

Fr. Edward A. Bushinski, 77, USA
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+ May 21, 2002 Pittsburgh PA

The Rev. Edward A. Bushinski, who never experienced marriage himself but became a beloved campus instructor on the subject, died Tuesday, May 21, 2002, of heart disease in Manor Care Nursing Home in Bethel Park. He was 77.

For more than a quarter-century, Father Bushinski taught at Duquesne University, where thousands of students knew him for his outgoing personality and for his trademark course – Marriage 301.

It was an exploration of marriage from the Christian perspective, and it was never dry, thanks to skits and a sense of humor that turned a theology requirement into a show. There was a waiting list for the course each semester.

A stocky man, Father Bushinski wasn't hard to spot, in part because he wore a cassock on campus, and in part because he used a dolly to wheel around elaborate charts of information he could hang from walls so students could take notes.

Some found it odd that a priest could be a marriage expert. Father Bushinski seemed barely to give it a second thought.

"If you had a brain tumor", he said to Post-Gazette columnist Brian O'Neill in 1994, "would you try to find a doctor that has one?"

"I never made the mistake of saying I know what it feels like to be married," he said.

Father Bushinski left the classroom in 1988 for health reasons, but his profile at Duquesne remained high. Word of his passing prompted e-mails from as far away as California.

"My wife and I took [his] marriage course," wrote one former student from the 1970s. "We are still married almost 23 years later."

The son of a coal miner, Father Bushinski was born in Eastern Pennsylvania. He was the fourth of seven children.

At the close of World War II, he became a member of the Holy Ghost Fathers. Ordained in Paris five years later at the Holy Ghost Fathers Seminary, he got an undergraduate degree in philosophy from the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. He later received a masters from Duquesne and a doctorate from Fordham University.

Father Bushinski taught philosophy at the Holy Ghost Fathers Seminary in Norwalk, Conn., between 1952 and 1961 before coming to Duquesne to teach theology.

In the decades that followed, he taught more than 15,000 students, the university said. He officiated at weddings for more than 150 of them, and he corresponded and visited with many of them years after they graduated.

"He covered everything about marriage, including sexual relations, and he did it unabashedly," said Jim Miller from the 1980s who is now director of major gifts for the university. "You got some stern lectures from him on respect for the other sex and respect for human beings."

"He captured one's attention and at the same time really laid things on the table about what it was like to be married," Louise Medvid (Class of '85) of Carrick, told the Post-Gazette in 1994. He would play both a husband and wife. He would be Bill, and then he would be Mary. He would give us an insider's look into that couple's marriage."

Many of his classroom anecdotes were based on the experiences of his own siblings. That made things awkward for one of his students, his niece, Laura DiBiagio.

“I chose to sit in the very front of the class so I didn’t have to look at the rolling of eyes at some of the stories that I knew were specifically about my parents or my aunts and uncles,” she said.

Upon leaving the classroom, Father Bushinski collected his notes and experiences over the years and compiled them in “The Call to Marriage,” a 340-page book.

Surviving are three sisters, Helen Tomkiel of Exton, Chester County, Dorothy Bell of northeast Philadelphia and Theresa Kruczek of Hainesport, NJ; and a brother, Albert Bushinski of Shillington, Berks County.

His funeral Mass was celebrated on May 24, 2002, at 10 a.m. in the chapel of Duquesne University. Burial was in the Holy Ghost Fathers section in St. Mary Cemetery in O’Hara.