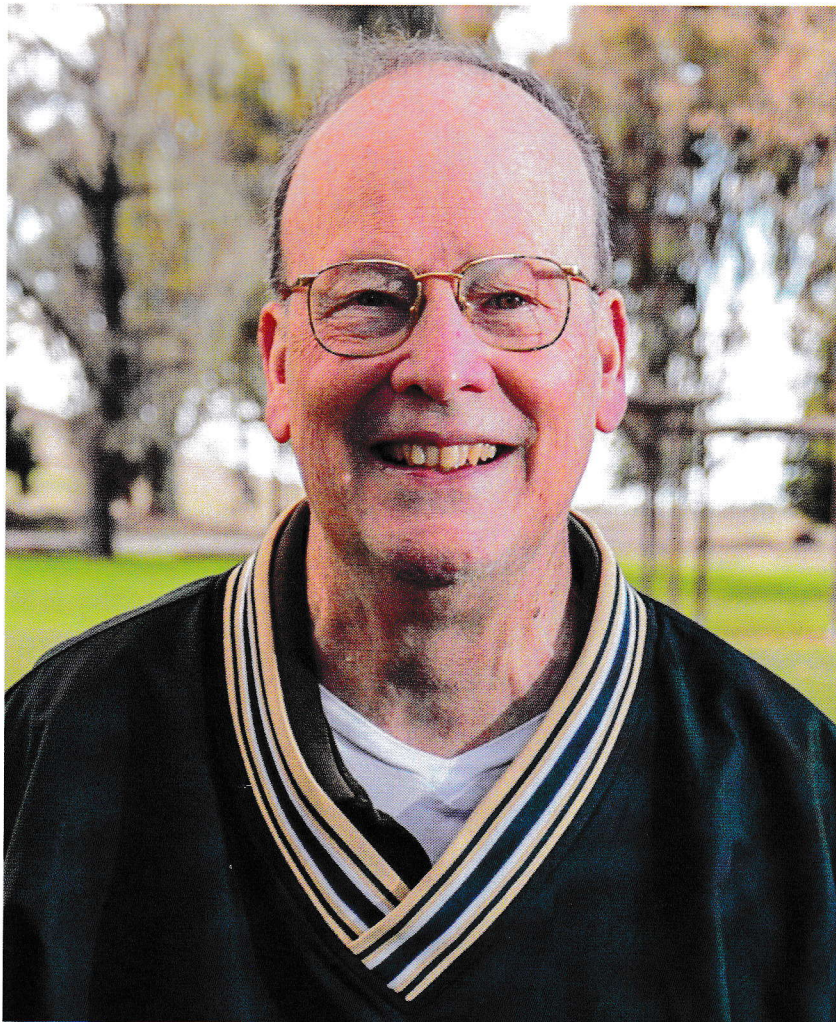


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Brother John Michael Rasor, SDB



October 7, 1944 - December 22, 2021

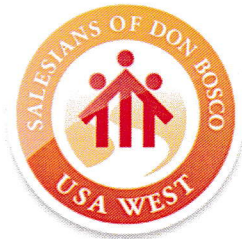
Salesians of Don Bosco Constitutions

The community supports with greater love and prayer the confrere who is gravely ill. When the hour comes for him to bring his consecrated life to its highest fulfilment, his brothers help him to enter fully into Christ's paschal mystery.

Death for the Salesian is made bright by the hope of entering into the joy of his Lord, and when it happens that a Salesian dies working for souls, the Congregation has won a great triumph. The memory of departed confreres unites, "in a love that will not pass away", those who are still pilgrims with those who are already resting in Christ.

