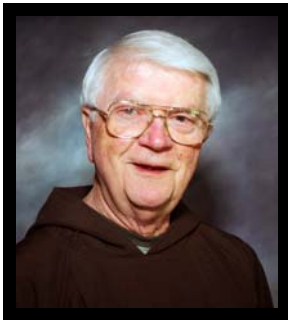


Necrology

Malcolm Maloney

1927-2010



The author of this necrology of Malcolm Maloney is his brother by blood and in fraternity. Therefore the comments may be biased.

Malcolm was born on 16 May 1927 to John and Virginia Maloney. He was baptized John Patrick but was known to all as "Pat." He was the second of four siblings; the first was our sister, Mary. Jim and Joe, the twins, came upon the scene on 19 January 1931. Our father was a medical doctor at "Old Grace Hospital." We lived in

Detroit, Michigan not far from Henry Ford Hospital on West Grand Blvd.

We were active members of St. Agnes parish. Our father was an usher and we boys were servers. We all attended St. Agnes grade school. We all played musical instruments. None of us was really proficient. Malcolm played the violin in grade school, then the trombone in the high school band. He dabbled with a small instrument called the "Jews Harp." His first love, though, was the harmonica which he played almost until the day he died.

There were a good number of kids in our neighborhood, mostly Catholic. We basically enjoyed one another, playing games long forgotten: Run My Sheepy Run, Duck on the Rock, Kick the Can, and Tappy on the Ice Box. One day my twin brother, a few of our friends and I found a dead cat. We decided to have a funeral. We put the cat on a wagon, paraded to the neighborhood vacant lot which served as our softball field. We buried the cat under home plate. Come Spring, sliding home became a little messy. Malcolm and his friends became furious.

Having graduated from grade school, Malcolm entered Catholic Central High School, an all-boys high school taught by the by the Basilian Fathers. The school was then located behind Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. From what I gather he was a mediocre student. I heard he was expelled from a class for goofing off. A professor bet him five

dollars that he would not amount to “a hill of beans.” In the 1945 school year book, under his graduation picture it is noted that he was “a social butterfly....may be seen at all the prominent dances.” I am sure this made my parents proud! These were the war years of 1941-1945.

A young man at the age of 18 was automatically conscripted into military service. Malcolm turned 18 in 1945 and was not around to receive his diploma that June. One of the reasons he said he joined the U.S. Navy was that he wanted to sleep in a bed, not a fox hole. War was very much on the minds of the young men. The attitude therefore was, “Enjoy life while you can.” Malcolm was assigned to a ship but never saw active duty.

Our family moved to Southfield, Michigan in 1945. When Malcolm was discharged from the navy he returned home. He enrolled at the University of Detroit intending to pursue a degree in dentistry. However, there was another undercurrent running through his life. As he told it, one early morning he was on the deck of his ship and had an over-whelming experience of the magnificence of God in creation. Although he was pursuing a degree in dentistry, he was toying with the possibility of a religious vocation.

Our family was very close to the Franciscans. Duns Scotus College, the house of studies for the St. John the Baptist Province (Cincinnati) was near our home. Our parish, St. Michael's, was staffed by the Franciscans. Our Dad was house doctor for the college. He had an office there and weekly office hours. He had a deep affection for the college. Malcolm seriously considered joining them. Under the advice of Ignatius Brady, OFM he went to the seminary at Kitchener, Ontario to study Greek. This was a required make-up course for those wishing to enter the seminary. After a year at Kitchener he would enter the Franciscans. The class at Kitchener consisted of veterans discerning their religious vocations.

A young veteran in the class was considering joining the Capuchins. Malcolm had no idea who the Capuchins were. This person piqued Malcolm's curiosity. The family knew nothing about the Capuchins. The only previous encounter with the Capuchins was when our father was a young doctor and contracted a serious blood infection. It was feared that he would have to have his arm amputated. Our dad's mother and aunt visited Solanus Casey for prayers. Solanus told them that his arm would not have to be amputated. However, he did suffer a slight deformity. In those days Solanus was not yet a household name.

