

2021 Claretian Alumni Tribute Award

Ernest Hyman, CMF



*The Claretian Alumni Association honored **Father Ernest Hyman CMF** at its August 28th Reunion, video-conferenced on Zoom. The award is given in memory of a priest or brother impactful in the lives and formation of seminarians. Jose Blanco '69, a member of the Alumni Council and a resident of El Paso, presented this tribute during the Reunion.*

José Blanco '69:

When my family and I arrived at Dominguez Seminary, we were greeted by Fr. Hyman and the family met with him. My parents felt extremely comfortable with Fr. Hyman and when they left, they told me that he was a true man of God and that I would be very safe and happy in the seminary. Fr. Hyman introduced me to Saul Torres, who was in his third year and from El Paso, Texas. Saul told me that we would be wakened by a priest with announcement of “Deo Gracias et Maria” and we would respond with “Sempre Deo Gracias et Maria.” Indeed, in the morning we were awoken Fr. Hyman, a giant of a priest. Although he had the stature of a giant, he was so gentle, kind, and compassionate.

Father Hyman was our biology teacher, and he was very passionate about the creation of God. He made it very obvious that God was the intelligence of the world and that scientists were always looking for the cause of everything. He described God as the un-cause of all causes. He was an excellent coach and athlete and demonstrated outstanding sportsmanship. He coached our freshman flag football team, and we never lost a game.

Father Hyman selected three postulantes from our class to pioneer a new seminary in Clayton, California. He was a smart and fair person and he passed out index cards to our class and told us to pick three classmates that we would want to be stationed with. He then picked the three seminarians that he would take with him to St. Anthony Claret Seminary. He asked me if I could

report three weeks before other seminarians arrived to help him prepare for the opening of the seminary.

Father Hyman was so talented. Under his direction Bro. Stanford and I laid sod, built sidewalks, assembled furniture, mopped, and waxed the floors. He even built an island for Mallard ducks to nest in the pond. The seminary was below Mount Diablo and we had about twenty-five cows. Father Hyman also taught me to drive a Jeep. He would wake me up at 5:30 a.m. and both of us would go to our barn, pick up seven bales of alfalfa, load it up on a trailer, and take them up the mountain and spread them out for our cows. He told me that would be one of my chores. He then taught me to drive a Volkswagen, got me a California driver's license, and told me that Bro. Stanford and I would be driving the seminarians to our classes in nearby Concord; Father Hyman was particularly good at delegating.

Fr. Hyman was a real cowboy and had true grit. There were a lot of ranches around the seminary and on weekends the ranchers would get together to help each other with the cattle. Father Hyman would tell me to saddle up the two horses we had. I felt sorry for his horse "Smokey" because Fr. Hyman was so big. At the ranches we helped dehorn, brand, and castrate the calves. Father Hyman and the ranchers would cook and eat "mountain oysters" (you know what they are!!!). I never acquired a taste for them.

Father Hyman was also a visionary. In September 1966, the Claretians opened the third of their junior seminaries in the United States. St Anthony Claret Junior Seminary was experimental in its total concept and Fr. Hyman was the Rector. We lived in the seminary and attended school with lay classmates at De La Salle High School taught by the Christian Brothers in Concord. An 'all girls' high school taught by the Carondelet Sisters was across from our school. He allowed us to engage in sports, extra-curricular activities, and attend mixed activities, including dances, at both schools. We joined the cross country, track, soccer, and basketball teams. Father Hyman was proud of us especially when we made the varsity teams, lettered, and won most valuable and most inspirational awards.

Father Hyman developed our minds, body, and spirit. He was very charismatic and a servant of the community. The brothers, sisters, and community loved this holy man. We all had an apostolate in the community. We were involved with the sick, elderly, orphans, and served Mass when Fr. Hyman said Mass in the prison. He continued the tradition of the yearly barbeque, and the community would attend.

In summary, Father Hyman can be described as a true man of God, a holy and pious man, who had the stature of a giant but was so gentle, kind and compassionate. He had a passion for the creation of God, the birds in the trees, the fish in the sea, the beast in the fields. He was an outstanding teacher, coach, and motivator. He was a real cowboy with true grit. He was a visionary, charismatic and true servant of God and the people.

Oh, and before I forget, he was an excellent delegator of chores!