

VILLA SAINT-JEAN

Fribourg, Suisse

Reverend John Gorman, S.M.

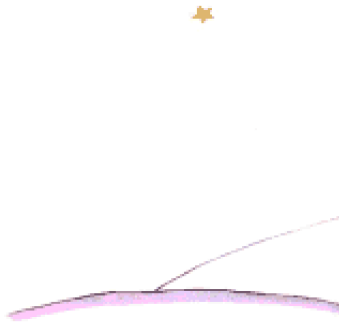


Photo: 1967

Father Gorman was chaplain in 1966. His death mountain climbing the week before the 1967 school year began was a tremendous shock to the Villa Saint-Jean and the nearby seminary.

BIOGRAPHY

John Gorman was born in Springfield, Illinois, on November 7, 1925. He was the oldest of five boys.

The Gorman family moved to Granite City and decided to send John to Central Catholic High School in East St. Louis despite the long bus ride there each day.

"My early impressions of the Brothers," John later recalled, "had a profound influence later in deciding my vocation. After three months of my freshman year, I admired the Brothers (not just one, but all of them) more than any men I knew. . . They seemed to me at the time to be the first men I had met who lived and acted all of the time as if their whole life were for God.

John graduated at the top of his class in 1943. He turned down several excellent scholarship opportunities to enter the Novitiate. A scholarship to Cornell for chemical engineering was the most attractive offer for John personally. However, once he decided to become a Brother of Mary, he easily gave up the scholarship offers.

John entered the novitiate in July of 1943 and spent a very happy year at Galesville, Wisconsin. His scholasticate years were spent in studying for his college degree at Maryhurst (one year) and at Mount Saint John (one and a half years). After graduation from the University of Dayton in January, 1947, he was assigned to the postulate at Maryhurst under the directorship of Brother Julius Kreshel. The following semester John was assigned to

teach at Coyle High School in Kirkwood, Missouri. At the end of his first year at Coyle, John was permitted to take perpetual vows in the Society of Mary.

Brother John spent three years at Coyle High School teaching Religion, English, and Latin. Sodality and recruitment were his principal extra-curricular activities. In 1950 he was assigned to De Andreis High School and in 1951 to Central Catholic High School in East St. Louis, his Alma Mater.

John entered the seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland in the fall of 1952. His ordination on July 22, 1956, was followed by studies for a doctorate in Theology.

Father Gorman returned to the United States in August, 1958, and was assigned to teach at Chaminade in Clayton, Missouri. The following year he taught at Central Catholic in San Antonio, Texas.

In 1961 Father Gorman was assigned to the Scholasticate in San Antonio to serve the young Brothers as chaplain. It seemed to John that he was finally settling into a work made for him.

Things were not as settled as John had presumed. Within the first few months of his stay in the Scholasticate, John was informed that provincial superiors intended to send him ahead for a doctorate in Canon Law. This intention was confirmed by Very Rev. James Young in April, 1962. John made arrangements to return to Europe during the summer. He arrived in Rome on September 19, 1962 and began his studies in Canon Law.

In the fall of 1965, Father Gorman went to Villa St. Jean to complete the writing of his thesis and to lend his priestly services to the Brothers and students there. Meanwhile, the Province was anticipating his return to the States. He was named to the Provincial Office of Zeal and was to assume these duties as soon as his thesis was terminated. But the thesis had to be written in Latin and the topic turned out to be much more complicated than anticipated. John was writing on the canonical aspects of the Office and Powers of the Provincial Administration of the Society of Mary. He discovered that this topic touches practically all aspects of the religious life in some way.

Although the final touches of his thesis were not yet finished, the essential work was completed by the summer of 1966. Father Gorman assisted at the General Chapter of 1966 as a Canon Law expert. With the thesis so near completion, John planned to return to St. Louis in October, 1966, to take up his duties as Provincial Head of Zeal.

John had wanted to climb one last mountain before he left Switzerland for the United States. On a sunny Friday morning, August 26, 1966, John, Brother James Facette and Brother Don Ribbing set out by car for the Dent de Lyss, a mountain in the region of the Gruyere, south of Fribourg. They reached the summit at 3 p.m., remained a half hour, and then began their descent. Twenty minutes from the top John tumbled down the slope of the mountain and over a cliff.

Brother Don stayed with John while Brother Jim went down the mountain to call the Brothers at Fribourg and to get help. He went back up the mountain with a member of a mountain rescue team. A helicopter picked John off the mountainside at 6 p.m. and took his body to the Hospital of Riaz, near Bulle, capital of the Gruyere region.

Despite this early and tragic death, Father Gorman had lived a rich and beautiful life. [The Marycliff chapel in Glencoe was dedicated in his memory.]

[RETOUR AU MENU](#)