



BROTHERS DAILY NEWS

Death of Br Anthony Atkinson, RIP Campbelltown Community

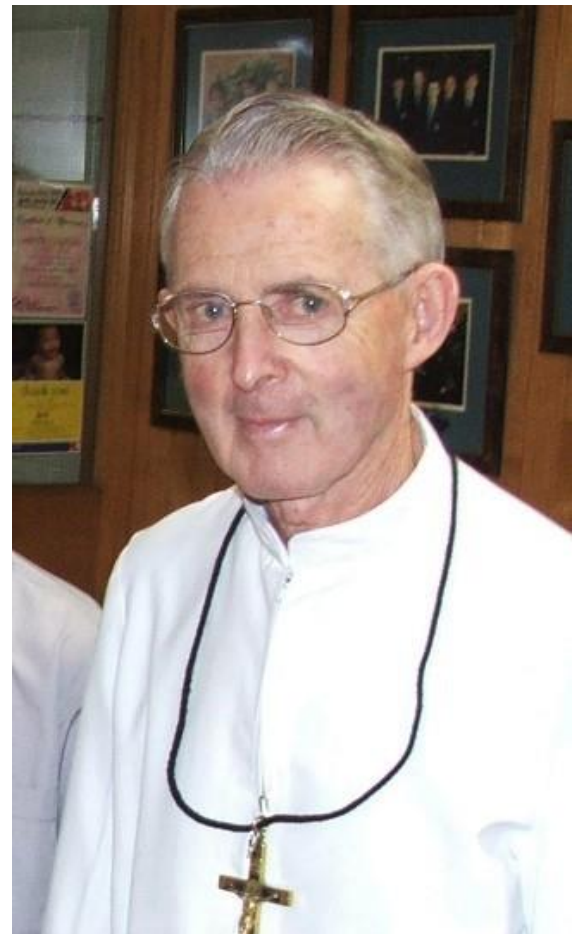
Dear Brothers

Sadly, I inform you of the death of our brother, Anthony Atkinson. He had been in physical and cognitive decline for some years but deteriorated rapidly late last week. He died peacefully at Molloy House, Campbelltown, this morning at 6:17 am. He was aged 89 and had been a Brother for 69 years.

Anthony William was born in Sydney on 22 August 1933, the eldest child of William Atkinson and Mary Kelly. Three other children followed: Terry in 1936 and twins, James and John, in 1940. The boys grew up in Bankstown, where their father managed the local swimming pool. Anthony became an accomplished swimmer, gained his bronze medallion, and was a swimming instructor at the pool for some years. His faith and love of the Church came from his parents, who were devout Catholics.

Ironically, Anthony never attended a Brothers' school. Both his parents, however, had strong Marist connections. His mother grew up in The Rocks and always maintained a strong connection with the Marist Fathers at St Patrick's. His father was an ex-student of Darlinghurst and St Benedict's, his great uncle was one of the first students enrolled at the Marist Brothers' school in North Sydney, and all his uncles attended Marist schools. Having achieved excellent results at St Felix Primary School at Bankstown, he gained a scholarship to attend St Patrick's Christian Brothers' school at Strathfield, and his three brothers followed him. It was the family's strong connections with the Marists that influenced Anthony's wish to become a Marist Brother. However, his father was keen for him to have some life experience, so after completing school he worked for the Sydney City Council for several years. Anthony's desire for religious life persisted and he started Postulancy in January 1953, received the habit on 2 July that year and took his first vows twelve months later.

Typical of the time, there was limited opportunity for study and great need for Brothers in the expanding Marist schools. Immediately after the Novitiate, Anthony started teaching, and didn't stop until 2015. He completed his first qualification in the 1950's by correspondence and his Arts Degree at Sydney University part-



Br Anthony Atkinson FMS
22 August 1933 – 27 October 2022.

time. It was only in 1978 that he was given the opportunity for full-time study at the Catholic University of America where he completed a Master of Arts in Education.

Primary Education was Anthony's specialisation, though he did have two years as Religious Education Coordinator at Marist College North Shore and taught History, a subject he enjoyed, to secondary classes while at Ashgrove. He was an organised and methodical teacher and taught at most of the Sydney Marist Primary schools. At the relatively young age of 33, he was appointed Principal and held this role in various places for a total of 20 years. In some ways he was a reluctant Principal, not wanting to be the 'front man', and preferring to teach rather than to administer. However, he completed all that was asked of him and did so in an exemplary fashion. His staff over those years recall that he was a well-respected and popular Principal, the schools were superbly organised, and were happy, calm places. He never lost his temper or said an angry word. Without doubt, Anthony was a traditionalist, but his life and schools were characterised by timeless values and Marist principles. Staff and students appreciated the order and predictability he ensured.

I followed Anthony as REC at Marist North Shore and was delighted at the thorough organisation, revised teaching programme and useful resources that I inherited. I then found myself with him at Ashgrove, where he was Principal of the Primary school, taught secondary classes and assisted with boarding duties. He was most generous. Despite his reserved manner, in community he was friendly and encouraging, enjoyed conversation and had a ready smile and laugh. Each Saturday he hosted a morning tea for the Brothers at the Primary school. These were welcomed by the monks as a respite from the constancy of boarding duties.

Anthony was a true gentleman. He dressed well, though simply, preferring the religious habit or black trousers with white shirt and Marist insignia. His grooming was impeccable. He was courteous and pleasant to staff, visitors and monks. While he could be disapproving, he wasn't given to outburst or displays of anger. He expressed his position calmly and his tranquil temperament maintained his equanimity. In relationships, Anthony was loyal. After he met my mother, who lived at Ashgrove, he would drop in and visit her, even in later years during his holidays in Brisbane. The same loyalty was shown to many people. He was a private person, but this didn't limit his friendliness or hospitality. Though he preferred to be "hidden and unknown" he made a positive impact on the lives of innumerable people over his long Marist life.

When the Brothers withdrew from Canberra and Anthony needed to leave the Primary school there, he was most disappointed that he could no longer be a daily part of that special community to which he continued to contribute into his 80's. However, over time, he adapted to life at St Greg's, and it soon became apparent that he benefitted from the greater level of care available at Molloy House.

On your behalf, I offer his brother, family, and community at St Gregory's our deep sympathy. He has received marvellous care at Molloy House over the last seven years. Sincere gratitude to all who have assisted him.

Anthony never wanted to be anything else but a Marist Brother. He valued our life, lived it with fidelity and simplicity for 69 years and loved his ministry as a teacher. We remember with gratitude the great blessing Anthony has been for countless students, teachers, families, Brothers and friends. May his gentle soul rest in peace.

Peter Carroll.
