

A Few Words for Brian Tracey

**Sept 9, 2023
London, On.**

First I would like to offer my sincere sympathy to Martha on her great loss, as well as to her sons David and Andrew, their wives and children, to Brian's brother Richard and to all of the family and friends.

Four years ago when Brian and Martha kindly came to my birthday party, Brian said, "I've been friends with you longer than anyone." He was right. Brian was the first one I met in September, 1955 when I went to the Redemptorist Minor Seminary in Brockville from the small town of Deep River. Although he was from the big city of London, Brian was friendly from the start.

Soon I learned that he was a good student, singer, speaker, swimmer and handball player. But most important, he was a loyal friend with a dry sense of humour and a ready laugh. All told we were classmates for three years at Brockville, six and half years in Windsor and even a half year in Esopus, NY.

Between Brockville and Windsor, we spent a year in the Novitiate learning how to be Redemptorists, beginning in the summer of 1958. Two things happened there that might interest you. In Woodstock Brian and I were the only ones swimming one day. In the deep end of the pool I swallowed water and began to thrash about in panic. Brian calmly pulled me to safety, probably saving my life. I'm telling you this because I want Brian's grandchildren to know that their grandfather was a hero.

Luckily, the other thing wasn't so serious. One of the big lessons to learn in the Novitiate was the importance of obedience. I asked one of the older class members what blind obedience meant. He said, "If your superior says "Jump!" you say 'How high?' on the way up."

One day the Novice Master told me to pack up all the pious holy pictures and statues in the Woodstock building for the trip to the new Novitiate in Keswick. Naturally I did so.

A Redemptorist with the title of Building Master was in charge of the new Novitiate in Keswick. A few days after we got there he said to Brian, “This is a brand new building. Those old fashioned pictures and statues don’t fit in with this modern decor. They spoil the ambiance. Get the half ton truck and get rid of them at the dump!”

Naturally Brian and another novice followed his order. But when they were almost at the dump, they came upon the Novice Master, who demanded to know, “What are you doing with those precious artifacts? Take them back to the Novitiate right now!”

Naturally Brian and his helper obeyed. Just when they had unloaded the truck, the Building Master appeared. “Didn’t I tell your to get rid of that junk? Take it to the dump!”

This went on, back and forth, all afternoon. It ended when the Building Master rode shotgun in the truck to oversee the cargo thrown into the dump with all the finality of the General Judgement.

When Brian told me this story at supper, I said, “That must have been a tough afternoon.” “It was,” said Brian, “but I learned a great lesson... **NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS!**”

The last ten years or so of Brian’s life, we would get together for lunch now and then. The old stories were told and there was a lot of laughing. But two things became crystal clear to me. 1. How happy Brian was married to Martha, and 2. How proud he was of his sons David and Andrew and their families.

I will close with a quote from the poet Auden:

**“Earth receive an honoured guest:
Brian Tracey is laid to rest.”**

Frank Green