

Brother Edgar Hoffman (1928 - 2013)

By Fr. James Mason, C.Ss.R.

The life of the much beloved Brother Edgar Hoffman was remembered and celebrated by a large community of fellow Redemptorists, family and friends gathered at the Mass of Christian burial in St. Patrick's church.

Brother Edgar died suddenly of a heart attack while crossing a downtown Toronto street on October 11.

At the October 17 Mass, presided over by Provincial Superior Mark Miller, Archbishop Gerard Pettipas of Grouard-McLennan noted in his homily: "Edgar became well-known and respected wherever he lived. He touched the lives of many and was widely-sought for his intercessory prayer and humble wisdom."

On a personal note, the archbishop recalled that Brother Edgar taught him to drive. "He was always so patient."

Edgar Alphonse Hoffman, ninth in a family of 12 children, was born in Zurich, Ontario, a farming community near the southern shores of Lake Huron, on March 13, 1928. His father, Simon Hoffman, was of German descent and his mother, Caroline Regier, was French-Canadian. Baptized and confirmed in St. Boniface church in Zurich, he attended the local country school until the age of 14. Edgar grew up to be a big, healthy and strong young man. An early sense of helping others led him to work with the youth of his parish and join the Holy Name Society.

After school and for the next 12 years, Edgar worked on the family farm and drove a highway snow plow during the winter months, a cement truck at times and later transport trucks between Kitchener and Toronto.



Bro. Edgar Hoffman, C.Ss.R.

Born: March 13, 1928

Professed: March 15, 1957

Died: October 11, 2013

He described the beginning of his journey toward his religious vocation: "It was on a Sunday afternoon, while out for a drive, I stopped in for a visit to this (St. Boniface) church. After I got in the car again I turned on the car radio and Father M. Meehan (pictured at right with Bro. Edgar) was speaking on the Life of a Brother. I said to the person with me, 'That's



what I'm going to be.' This person replied, 'Oh yes I can see you going for a Brother.' At this time I did not have any more intention than the man in the moon." (of becoming a Brother).

During the Kitchener-Toronto runs, he regularly stopped for a visit at one of the churches along the way, reflecting on: "How wonderful it would be to visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament many times during the day and get away from the rough language."

The thought of becoming a Brother stayed with Edgar. Then: "On one Sunday during Mass at the sermon I picked up a Madonna Magazine which was near me and I saw a picture of St. Gerard, a Redemptorist Lay Brother. This is how I became a Redemptorist."

In May of 1955 Edgar attended a triduum at St. Boniface given by Fr. Martin Foley in honour of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. "I talked to Father Foley and he sent me some information. After this I had a talk with Father Bedard and Father Davis. "

Edgar arrived at St. Mary's College on September 24, 1955 after a send-off party organized by the Holy Name Society and the Young Peoples Club. He recalled that "the Holy Name Society gave me a wrist watch and the Young People's Club gave me a bible, which was beautiful."

“I liked it at Brockville. I did not get lonesome; I suppose the reason why was because there was always something to do. I worked outside on the farm, then in the kitchen. I found the kitchen interesting. I had many surprises at Brockville. The six months went by quickly.”

After six months at St. Mary's, Edgar was invested in the Redemptorists' habit on March 14, 1956 and began his year of Novitiate, as part of a large class of Novices, at Marianella, L'Abord a Plouffe, outside Montreal, where he professed his first vows on March 15, 1957. He chose Simon, his father's baptismal name, and returned to Edgar after Vatican II.

Edgar's farming skills were much appreciated at St. Mary's College in Brockville, St. Gerard's Novitiate in Keswick (1959-1972) and at Holy Redeemer College (1972-1994) in Windsor. The many hours of plowing and planting offered Edgar time for quiet reflection and prayer. His love of the land easily transferred into a love of serving people.

As sacristan at St. Patrick's in Toronto (1994-2013), he fulfilled his desire to spend time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. On answering the telephone or door as porter, he gave expression his caring nature in the respectful and gentle ways he welcomed all, even those ringing the doorbell during mealtime. In community, he helped where needed and always found ways of finding humour in both the calm and rough times that are the daily experience of people living together.

When introduced to a new acquaintance, often he would ask if they would like to see a photo of his pride and joy. From his wallet, a photo was shown of two containers – PRIDE, the furniture polish and JOY, a bottle of dishwashing liquid. Laughter always followed.



At St. Pat's, he experienced some of his best years while being part of the team that ran the Sunday night Out of the Cold winter program for street people in the basement of St. Pat's. At times more than 100 people would eat, sleep and keep warm there on very cold, blustery winter nights. In recent years, he was part of "Becoming Neighbours," a program that helped refugees to Canada.

Much of what Br. Edgar became as a man of continual prayer and quiet service flowed from his time as a member of the Renewal Team at Holy Redeemer College in Windsor, where religious programs were provided, including Marriage Encounter, Engaged Encounter, preached retreats and the Charismatic Renewal Movement.

As Edgar noted: "Christ as the centre of my life became a reality when I was prayed over for the release of the Holy Spirit in my life. At retreat, I discovered that it was not what I was doing for God that mattered but what God was doing for me. I had believed that if I did a lot of good things for God, God would love me. As a result of my conversion, I became convinced that God loves me and that his love is pure gift. Thus, my life changed and I acquired an incredible desire to know Jesus more deeply. ... Silence and solitude with God touches my very being."

He is survived by his sister, Sister Angela, OSU, Wilfred (Stella), Mary Ducharme, Doreen Ducharme, Irene Hoffman, Lil Martens (Martin) as well as nieces and nephews.

His body was buried in the Redemptorist plot in Mount Hope cemetery in Toronto.