After an interview at St. Bonaventure Monastery, Malcolm decided to enter the novitiate. This decision did not sit too well with my father. He was somewhat disappointed that his son would not join the Franciscans. One evening Malcolm broke the news. Our dad pointed out to Malcolm that the Capuchins wore beards.

Malcolm responded, "I know."

Our dad replied, "Well. It's your face."

Malcolm was invested as a Capuchin on 31 August 1948. He made his first profession on 1 September 1949 with Ignatius Brady, OFM attending the ceremony. His philosophy studies were at St. Mary Friary in Garrison, New York. His theology studies were at St. Anthony Friary in Marathon, Wisconsin. He was ordained a priest on 8 September 1955. In those days the extra-curricular activities of a seminarian were pretty limited and in-house.

Malcolm's priestly ministries were significant and varied. He was involved in ministry at our various retreat houses. He was hospital chaplain at Providence Hospital, Detroit. He was the first full time Catholic chaplain at Marquette Prison (8 years). He was the first Capuchin pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Saginaw, Michigan (5 years). He also served as pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Detroit. That assignment lasted less than one year (July 1980-May 1981).

Malcolm's short time at St. John's was his most contentious assignment. He arrived at the parish one week after he learned that it was to be demolished. In June 1980 Mayor Coleman Young and General Motors Chairman Thomas Murphy announced that a new \$500 million Cadillac plant would be built in the center of Detroit, a site that would include the northern third of the Poletown neighborhood. To accommodate GM Detroit officials would have to obtain title to 1400 homes, 144 businesses, and 16 churches using the legal process of eminent domain.

Immaculate Conception and St. John the Evangelist were among the churches slated for demolition, along with St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, which was located across from Malcolm's parish. The pastor and parishioners of Immaculate Conception fought the destruction of their church to the bitter end with public demonstrations, sit-ins, and lock-outs. Malcolm and the parishioners at St. John's took a more conciliatory stance. Rather than fight the inevitable they concentrated on helping people to move. This was also the position of the Archdiocese of Detroit. It did not sit well with everyone. St. John's was picketed and Malcolm received hate mail.

The final Mass at St. John the Evangelist was held on 24 May 1981. It was to be a Mass of reconciliation and healing. The press was not allowed and only parishioners could attend. Through a form of lottery the parishioners took home souvenirs from the church. After Mass there was a dinner dance at the Polish Century Club hosted by the parish and paid by the archdiocese. Some parishioners formed a small support community called "St. John's Outside the Walls," which met monthly for Mass and a social. In time the members were fully absorbed into other parishes.

The sad conclusion to this whole episode was that the courts eventually ruled that the City of Detroit's use of eminent domain was illegal because it was used to benefit a private enterprise (GM). The projected number of new jobs never materialized and car production at the Poletown plant never reached the hoped-for capacity. General Motors did not revitalize the city.*

Toward the beginning of this necrology I mentioned that under Malcolm's graduation picture in his high school yearbook he was noted to be "a social butterfly." We smile when we read that. I'm sure that comment embarrassed Malcolm. However, that was his gift. I also mentioned that a priest at Catholic Central High School bet him five dollars that he would never amount to "a hill of beans." Early in his ministry, however, Malcolm was invited by the faculty of Catholic Central to give the commencement address. His talk to the graduating seniors was basically a pep talk to the academically challenged. After his presentation a faculty member walked up the center aisle and gave him five dollars amidst a standing ovation.

Malcolm was a "people person." He was approachable and carried with him his deep Capuchin commitment whether in social gatherings or in ministry in the traditional sense. In 2009 Malcolm was named a "Priest of Integrity" by the Mid-Michigan affiliate of Voice of the Faithful. The honor was presented at a gathering of friars and friends at St. Bonaventure Monastery by Thomas Gumbleton (aux. bishop of Detroit). My brother died on 23 July 2011.

This was Malcolm. May he rest in peace.

— *Joseph Maloney*

* For more information about the Poletown controversy, see Jeannie Wylie, *Poletown: Community Betrayed*, University of Illinois Press, 1989.