

## **Leo A. Murray, S.J. – A Remembrance**

*Make visible what, without you, might perhaps never have been seen.* – Robert Bresson

Born in Baltimore in 1931, Leo Murray entered the Jesuit Novitiate in 1949 after graduating from Loyola High School (now Loyola Blakefield). He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Weston College in Massachusetts and was ordained a priest in 1962. He received a licentiate of sacred theology from Woodstock College in Woodstock, Md., and a doctorate in sacred theology from the Institut Catholique de Paris. His thesis, "Cinema and Theology," studied the filmmaker Robert Bresson. He was a member of the Catholic Film Office in Brussels, sat on juries of the Berlin and Venice film festivals, and in 1966 was a technical adviser for the film "A Man for All Seasons."

Fr. Murray served from 1970 to 1973 at Loyola High School in Baltimore as president and headmaster, then as rector at Gonzaga High School in Washington, D.C., and then as parish administrator and pastor at St. Ignatius Church in Baltimore. From 1983 to 1986 he was director of communications for the archdiocese of Baltimore and from 1987 to 1990 was executive director of the Jesuit-sponsored Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture in London.

In the early 1990s, Fr. Murray was director of communications for the Jesuits' Maryland Province, served as a consultant for the center of continuing education of clergy at St. Mary's Seminary and University, led retreats, and was assistant director of the Preaching the Just Word program of the Woodstock Theological Center. Then, after a year as headmaster of St. Ignatius Loyola Academy in Baltimore, he moved to Philadelphia in 1995 to become associate pastor and then pastor of Old St. Joseph's Church. He came to Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown in 2003, where he served until 2015. Fr. Murray died on July 23, 2016. His last words, to those who were with him, were "I'm going up now."

What comes to mind when remembering Leo Murray? His kindness and generosity of course. His warm smile and welcoming grace. His resonant voice and deep wisdom. His gentleness and abiding sense of gratitude. His love of film and theater, of French food and the New York Times. To be sure, his gifts as a homilist and as a

spiritual director. One parishioner says, “No one could reassure me more of God’s abiding love and mercy than Fr. Murray.” Another says, “Fr. Leo knew words mattered, and he always had the right words – in a homily, in a personal conversation, in a book he recommended. It was in his personal encouragement for those who struggled that made a real difference to us all – not sympathy for how hard things were, but empathy and strength that together we could and would make a difference!” Another says, “He knew what social justice was and, so very importantly, he could speak about it and connect us to who it is that God wants us to be. I always felt a special lift when I saw him walk down the aisle.” A fellow Jesuit who had him as a spiritual guide says, “Why did I choose Leo to be my spiritual director? I knew he was kind, and I suspected, correctly, that he understood human weakness and would therefore be compassionate with me.”

Another Jesuit remembers a time he came to Washington to speak, and stayed the night before his talk at the Holy Trinity rectory. “As it happened,” he writes, “there were no other Jesuits in the community that Friday night. Leo was then in his 80s, but nonetheless asked in an email, ‘Would you like to be picked up at Union Station?’ I said I’d take a cab instead. He met me at the door of the community with a smile. ‘Let me take your bag, Jim,’ he said as he lugged it up the stairs. There was no dinner that night in the community, so ‘Let me take you out for a good meal.’ Leo took me to the Tombs, the well-known watering hole of Georgetown students. ‘My treat of course.’ We had a lovely dinner. Afterwards, ‘Let me make sure your room has everything you need.’ The next morning he made sure to give me a good breakfast, escort me to the talk, and make sure I made it in time to Union Station. Leo was the consummate host: gracious, thoughtful, kind.”

A prayer attributed to Pedro Arrupe, S.J., perhaps calls Father Leo to mind: “Above all give me that *sensus Christi* about which St. Paul speaks, that I may feel with your feelings, with the sentiments of your heart, which basically are love for your Father and love for all humankind. No one has shown more charity than you, giving your life for your friends, and with that *kenosis* of which St. Paul speaks. And I would like to imitate you not only in your feelings but also in everyday life, acting as far as possible, as you did.”

What follows is a collection of the typescripts of over 170 of Fr. Leo Murray's Sunday homilies from his years here at Holy Trinity. They date from 2004 through

2014, and they have been lightly edited for spelling and punctuation. These homilies say better than any words of ours who he was and what he believed.

In gratitude for all of Fr. Leo's gifts to us. May he rest in peace.

Peter Albert

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*July 23, 2017*