



Fr John Thornhill SM

13.5.1929 ~ 28.7.2019

Born 1929 in Ashgrove where nine other Marist priests were born, John went to Marist Brothers Ashgrove on the day it opened. The army took over the Ashgrove College during the war, so John went to Woodlawn. The music teacher at Woodlawn used to poke him with a nail file whenever he made a mistake, which was frequently, so he ran away. Captured, John was brought back by Fr John Webber. He went on to do reasonably well at school.

After seminary years Fr John studied further in Rome (Via Cernaia and Angelicum) with a doctoral thesis on Toynbee. He returned to work in the migrant parish in West Sunshine, Vic. Then followed sixteen years teaching in the seminary, six of them as rector followed by six years at director of the Aquinas Academy.

The next eighteen years were at Villa Maria teaching theology at CTU. In 1980-85 Fr John was a member of the International Theological Commission – along with Joseph Ratzinger, keeping JP II on the straight and narrow. In the late eighties he served several years on the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II). Serving on these commissions Fr John met some great minds.

He survived prostate cancer (1988), brain tumour (1994), melanoma (1995), bowel cancer (1999). These health issues caused Fr John to move from being a professional academic to grass roots work helping faith renewal in parishes. Working for a few years in Perth he made twenty DVDs on faith renewal in the spirit of Vatican II.

Fr John returned to Brisbane for his sunset years, reading theology and history for fun. He remarked, 'I may have another book in me; I am working on a study of the thought of Christopher Dawson. At 79, I have never been so deeply contented.'

After some years as a member of the Herston Marist community in Brisbane, Fr John moved to Sydney and the Maryvale/Montbel community where he lived before taking residence at Southern Cross Aged Care facility, Marsfield. He died there on Jul 28, 2019.

May he rest in peace.