Constitution 54

**Salesians of Don Bosco
USA West**

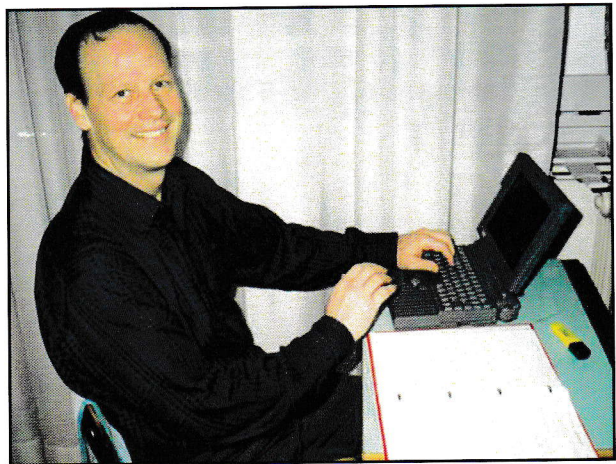


Brother John Razor, SDB

Picture a line of students outside of the locker rooms by the lecture hall at Metallurgy waiting to test Brother John Razor. Each student with the new handheld calculators from the mid-seventies waited to test the living computer of Brother John. “What’s the square root of 632?” And before the little red-number displays could pop open, Brother John would say, “25.13961018.” Dumb-founded and open mouthed, the students would walk away in wonder. He was right on the mark! This was just one of the wonderful attributes of the great Brother John Razor!

He was a working computer, to say the least. He could figure things out and was writing code long before Steve Jobs or Bill Gates could claim that fame. Linux was his preferred platform anyway! He was so focused on whatever he was doing that Brother John would have to be carefully interrupted if you needed to break into his concentration. He would hold up an index finger still focused on the task at hand, finish a computation, put down his finger and turn to the person seeking his attention and say, “Now, what did you need from me?” Interruption or not, John would attend to the need of whomever asked for his help with the gears turning in that incredible mind of his, and always with a joyfulness and a kindness that kept people coming back again and again. In fact, John exuded welcome and enthusiasm in just about any task at hand. And with a child-like joy he would delight his audience with his riddles and his various animal sounds (the most famous being his elephant trumpet blast!).

Brother John had a love for young people that was infectious. He was in their midst in sports, in study, in “hang-ing-out”, in the parking lot, and in his class room or lecture hall. He was famous for his unbeatable chess prowess and reigned



Brother Johnnn as the helm of the IT at Don Bosco Hall in Berkeley



supreme in his chess club for many years. It was quite the challenge to try to beat Brother John and it was an honor to be counted on his competitive team. John himself was in track and field as a student at the Tech in the early 1960's. And he brought that energy and drive with him right into Newton and Don Bosco College

from 1963-1965.

His practical training began in Salesian High School while he studied at Loyola University. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Physics, Summa Cum Laude. Degree in hand, he went "home" to Don Bosco Technical Institute in 1968 and served as a teacher there through 1974. In those six years, he was also a student at UCLA where he added a Master of Science in Physics to his resume in 1974. Continuing at the Tech now as the Department Chair of Metallurgy from 1974 through 1982, John pursued more education simultaneously achieving a Masters in English at Cal Poly Pomona in 1984. And John would become an institute at the Tech continuing his role as teacher, coach, mentor, and friend through 1988.



Brother John depicted as a Chess piece in Alice in Wonderland in the 1975 Tech Yearbook.



Br. John, front row at the left in Newton with his class.

In 1988, John began his studies at the Institute of Salesian Studies (ISS) at Don Bosco Hall in Berkeley. He returned to the Tech in 1989 and remained there until 1992, becoming the Department Chair of Electronics in 1991 and finishing in 1992 in order to begin his Doctoral Studies

in Salesian Spirituality at the Salesian Pontifical University (UPS) in Rome. John's reputation continued. Having studied Italian, John was noted for correcting the Italian of his professors! He dove into the work of his dissertation on the unique spirituality of the Salesian Coadjutor Brother producing quite a tome of work that is still consulted even to this day. In Rome, he received his Licentiate in Salesian Studies in 1994 Magna Cum Laude and in the next year achieved his Doctorate in Salesian Theological Studies with his detailed work on the spirituality of the Salesian Coadjutor vocation.

From Rome, John would return to the ISS after his doctoral work and came on as staff in Berkeley for the next three years. And, of course, that was not all he did at Berkeley. He set up the IT at the ISS and controlled all the passwords for the many functions on the Internet for the students and the staff at Don Bosco Hall. The computer room, where he set up and maintained many computers for the students, was another workshop for him with drawers full of cables and connections, with solutions for all the demands of that work. His passwords for the web and other common use computer functions were notorious for having unbreakable codes that were too long to remember. Hackers would, no doubt, give up any attempt to break into the ISS!

John carried on with his spunky spirit returning to Southern California in residence at Saint Joseph's Salesian Youth Renewal Center serving the province as the Salesian Family Delegate for one year while teaching at the Tech and then taking another year on the faculty of St. John Bosco High School in Bellflower into 2000. For one more year, he returned to work on the faculty at the Tech. In 2002, John began a period at Berkeley on the ISS staff. It was during that ten-year assignment that John would begin to battle with cancer. So many of us received his news regularly reporting on the treatment of "Igor", his first tumor. That would be followed by reports on



Brother John in one of the school portraits from his many years at Don Bosco Tech. He was famous for his laughter and joy even when he was suffering.

“Pluggie,” the second tumor to plague John. During this time, he had rough bouts at the hospital in Berkeley for chemo-therapies of varying degrees. It was especially critical in the year of 1997 when it seemed that the cancer was not responding well to the chemo-therapies. Yet, even during all of that stressful time fighting his enemies Igor and Pluggie, John would rise early each day and take off on hikes up the hills of Berkeley aiming to raise the elevation day by day. First it was to the heights of Grizzly Peak, but John would go beyond that more and more each day.

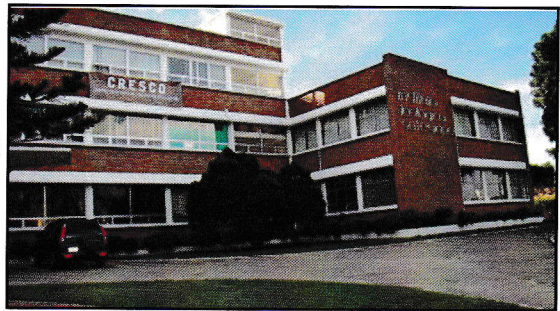
Climbing was not just his way of coping with sickness, John was always ready for a hike in the mountains and to go sometimes for days into the wilderness climbing the Sierra Mountains. He would go out on backpacking outings with many Salesians over the years. He was not afraid of roughing it and hitting the trails!



Brother John on a wilderness hike

And during this time, when out of the hospital, John would seem full of energy and improving health. By regular reports, we were encouraged by the seeming defeat of the offending tumors and, in fact, for a number of years John’s regular PET scans revealed no further advance of any cancer. Many

of us attributed that to John’s personal prayer, to his network of family, Salesians, and friends praying for him, and for his indomitable spirit so evident in his daily morning hikes. John continued during those years to lend his talents and education to the care of the Coadjutor Vocation. In 2010 he went to CRESCO in Guatemala for the ongoing formation of the Coadjutors of the Region. John was proficient in Spanish and, in fact, in German, Portuguese, Latin and Greek. Certainly, his intelligence went beyond science! In fact, John often referred to himself as a Spiritual Engineer. Spreading the wisdom of the Coadjutor Vocation, John served as faculty at the CRESCO Program in Guatemala for three years in 2010, 2012, and 2013.



The CRESCO Institute of Education and Spirituality for Coadjutor Formation

John was known world-wide for this expertise and was called upon for retreats in various provinces of the world.

In 2011, John went to assist in the formation house of Don Bosco Residence in Orange, New Jersey, where the brothers in post-novitiate continued their college studies at Seton Hall University and where some candidates and a few brothers in theology also resided. John was active in the vocational outreach and the instruction of those in residence in New Jersey. He was known for his ability to make friends in the neighborhood--a depressed area of Orange where there were threats from drug-dealing, poverty, and petty-crime. But John was never afraid, making friends with many in residence in this depressed area. His famous elephant blast or his kazoo calls were signals to neighbors that John was



Don Bosco Residence in Orange, New Jersey

out for a friendly visit.



John, second from the left, enjoying Christmas with the family.

After Brother John's four years of serving in the post-novitiate formation house in Orange, New Jersey, John returned to the Tech to serve as a teacher from 2015 to 2021. Those years were marked by his enthusiasm for robotics and would work with students in the creation of competing robotics. His was more than a club; the robotics was itself a stand-alone technology and a team for competing with other

schools. Brother Tom Mass shared this passion and enjoyed the competition with John.

John was immersed in the world of communications long before computers and



John with his family in Newport.

members of this club. This gave John and his family not only a love for communications but the family all spoke Spanish. Of course, John learned many languages as mentioned above. He also spoke Russian and the dialects of Sierra Leone. At the Tech, John had a ham radio club for many years. He had a call number and a license to operate from the earliest days of his career. John often reminisced about his father with great joy having learned so much from him. John's birth Mother, Mary Evelyn Bradley, passed away when John and his siblings were very young. However, their step-mother, Leona Marie Nowacki, was very close to them until her death. John would often visit her in her small home at the beach. His sister Karen Anderson moved to Arizona some years ago and John often went to visit them on their horse-riding ranch. John's brother Patrick Collins Rasor resides close to Kathy and her family in Arizona because his health, unfortunately, has not been strong. Kathy loved the PowerPoint presentation for his funeral and sought out a copy of that to share with Patrick, who was not well enough to attend the services.

cell phones. John's sister Kathy (Katherine Maria (Rasor) Anderson recounts that their father "Jack" had a ham radio and John (known in his family as "Mickey") carried that skill and that equipment with him as a teacher. John would vacation with his family often in Mexico because his father belonged to a ham radio club in Baja California Mexico. His father was an operator and wanted to meet the



Grammar School at St. Theresa in Alhambra

Kathy shared some lovely memories of her brother, known to them as “Uncle Brother Godfather Mickey.” John was his given name when he went to teach and that stuck, but to his family, he was always Mickey! The children all attended St. Theresa’s parish and went to school there in Alhambra, though they were raised in nearby San Gabriel. Kathy shared that both she and John had a great love for baseball and when she was in the eighth grade, her father gave her and John permission to take the bus to the Coliseum to watch Dodger Baseball (before the Chavez Ravine Stadium was built!). The family has remained staunch fans of the LA Dodgers to this very day.

As mentioned above, John loved playing chess. As a teen, John would go to the Community Center on Saturdays to play chess, often taking on up to three “old men” at the same time. Another treat for all of them was when their parents went out to dinner together once a month and each of them got their dollar to ride their bikes to the McDonald’s in Alhambra where they could get their burger, fries, and a drink and change besides. Kathy also fondly remembered that their father noticed John’s interest and gifts and kept he and his brother Patrick engaged in science, astronomy, and mining. John was such a voracious reader that his nose would be in a book even to the point of not getting up in time to dress for school.

While growing up, John had allergies to wheat and animal dander. So, John’s mother baked special bread for him and they had only snakes, lizards, tortoises and fish for pets. For some reason, by the time John went to Newton, New Jersey for

his formation, those allergies disappeared! The children would sit in the den and watch television with snakes and lizards crawling all over them. Perhaps that was not the scariest experience for John. Kathy recalls also that her brother went to the Salesian Mission in Africa. John went to the Salesian Mission in Sierra Leone to help the schools and the community set up computers, but that was during the



San Clemente in 1956. John in the middle between his siblings.

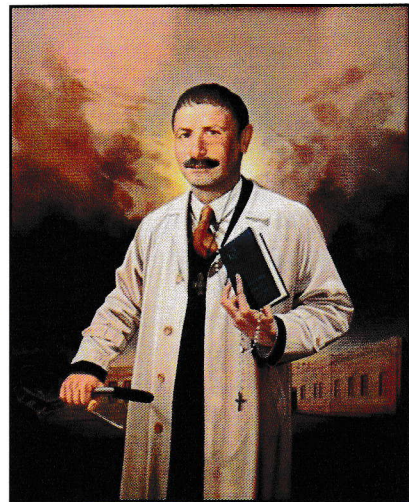
dangerous revolution. John went and was busy setting things up when the rebels arrived and they had to escape with just the clothes on their backs. John was able to keep his backpack and his laptop in that midnight escape. They all ran to another country.

Returning to the reflections on this Salesian Brother in the task of being an educator, John continued to work and pray and encourage the students wherever he was. He was always a spark of life to the communities where he lived and worked. He had a passion for vocations and urged many students to consider Salesian life. He even attended various vocation conferences and assisted at vocation booths in many places. Recently Brother John was recorded telling his own Vocation story by the very talented Fr. Vien Nguyen. His own love of his Salesian vocation and his devotion to our Lady, Help of Christians, sustained him through his many ventures in education and extended his influence throughout the provinces of North America and the Inter-America Region. Is it any wonder that John was born on the feast of our Lady of the Rosary? She had been his companion in work and life from beginning to the end.

Before the summer of 2021, the PET scans revealed an aggressive return of the cancer we all believed John had defeated. His communications to his network of prayer-warriors and friends were launched again. John attacked this new rise with the same vigor and determination that marked his entire life. In his tenth communication on July 29, 2021, John realized that things had grown dangerously against him. He wrote,

“Basically, the chemo therapy did not work. The bladder cancer is still growing, and has spread.

I’m at stage IV. It looks like surgery is off the table. Options given by Dr. Lyou: 1. Chemotherapy with another medicine, cisplatin. That is risky for my kidneys. We have to reduce the dose, given my age. Best case, I’ll live 6 - 12 months. 2. Stop treatment, except to control pain. I’ll survive only a few months, likely 6 or less. A third opinion is to join a clinical trial of some experimental therapy. For now, I am



Blessed Artimides Zatti. a Brother from Argentina who cared for the sick.

going to start on Option 2 while researching this experimental option. Thanks for all your prayers and support. I'm in the Lord's hands now."

John proceeded with a clinical trial and experimental therapy that left him in much pain, weaker, and failing. At one point, he wrote to some friends and confreres in the fall that "the Lord asked for a stay of the cup he was to be given at Gethsemane, and I think I have gotten the same offer." Many throughout the Salesian world had entrusted John's desperate struggle to the intervention of Blessed Artimide Zatti. One close friend even gave a first-class relic of Zatti to John and delivered it to him in the fall. The Eastern US Province universally promised prayer through Blessed Zatti for John. In the end, even in the days before his death, lovingly fed by his director, Father Thien Nguyen, John insisted that he get better so he could undergo another clinical trial. Gently, Father Thien reminded John that the last trial nearly killed him and allowed John to make his own conclusion. On December 22, John was in bed and found to be without a pulse in the evening as Brother Bob Hennings and Father Thien assisted him. The hospice nurse was called and John was declared dead shortly after.

Thinking about Brother John now it is difficult to believe he finally lost the battle. He was so positive throughout the long struggle. Whenever someone ran into some frustrating situation, John's famous advice was, "Tell him to take two Dammitals and call me in the morning." John was more than brave, he was tenacious, strong in his faith, and fully committed to being with the young. In one of the emails he sent out, admitting that the Lord was allowing him to share in his passion, he did not give in to self-pity. In fact, he asked God to allow him to stay in the classroom to be by the youth as long as it was possible. Today, tributes have poured in from past students, fellow administrators, friends and relatives, and many more will come as the news spreads. Here is one example: An email from a long associate stated, "May he rest in peace. But I rather doubt he is resting. He's probably so excited to be in the place he prepared for all his Salesian life." The Tech community added in their message, "We have loved him in life; let us remember him in prayer in his death." Yes, John has run the race and finished well. We will take with us his courage, his humor and pluck, his love for vocations and his deep and always joyful example as a true Son of Don Bosco! Now it is his turn to pray for us and intercede for us. Perhaps with his influence, we will grow in many more vocations to the special calling to be a Coadjutor Brother.

