

Remarks at the Wake for Brother Dominic Berardelli, F.S.C.

Bishop John, relatives, and friends. Welcome this evening to everyone as we remember and celebrate the life of our dear Brother Dominic, who was Uncle John to his family. A special welcome to Brother Dominic's sister Maryann who was able to make the journey from back East with her daughter, Linda, to be with us this evening.

Welcome also to Brother Dom's niece, Rita, her friend, Dr. Marshall, her cousin Mary Kay, and Mary Kay's mother, Mary. We gather together as Brothers; family; students and alumni; colleagues; friends and loved ones. Brother Dom had a long day of physical trial on December 27, the Feast of his patron saint, John the Beloved Disciple, and his passing was in the first hour of the Feast of the Holy Innocents. These feast days are noteworthy. There is a passage in the Gospel reading for the Feast of Saint John, which suits Dominic very well. The women had reported the empty tomb to the eleven apostles and so Peter and John go to see for themselves. The Fourth Evangelist reports "They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in." [close quote] Traditional and contemporary commentators like to see in the race to the tomb between Peter and John, two aspects of the Church; one is ecclesial authority, represented by Peter, and the other is love, represented by John. The point is that love always gets to the Lord first. It was easy to think of this passage as we gathered around Dominic in his last hours. He was a great lover and he was greatly loved. To quote just two of the many encomia posted on social media at his passing:

Brother Dom has always been THE face of welcome, warmth, love and support for me at SMC.

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Thank you for touching so many hearts with your joyful spirit.

John Berardelli began life as the youngest member of a family of Italian immigrants to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. His parents and older brothers had come from San Mango d'Aquino, in the region of Calabria. His father and brothers were cobblers. John Berardelli was educated by the Brothers at Central Catholic High School in Pittsburg. His was a normal childhood. His first job was in a local pharmacy as a teenage soda clerk and all-around assistant to the shopkeeper. With the blessing of his family and an abundance of food packed by his mother, he entered the Christian Brothers. After one year of teaching high school in Arlington, Virginia, he answered the call to teach in the Philippines, a decision that was hard on his mother. With her eventual blessing, and, I imagine, more food for the journey, he left for what would turn out to be a most formative experience. Brother Dominic Aquinas, as he was known in the early part of his apostolate, found Christ waiting for him in the children, their families, and his colleagues in the Philippines. By the time he completed his work there, Dominic had become principal of La Salle Green Hills, an elementary school in Metro Manila, with the reputation of being one of the best schools in the Philippines. Many of us here remember fondly in the 1990's, Brother Dom receiving the Kundirana choir from the Green Hills High School during their visits to the U.S., and the wonderful concerts they mounted for us.

Dominic did not experience the Philippines with an attitude of "Americans to the rescue." He learned from the elderly Anglo Brothers who brought the Institute to the Islands that they had come with the determination to turn the work of human and Christian education of the young over to newly-trained Filipino Brothers as soon as numbers would allow. That commitment has led to the emergence of the Philippines as a thriving center of Lasallian education for all of the Pacific and Southeast Asia and for the entire Institute. Brother Aquinas spent the last years in the Philippines in our school in Iligan City, serving the economically disadvantaged.

Dom came back to the States in 1970 and soon asked to be re-assigned to the West Coast since his mother had relocated there, with his brothers, Al and Hank, his sisters-in-law, Ronnie and Carol, and his niece Rita. Carol's family had preceded the Berardellis. Downey, California, became Dom's home away from home. He was assigned to La Salle Pasadena and soon came to the notice of the Archdiocese. After a short stint as associate director of Education there, he was invited by the newly appointed Bishop of Orange to join his staff.

The next sixteen years were full of administrative responsibilities for the Church and the Institute. After four years as the founding Superintendent of Schools for the new Diocese of Orange, he served in the Brothers' Administration of the District of San Francisco as Director of Education, with the responsibility of visiting our schools and giving interviews to the individual Brothers in the field. I remember fondly his meetings with me as a young teacher at De La Salle High School in Concord. Always an innovator

in tune with the outreach to Partners even before we had the language for such a thing, Dom extended the invitation to faculty, beyond the Brothers, to meet with him. I remember, also, it was during these years that he introduced a freshly-minted Lasallian by the name of Mary Brennan, who served as the District's first and only Alcohol & Drug Educator for many years and remained one of Dom's closest lifelong friends. Dom's next assignment was as District Treasurer, a job he fulfilled with scrupulous integrity. In this capacity, he hired a young alumna, Jeanne DeMatteo, as Assistant District Comptroller.

