

Father Boadt, a leading scholar and former head of Paulist Press, dies

MAHWAH, N.J. – Paulist Father Lawrence Boadt, a leading Catholic biblical scholar and former CEO and president of Paulist Press, died at his residence in Mahwah July 24 after a long battle with cancer. He was 67.

A funeral Mass was to be celebrated for him July 28 at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle in New York, followed by interment in the Paulist Fathers' section of St. Thomas the Apostle Church Cemetery in Oak Ridge, N.J.

Father Boadt was a Paulist priest for 47 years. His death was announced by Paulist Father Mark-David Janus, who in April succeeded the late priest as head of Paulist Press.

Born Oct. 26, 1942, to attorneys Loren A. and Eleanor Boadt, Father Boadt grew up in St. Paul the Apostle Parish in the Westwood neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Paulist archivist Father John Lynch was newly ordained when he first met Father Boadt, then a fifth-grader in the parish school. Father Lynch recalls seeing the makings of a priest in the young altar server and Cub Scout.

“He was dependable and enjoyed serving the church,” Father Lynch said in a statement. He noted that Father Boadt kept his close association with his home parish while he was a student at Loyola High School in Los Angeles; he graduated from Loyola in 1960.

He entered the Paulist novitiate Sept. 6, 1962. He earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from St. Paul's College in Washington. He was ordained a Paulist priest Feb. 22, 1969.

After his ordination, he did graduate work at The Catholic University of America, also in Washington, and earned degrees in Semitic languages and theology.

“That was extraordinary,” said Father Lynch. “Not many people can accomplish that,

as the mastery of ancient languages is incredibly difficult. He was the type of priest who could do anything.”

Father Boadt’s first priestly assignment was as associate pastor at St. Andrew’s Parish in Clemson, S.C., from February to October of 1969. Father Boadt then headed to Rome for advanced Scripture studies. He served on the parish staff at Santa Susanna, the Paulist parish in the city, and obtained a licentiate and doctorate in sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute.

Father Boadt was a longtime professor of biblical studies at several institutions of higher learning, including Jesuit-run Fordham University in New York and the Washington Theological Union, a Catholic school of theology in the nation’s capital. He taught at the school for 21 years.

He also was a prolific author of scholarly books, articles and popular studies. His extensive published works included “Ezekiel’s Oracles Against Egypt”; two volumes of commentaries on Jeremiah; a commentary on Ezekiel for “The New Jerome Biblical Commentary”; and almost a hundred articles and reviews in leading biblical journals such as the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, the Journal of Biblical Literature and *Vetus Testamentum*.

His most popular work is “Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction,” published by Paulist Press in 1985. It has been the standard English-language introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures used in numerous colleges and seminaries.

Friends, colleagues and students described Father Boadt as a man of boundless energy and enthusiasm. Besides teaching and writing, he often conducted tours of the Holy Land. His favorite tour was through Turkey and Greece, following the footsteps of St. Paul.

He also was the biblical expert on a team established by the late Jesuit Father Walter Burghardt to conduct workshops/retreats on preaching for diocesan priests.

During his years in Washington, Father Boadt taught a weekly Bible class to a group of lay professional people and government officials.

From 1998 until earlier this year, he served as president of Paulist Press. In that

capacity he oversaw the publication of up to 80 books a year, including several about the Bible. Before becoming president, he had been Scripture editor for Paulist Press.

His final contribution was the “The Catholic Prayer Bible: Lectio Divina Edition.”

Father Boadt had been president of the Catholic Biblical Association of America and was active in major Catholic and Protestant biblical organizations. He also was president of the Stimulus Foundation in recent years, which was created to foster dialogue and mutual respect between Christians and Jews through publications dedicated to those goals.

Eugene J. Fisher, the now-retired associate director of the U.S. bishops’ Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said Father Boadt was a colleague and friend for many years who, while at Paulist Press, was “eager to publish books furthering the cause of Catholic-Jewish relations, my own included.”

Father Boadt “excelled,” said Fisher said in a statement. “There is no other word for it.”

He said the priest’s book on sacred Scripture, used in seminaries and theology programs at universities, “incorporated the best not only of biblical scholarship but of the critical scholarship of the Jewish-Catholic dialogue. “ In it, Fisher said, the priest made real “the great vision of the Second Vatican Council on the renewal of dialogue between the church, as the people of God, and the Jewish people, as the original and still present people of God.”

Australian Cardinal Edward Cassidy, retired president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, called Father Boadt “a good friend and faithful servant.”

A statement from the Catholic Biblical Association said he was “a serious scholar,” but also “brilliant in producing works that presented the fruits of his scholarship to a wider audience.”

“He was beloved especially for his infectious sense of humor. He will be greatly missed,” it said.