A lovely video was made of John standing in his room looking out of his window into a crowd of students at the Tech standing there and looking up. It reminds all of us in the Salesian world when St. John Bosco stood in his balcony after recovering from a sickness that the doctor said would end his life. When he defeated his illness, he saw the crowds of young people who were waiting for their miracle. Moved by their love, St. John Bosco pledged to those young people that he would “live for you, study for you, and give everything to my last breath for you!” Fr. Ángel Fernandez Artime, the present Rector Major (Don Bosco’s tenth successor) explained that this pledge was Don Bosco’s profession of his vows to serve the young. In like fashion, John carried his commitment to his last breath and gave a powerful message to the students outside his window: “Be the Gospel! You may be the only Gospel that others will ever know!” Brother John Michael Rasor was the Gospel to so many young people, to his Salesian family, to his loving family, and to any who had the grace and the privilege to be touched by his life!



Brother John is second from the right in the center row in this photo taken at St. Dominic Savio parish in Bellflower, California. Here John celebrated a Profession anniversary and renewed his vows. John is certainly in the Salesian Garden, as one colleague expressed: “May he rest in peace. But I rather doubt he is resting. He’s probably so excited to be in the place he prepared for all his Salesian life.”

For a brief time, Brother John served as the Salesian Family Delegate for the Western Province. John poses here with the Coop-erators in Rosemead in the chapel at Don Bosco Technical Institute. He was ready to journey with these and other members of the Salesian Family and would often provide conferences for the various groups. I am sure that these members were touched by his life and will remember his example of joyfulness and courage.



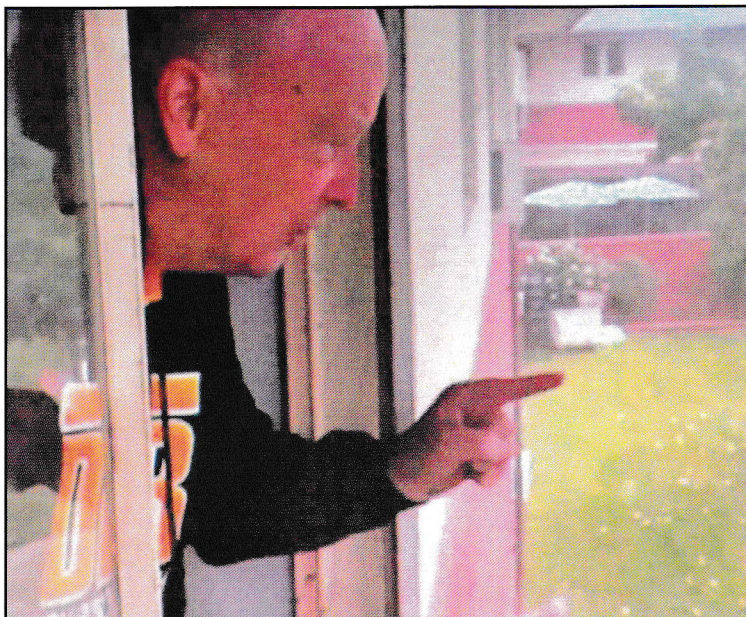
Brother John with the Rosemead Cooperators at Bosco Tech.

I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"He will keep you firm to the end, Irreproachable on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ"



Salesian Cooperators Michael and Maggie Lau of St. Bridget Salesian Chinese Catholic Parish in Los Angeles with Brother John acting as the Delegate of the Salesian Family for the Western Province of the United States.



***"Be the Gospel!
You may be the only Gospel
for someone else!"***

Brother John Michael (Mickey) Rasor, SDB

**Date of Birth: October 7, 1944
in Pasadena, California**

**Profession of Vows as a Salesian of Don Bosco
August 15, 1963 in Newton New Jersey**

**Profession of Perpetual Vows
August 1969**

**Doctoral Degree in Salesian Spirituality
at the Salesian Pontifical University
1995**

**Entered into the Salesian Garden and Eternal Life
December 22, 2021**

