 runs over thirty pages of small print.

Another aspect of Ray's legacy that continues at St. Mary's is The Raymond E. Brown Center in the library with its Johannine Collection. Housed as a special collection in an attractive glassed-in space are books related to Johannine literature and the Second Temple period. Ray left these books from his personal collection to St. Mary's along with a generous endowment to continue to add to this important collection.

All of these aspects of his legacy accompany his deep commitment as a priest and preacher of the gospel in many places over his years in ministry. He took seriously the statement of the Second Vatican Council that the primary task of the priest of the preacher of the Word. Parishioners at St. Mary's, Govans in Baltimore still remember his Sunday homilies in the 1960's.

There is a final aspect of Ray's legacy that we wish to highlight in a special way today, that is, the formation of future biblical scholars in the Society of St. Sulpice. In his many years of teaching,

Ray paid great attention to all of his students but two of these students who are alumni of St. Mary's and members of the Society of St. Sulpice have walked in Ray's footsteps as biblical scholars in their own right. They are Father John Kselman, S.S. of the class of 1967 and Father Michael Barré, S.S. of the class of 1970.

Both Fathers Kselman and Barré were students of Father Brown as seminarians. They listened to Father Brown in the classroom, in the chapel, and in his tutoring sessions for them in Hebrew. Then they heeded the words of the Book of Proverbs, "Hear son and receive my words. On the way of wisdom I direct you. I lead you in straight forward paths. Hold fast to instruction. Never let Lady Wisdom go. Keep her; she is your life." (Prov. 4:10-13).

Both John and Michael pursued the acquisition of wisdom found in the scriptures, especially in the Old Testament. They both went to prestigious graduate schools and earned degrees in Near Eastern Studies and Semitic languages just like their teacher, Father Brown. Father Kselman graduated from Harvard University and Father Barré from Johns Hopkins University.

They both have taught here at St. Mary's and at the Sulpician seminary in the west, St. Patrick's, Menlo Park, CA. Father Kselman was on the faculty at St. Mary's from 1971 to 1977, followed by four years at St. Patrick's. He then taught in the Semitics Department at The Catholic University of America for six years and seventeen at Weston School of Theology. He now serves again on the faculty at St. Patrick's Seminary.

Father Barré taught at St. Patrick's from 1970 to 1973 and then again from 1978-1992. He returned to St. Mary's in 1992 and has remained here – a fixture so to speak with our students--teaching the Pentateuch, Psalms and Wisdom literature to multiple seminary generations.

Both Fathers Kselman and Barré have published scholarly books and articles concerning topics related to the Old Testament. Father Kselman has over 50 articles in print including two in the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. He is now working on a book for the Yale Anchor Bible series on the Psalms.

Father Barré has also published more than 50 articles over the years as well as three books, including a ground breaking monograph on the Psalm of Hezekiah in the Book of Isaiah.

Both have also served with distinction in organizations and societies devoted to the study of scripture. Father Kselman was the editor of the Catholic Biblical Quarterly and was Associate editor for several terms of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Father Barré has served as editor of the Catholic Biblical Association Monograph Series and has been a member of the editorial board of the Catholic Biblical Quarterly and the Journal of Biblical Literature. In 1999-2000 he was president of the Catholic Biblical Association.

If you have heard these two biblical scholars preach you also know that as priests they are deeply immersed in God's Word and convey its meaning for us with wisdom and with power. Each of them has followed the words of the Book of Proverbs to seek wisdom and follow after it.

It is for all of these reasons that their alma mater, St. Mary's Seminary and University awards each of them the Jean Jacques Olier Distinguished Alumnus Medal.

Named after the founder of the Society of Sulpice the award is given to alumni who through extraordinary contribution to the church and community embody the mission of St. Mary's to form priests after the heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd.