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A Chronicle Profile

Cecilia Mushenheim

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A CHRONOLOGICAL PROFILE

CECILIA MUSHENHEIM, DAYTON, OH*

1911 June 23

Was born in Strasbourg, France, son of Albert and Justine (Illig) Koehler

1922-1927.

Attended Collège épiscopal Saint Étienne, Strasbourg; received Baccalauréat ès Lettres from the University of Strasbourg (1927)

1927 September 11

Entered the novitiate of the Society of Mary (Marianists) at St. Rémy-Signeult (Belgium) [Rev. Joseph Schellhorn, S.M., was Novice Master.]

Our spiritual life is rooted in the desire of living – “walking” – in the presence of the Lord... In the steps of Abraham, but at the sources of the New Alliance, Mary is our mother in faith. And the Church, faithful to the history of salvation, tells us to walk in the presence of God, following the grace which the Spirit is giving us through Mary, also present to her people. Without going into a detailed study of this Marian presence, we have to remember first that God created the visible and invisible world, foreseeing Christ and his mother, overcoming by this in advance the sin of the world. The Father modeled his creation with wisdom, looking to the beauty of Christ, His Son and of the mother whom He destined to him. Then we discover something of the beauty of the Son and of the mother in each fragment of the universe. From this presence of creation we pass to another order: the order of divine Love where Jesus and Mary are the models which guide the Spirit in his work of our sanctification... In her prayer the Church is led by the Spirit towards her Spouse, Jesus; with the Spirit she says, “Come!” (Ap 22,27). She follows the attraction of the Spirit, a charity in which she experiences the liturgical presence of the saints and first of Mary. Miriam, the sister of Moses is a figure of it, after the Exodus, when leading the dance of the women (Ex 15,20); the Theotokos attracts us into the

* My dozen-plus years as research assistant in The Marian Library have provided me with many and varied experiences of Father Koehler’s humanity, faith, and scholarship. Still, preparing an overview of his life and compiling a bibliography of his writings have been revealing and rewarding projects. Rather than any biography composed by me, it became evident that the facts of Father’s life and work – with some of his own reflections for “flavor” – could better testify to the breadth and depth of what the Lord has done for and through him these past eighty years.

eternal liturgy initiated by Christ our high priest, our brother born from her. (From "Editor's Foreword," *Marian Library Studies* n.s. 8 [1976]: 19)

1928 September 12

Professed first vows as a Marianist religious

1928-1929

Attended Villa Saint-Jean, Fribourg, Switzerland

1929

Received degree of Bachelor in the Classics from the University of Strasbourg (Baccalauréat de Philosophie)

1929-1931

Was Assistant Postulant Master at the postulate in Rèves, Belgium

1931-1934

Studied and obtained his Licence ès Lettres from the University of Strasbourg (1934), earning certificates in Latin, Greek, French, and philology in the process

1934-1935

Studied philosophy at the University of Strasbourg

1935-1936

Was drafted; studied, trained, and graduated as a reserve officer from Saint-Cyr, the French National Military Academy (summer 1936)

1936 November 1

Pronounced final vows in the Society of Mary (Marianists) at Strasbourg

1936-1937

Was professor in Strasbourg (French, Latin, and Greek)

1937 November

Entered the Marianist Seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland [Rev. Émile Neubert, S.M., was the Superior.]

1939 September

Was called to active military duty; served as a lieutenant in the Infanterie de Forteresse along the Rhine

1940 August (at the Armistice)

Was taken prisoner of war and interned in OFLAG-17A

1940 December

Was freed; returned to Strasbourg and studied at the seminary there

1941 March

Escaped to Switzerland and returned to the Marianist Seminary in Fribourg

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1941 July 27

Was ordained to the priesthood at Fribourg (Switzerland)

1942

Received a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the University of Fribourg

1943

Received the Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the University of Fribourg (See "Bibliography," part I, 1943, for dissertation title.)*

Over the years, and in study after study, [the example of Fathers Emile Neubert, S.M., and Gabriele Roschini, O.S.M.] led me to the conviction that tradition is richer and more complex than speculative theology. As we study the mystery of Mary in the living tradition of the Church – the Spouse of Christ – we encounter not a theory nor an ideology, but an individual who continues to live – Mary. (From remarks Fr. Koehler offered upon reception of his Honorary Degree from the Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum, 9 November 1988)

Was appointed chaplain at the École d'agriculture of Grangeneuve (Fribourg)

1944-1952

Served as professor of philosophy at Institution Sainte-Marie in Paris

1946

Joined the Société française d'études mariales

1951-52

Served as chaplain of "Le sillon catholique" in Paris (See "Bibliography," part II, 1951, 1952, and 1953, for a series of articles on Christian responsibility which appeared in *L'Âme populaire: Organe du Sillon Catholique.*)

1951-1953

Attended the Paleographical School of the Vatican Archives and received the Diploma of Schola Vaticana in 1953

1952

Participated in a symposium on mental prayer sponsored by the Eudists (See "Bibliography," part II, 1952 – *Cahiers Eudistes.*)

1954

Spent a semester in the Holy Land pursuing biblical studies

Presented a paper at the International Mariological Congress at Rome in October (See "Bibliography," part II, 1955 – *Virgo Immaculata.*)

* Note: Throughout this chronology, whenever appropriate, pertinent references to works in "A Bibliography [of Théodore A. Koehler, S.M.]" (pp. 56 to 72) will be made in this manner.

1954-1969

Was assigned as Spiritual Director and member of the Directors' Council, as well as Professor of Mariology and Spirituality, at the Marianist International Seminary, Regina Mundi, in Fribourg (Switzerland)

In summary, then, the sciences progressed through a process of differentiation, following the lines set down by the Greeks. In the general movement toward specialization, Mariology became a science possessing its own formal object, even while remaining part of the science of theology. After its striking rise in the Middle Ages, theology suffered a retarded development in the evolution of the sciences. . . . Fortunately, several 19th century theologians adopted the new critical methods and worked in accord with the complementary character of the sciences. Mariology availed itself of this important scientific renewal, especially in recent decades. . . . (From "Marian Theology and the Continuing Evolution of Human Knowledge," the first public lecture given by Fr. Koehler as director of The Marian Library [9 December 1969], *University of Dayton Review* 7, 1 [Spring 1970]: 46)

1961-1969

Was also appointed Director of Studies at the Marianist Seminary (Fribourg)

1962

Was elected to the Board of Directors of the Société française d'études mariales [He served continuously on this Board from 1962 through 1986.]

1967

Presented a paper at the International Mariological Congress in Lisbon in August and participated in the Ecumenical Roundtable (See "Bibliography," part II, 1970 – *De primordiis cultus mariani.*)

1969

Lectured in July at the Centro Mariano Chaminade in Verbania/Pallanza on Mary in Sacred Scripture [These lectures were later published as a book.] (See "Bibliography," part I, 1970.)

Was appointed Director-Curator at The Marian Library of the University of Dayton (Ohio – U.S.A.) [He began serving in this capacity on October 19, 1969, and continued through 1987. A member of the French Province, he has been active in the Cincinnati Province of the Society of Mary since 1969.]

In theology, Father Koehler believes in being open to all points of view, but is skeptical about becoming a "disciple" of any theologian.

The new director said he favors working in groups, with findings of research not attributable to a single scholar. Moreover, he added, the work of the library group should become an integral part of the University of Dayton, he believes.

Each field of study has its limitations, but these limits come together in a complementary way, not as barriers, he said. (Excerpts from an article about the new director of The Marian Library, Father Theodore Koehler, S.M., in the *Catholic Telegraph Register*, 30 October 1969)

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Began publication of *Marian Library Studies*, new series [He continues to serve as editor for this scholarly multi-lingual and interdisciplinary journal.]

The University of Dayton, under the direction of the Society of Mary, Marianists, created in 1943 a Marian Library, as a center . . . able to stimulate a great scientific research in all the fields interesting for Marian studies: theology, spirituality, iconography, anthropology, etc. The collections developed into the greatest Marian Library in the world . . .

In 1969, we began a new periodical *Marian Library Studies* – new series, at a strictly scientific level Our purpose is to help scholars – in particular young researchers who have prepared, sometimes during many years, specialized Marian studies – and give them the opportunity to publish. (From a radio address Fr. Koehler made at Radio Vatican, 11 September 1980)

Joined the Mariological Society of America

1970

Was appointed Associate Professor at the University of Dayton

1970-75

Lectured each summer on the history of mariology – from earliest times to the current day – at the Centro Mariano Chaminade in Verbania/Pallanza [These lectures became the five-volume series, *Storia della Mariologia*.] (See “Bibliography,” part I, 1971-76.)

1971

Presented a paper at the International Mariological Congress at Zagreb, Yugoslavia, in August and participated in the Ecumenical Roundtable (See “Bibliography,” part II, 1972 – *De cultu mariano saeculis VI-XI*.)

1972

Was elected member of the Board of Directors of the Mariological Society of America in January [He served one term, 1972-1974.]

Presented a paper at the Seventh Conference of The Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University, 30 April-3 May 1972 (See “Bibliography,” part II, 1976 – *Studies in Medieval Culture VI and VII*.)

Participated in the 25th anniversary symposium of the Société canadienne d'études mariales in Ottawa, 25-26 May 1972, which focused on Marian studies in seminaries and universities (See “Bibliography,” part II, 1973 – *Cahiers marials*.)

1973

Was named *socius ordinarius* of the Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis in Rome (body which organizes the International Mariological Congresses)

1974

Received the Cardinal Wright Award for 1973, an award bestowed by the Mariological Society of America to recognize the contributions to Marian scholarship by one of its members (January 4)

The last Council strongly contributed to the acceleration of Catholic progress in its opening to the needs and problems of the modern world. That openness is noticeable in the orientation of chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*: its doctrine is biblical, pastoral, ecumenical, and anthropological insofar as Mary, type of the Church, is presented as the type of all mankind in the plan of God. The openness to current trends of Christian thought, and human thought in general, has had an immediate effect on theological activity, as can be seen in recent publications.

An examination of postconciliar Mariology brings us fully into our question. Using it as an example, we can see how the sciences, at this particular stage of their evolution, are opening to a process of integration, . . . they are integrating, opening to one another, in their interdependencies; and so they are resulting in a truly human knowledge. (From "Marian Theology and the Continuing Evolution of Human Knowledge," the first public lecture given by Fr. Koehler as director of The Marian Library [9 December 1969], *University of Dayton Review* 7, 1 [Spring 1970]: 46-47)

1975

Presented a paper at the International Mariological Congress in Rome in May and participated in the Ecumenical Roundtable (See "Bibliography," part II, 1980 – *De cultu mariano saeculis XII-XV.*)

Founded the Marian Library Institute [now known as the International Marian Research Institute (IMRI)] as an affiliate of the Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum in Rome (Decree of Affiliation, 5 November 1975: five years, *ad experimentum*); served as Director/Professor until 1986 [He continues to serve both on the Directors' Council and the faculty of IMRI.]

Between 1973 and 1975, several indications of Providence led the Marian Library to recognize the need for such an institute. Theologians who came to work at the Library, students who wished to pursue research in various areas of Marian study, gifts received for the development of the work and other circumstances, in a sense, forced the Library to move ahead. (From an unsigned article, "A New Institute for Marian Studies," which appeared in *Marian Library Studies* 7 [1975]: 325-330, p. 328)

1976

Wrote an article on the Wright Brothers as a contribution for the U.S. Bicentennial, using materials from the Special Collections of the Wright State University Archives [It was published somewhat later.] (See "Bibliography," part II, 1980, *Almanach St. Joseph.*)

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Received the (2nd annual) President's Patronal Medal from the Catholic University of America (December 7) [It is awarded annually to persons who have made outstanding contributions to the Catholic Church and the promotion of interest and devotion to the Blessed Mother.]

In our own day, this mystery [Mary's Immaculate Conception] gives rise to a new kind of research, renewed interest, as we see in Pope Paul's Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis cultus* and in pastoral activities, as illustrated for example in this National Shrine. Modern Marian research is becoming more and more biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, rooted in the continual evolution and development of mankind. Let us note further that the Holy Father recommends a devotion that leads us to God in His intimate Trinitarian life: as Father, Son, Holy Spirit; a devotion by which Mary unites us with Christ, with His Church; a devotion following the charismatic guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is constantly at work in the world to restore in us the image of God our Father as He formed it in Mary at the first moment of her existence. (From Fr. Koehler's homily at the Mass accompanying his reception of the President's Patronal Medal from Catholic University of America, 7 December 1976)

1978

Was again elected to the Board of Directors of the Mariological Society of America (at January convention)

Celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his Marianist profession – in the United States and in France

1979

Was elected Secretary of the Mariological Society of America (at January convention) and appointed Editor of *Marian Studies*, the proceedings of the annual national convention of the MSA [He served in both these capacities and on the Board of Directors through the convention of May 1990.]

Presented a paper at the International Mariological Congress in Saragossa in October and participated in the Ecumenical Roundtable (See "Bibliography," part II, 1985 – *De cultu mariano saeculo XVI.*)

1980

Participated in the 8th International Thomistic Congress in Vatican City; presented a paper (See "Bibliography," part II, 1981 – *Prospettive Teologiche Moderne.*)

1981

Inaugurated a Ukrainian Marian Collection in The Marian Library, with the assistance of Helen Nykolyshyn, then cataloger at the Library

Participated in a national symposium on spiritual discernment in the Marianist tradition, June 1981 (See "Bibliography," part II, 1982 – *Proceedings on the Symposium*)

1982

Was appointed Full Professor by the University of Dayton

Was named a member correspondent of the Pontificia Accademia Teologica Romana (May 21)

1983

Presented a paper at the International Mariological Congress in Malta in September and participated in the Ecumenical Roundtable (See "Bibliography," part II, 1987 - *De cultu mariano saeculis XVII-XVIII.*)

Received the Decree of Incorporation of the International Marian Research Institute (IMRI) into the Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum (Rome), signed by William Cardinal Baum, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, on November 21, 1983 (five years, *ad experimentum*)

The problems researchers confront do not arise at the center of acquired science, but at the outer limits of our knowledge, where we seek what is still unknown and where different scientific disciplines collaborate, In this manner new sciences develop The evolution is such that the trend towards specialization is moving towards an integration of sciences, not a fragmenting of our knowledge.

Using Mariology as an example, we can see the direction this evolution is taking. Integration does not imply reduction, Like any other science, theology has its special area, and the theologian, his personal scope - so that theology cannot be reduced to any other science. It is integrable but irreducible. (From "Marian Theology and the Continuing Evolution of Human Knowledge," the first public lecture given by Fr. Koehler as director of The Marian Library [9 December 1969], *University of Dayton Review* 7, 1 [Spring 1970]: 47)

1984

Co-presided with Father Lucio M. Pinkus, O.S.M., Vice-President of the Marianum, while Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk officiated, at the ceremony of solemn reading of the decree by which the International Marian Research Institute (IMRI) was incorporated into the Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum, held at the Immaculate Conception Chapel of the University of Dayton (September 14)

1986

Was nominated *socius honoris causa* of the Academia Mariana Salesiana in Rome (May 16)

Participated in an international symposium on the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, organized by Cardinal Sin and held in Fatima in September; presented a paper (See "Bibliography," part IV, n° 1.)

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1987

Was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters by the University of Dayton (April 26)

Presented two papers at the International Mariological Congress in Kevelaer, West Germany, in September and participated in the Ecumenical Roundtable (See "Bibliography," part IV, nos. 5 and 7.)

1988

Was named Director Emeritus of The Marian Library by the University of Dayton (May 5)

Celebrated sixty years as a Marianist with his community and friends in Dayton and with Marianists, relatives, and friends in France

Was presented with an Honorary Doctorate in Theology with a Specialization in Mariology by the Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum (Rome) (November 9)

Tradition advances slowly in the pursuit of truth, love, and beauty, and it rejects that which is not true about Mary (including "false apparitions"). Questionable names or titles attributed to God, to Christ, to Mary, which do not lead to an encounter with the persons, are not formative and distract from the reality. This is the danger of research which remains exclusively intellectual. (From remarks offered by Fr. Koehler upon reception of his Honorary Degree from the Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum, 9 November 1988)

1990

Was named Secretary Emeritus by the Mariological Society of America (May 31)
[As Secretary Emeritus, he continues as a member of the Board of Directors.]

Was named Distinguished Service Professor by the University of Dayton, effective with the 1990-91 academic year

Our research is a questioning of persons by persons, all within the Communion of Saints. We study who Mary was for those who formed the Tradition and who now are in the presence of God with the fullness of life. The texts we study are not simply writings of the dead: they are the voices of witnesses.

Study of the historical tradition is not mere information; rather it forms us and becomes part of us. Mary participates in this formation, accomplished through the Holy Spirit. Mary is the mother of the one who renewed humanity; she is also mother of the humanity which has only one body because it has only one head. (Excerpts from remarks offered by Fr. Koehler upon reception of his Honorary Degree from the Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum, 9 November 1988)