At the prompting of the then Visitor, Mark Murphy, Dominic accepted an invitation, in 1986, to go to Rome as Co-Director of the Office of International Lasallian Cooperation, *Service de Cooperation LaSallienne Internationale* (commonly known by its acronym, SECOLI). It is not an overstatement to say that Dom transformed that office and the Motherhouse as well. His loving service to worldwide projects in need was matched with his wise and instructive stewardship. Every renewal of monetary support was contingent on a full and accurate accounting of how money was spent. Back in Rome, Dom hired the first-ever woman to serve in any capacity at the Generalate beyond cook or housekeeper. Mrs. Laura Schileo joined Brother Dominic and his Co-Director, Brother Maurice Richit, as the administrative assistant of SECOLI. Thirty years later, the Motherhouse now employs women throughout its administration. If you are getting the impression that Brother Dominic was a pioneer within a strongly male culture in seeing and promoting the professional acumen of women, you would be right on target. Dom's loving heart, ever present to needs wherever they might be found, also led him to

communal advocacy and personal support for the migrant Eritreans working and sometimes living at the Generalate. Recognizing Dominic's special qualities of leadership, the Superior General John Johnson appointed him Delegate to the countries of Southern Asia, especially India, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. These postings left strong impressions, echoed today anytime one meets Brothers from these countries. Brother Dom truly had a world of enduring friendships.

In 1995, Dom came to the College, where he would serve for the remainder of his life, with a very important three-year hiatus at De La Salle North Catholic High School, where he flourished in the company of the students, families, and staff of that community. Indefatigable would be a good way to describe his work here at Saint Mary's: as Special Assistant to the President; Community Director; Liaison with the Guild; Advancement Officer; Jan Term teacher; APASA mentor; Parent Relations Director; Campus Tour Guide Extraordinaire; Food line server; Dispenser of Ashes to Oliver Hall on Ash Wednesday; Greeter of first year students every August; and the first smiling face most visitors met when they entered the welcome center.

One of the privileges of knowing Dom was witnessing his deep faith-life. In key moments of transition, including his recent declining health, Dominic engaged in direct, questioning, but eventually trusting dialogue with God. This is not to paint a pious icon of Dom, but rather to recall the real and sometimes painful conversations about God's will in his life.

Dom loved the prayer life of the Brothers. In community, he would print color photos of saints of the day to place on our altar. At his work place on campus, he organized prayer services for staff & students, which he held in the lobby of Jerome West Hall.

He was always emotional when it came to the Faith and its the special devotions. He could be seen in the streets of Trastevere in Rome at the July procession of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, crying and waving his handkerchief at the Madonna as she passed; and doing the same as the great bronze statue of the Founder arrived on the horizon of St. Mary's Road on the flatbed truck, emerging like some ancient Greek Titan. The origin of the campus shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe needs special mention here. The late Jessica Ortiz came to see him one day and said that the chapel had so many mementos to Mary but still needed something to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe. Dominic agreed, of course, and asked Jessica to go home and pray with her friends and classmates for a donor. The next day he got a call from an old friend of the College whose mother wanted to give a sizeable unrestricted gift to the College. Brother Dominic called Jessica back to his office, asked her if she had prayed. The fruit of those prayers, of that gift, and of Dominic's piety, graces the back left alcove of the chapel, as the Guadalupe Window. Today in heaven Brother Dominic, Jessica, and the donors all have the joy of being in the presence of Our Lady.

I am mindful of a thousand precious personal memories of times shared with him, the telling of which would keep us here very late. I suspect that most if not all of us here

can think the same of personal memories. When I asked one friend what she remembers most, she reminded me of something she once heard from a staff member at the Provincial Offices here on campus, who told her "There's nothing I would not do for Brother Dom." The reason being that any time Brother Dom asked her or anyone for any special favor or extra task, there would always, always follow a personal thank you note in an envelope the next day. I think we all can recall, as well, how thoughtful and sensitive he was about resources and getting them to people in special need. The outpouring of support he had at the end reflects the reciprocal love for him. Thanks go out especially to his care-givers at the Mont. To Mary Kelly who insisted that he never be alone in his last days. Her constant vigilance at the hospital reminded me of his niece Rita's round-the-clock vigilance at John Muir Hospital in 2011, when Dom had his first serious illness. To Brother Victor-Kenneth, his loving Director at the Holy Family Community; to Jeanne DeMatteo and Sally Jamison, who sat with him his last day; to the Brothers of his community and the Provincial Community who gathered by his bedside; to the Brothers who journeyed to Napa to be with him in his last hours; to Jim Donahue for his beautiful tribute posted to the College; to the College and Mont staffs for all the arrangements this evening and tomorrow; and to everyone, who by messages and attendance tonight, have lifted the burdens of solitary sorrows at Dom's passing: Thank you.

Dom lived with a big heart, open to all. And we will miss him. The infectious joy with which he lived and the legacy of love that he left, give us all the courage not to

lament too much. Such life and vigor must only be a foretaste of heavenly love and joy. Dom died a little after midnight on the Feast of the Holy Innocents. [Now Dom was certainly holy, but maybe it's hard to accuse him of innocence.] In so many ways, though, he showed us by a life lived well what it means to become like children in our trust in God. The collect for that Feast can be paraphrased to fit our Brother to a T:

O God, whom [Dominic] confessed and proclaimed on this day, not by speaking but by dying [in your grace], grant, we pray, that the faith in you which we confess with our lips, may also speak through our manner of life, [after the example of our Brother Dominic].

Whenever we might find ourselves down or discouraged, Dominic, we can remember you. We know that, freed from the physical trials you suffered at the end, you are now back at work, in whatever heavenly shape the Bromobile takes, rushing from one end of heaven to the next on our behalf. Thank you for your friendship and your shining example of Brotherhood.

Saint John Baptist De La Salle,....

Live Jesus in our hearts....