

From Time to Time - Fr. John F. Long, SJ

Last week, the Catholic Review published the obituary of Father John F. Long, S.J., a remarkably wise and gifted leader whose service to the Church merits recognition here. From his days on the staff of the Second Vatican Council's Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Father Long displayed qualities of dedication and resourcefulness.

At the Secretariat he assisted Cardinal Augustin Bea, especially in his travels to Eastern Europe and in his dealings with the Orthodox Church. While I had known Father Long during the Council years, I began to appreciate more fully his theological and linguistic gifts in 1986, when I was appointed to the International Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Whether in English or in French, Father Long was able to articulate the Catholic Faith and historical facts in a forthright and helpful fashion at our meetings. His solid and balanced approach, rooted in solid scholarship, was appreciated by the other participants, who realized that Father Long knew what he was speaking about. His working knowledge of Greek and Russian made his service to the Universal Church extremely valuable.

For many years Father Long was a professor at the Oriental Institute in Rome and served as well as the Rector of the Russian College.

When he retired from the Oriental Institute in Rome, Father Long came here to Baltimore, where he taught at St. Mary's Seminary and University for a year, and then went back to New York City, near his native Brooklyn.

When word came of his death after a brief illness, the Rector of his community in New York invited me to offer the Mass of Christian Burial at the campus church at Fordham University, a great honor indeed! This I did the afternoon of Saturday, September 22, with the Long family participating in great numbers, many fellow Jesuits and a strong delegation from the ecumenical community, led by His Grace Bishop Vikan of the Armenian Apostolic Church. May he rest in peace.