Father Paul Marshall, S.M. was born at the right time – the right time for a black man in the Catholic Church to pursue his priestly vocation. As a baby boomer, he came of age during the civil rights movement and Vatican II. These two factors uniquely positioned him to pursue his passion for freedom and faith in the black community. From childhood his vocation was evident to family and friends. His sister, Iris Marshall Brown, recalls among Father Marshall’s favorite things to do was to play Mass. Even though Paul was one of the youngest of the siblings (there were six children born to Isaiah and Donia Marshall), he always was the priest when they played Mass. The family’s fine table linens served as his altar cloth and vestments on many occasions in the Marshall household much to the chagrin of his mother who taught home economics. While Paul may have faced some scolding for rumpling the linens, he received even more loving support and encouragement as he determined early in life that what he played at he would one day be – a priest.

Father Marshall professed his first vows as a Marianist (Society of Mary) in 1966 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1976. In his 47 years as a Marianist brother and priest, Father Marshall’s ministries included social work, high school and university teaching, parish pastor (17 years at St. Aloysius Church in Cleveland, Ohio, his hometown), rector of the University of Dayton, and assistant for temporalities for the Marianist Province of the United States. It was in his role as assistant for temporalities that he travelled to Ranchi, India where he died suddenly and quietly on July 17, 2014. Father Marshall took on all these ministries with a true sense of joy and commitment.

One outstanding quality of his life was that he was sincerely happy and at peace with the choices he made in his life, especially his choice to join the Marianists. On the occasion of his 25th jubilee as a Marianist, Paul said, “The Marianists have..."
always been open to someone of a different culture. Our life together, I believe, is a witness to the kingdom of God. Every race, culture and people are called to be followers of God. Mary, our model of faith, praised God who raised the lowly and freed the oppressed. Working for freedom and promoting the faith in the black community have given meaning to my life as a Marianist.”

Father Marshall found happiness and purpose in being a black Catholic. He was both a member and a president of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus and a member of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium. In his ministry as pastor he infused black spirituality, homiletics, and sacred music in the Mass. He worked closely with the late Archbishop James P. Lyke when he was in Cleveland on a host of issues that were of spiritual, economic, political, moral, and social consequence in the black community. Father Marshall was a member of the faculty of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies. He, Cecilia Moore, and Emily Strand instituted the Annual Father Joseph M. Davis, S.M. Black Catholic History Month Celebration at the University of Dayton in 2005. Father Marshall was an activist for food security for people around the globe in his work as a member of the national board of Bread for the World. His scholarship on spirituality served the black


2 Celebrating Mass. Photo courtesy of University of Dayton.
Catholic and wider Catholic community in his many lectures, retreats and articles on the subject. With C. Vanessa White and Cecilia Moore, Father Marshall was a co-editor of *Songs of Our Hearts and Meditations of Our Souls: Prayers for Black Catholics*. In his introduction to the prayer book, he wrote:

> Authentic prayer emerges from the interior of a person, and the transformative power of prayer takes root within the soul and grows or influences one’s being. It is at this level that prayer takes on a human perspective that easily transfers to others. Authentic prayer may start with an individual’s experience, and it is real. This reality invites others to contemplate their experience and connect or relate to the expression of prayer. Although prayer is born in subjectivity, it becomes the objective once expressed for others. This is the power of prayer. Prayer changes things and people.³

Members of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium were blessed by the many, many gifts that Paul Marshall gave over the years from his gracious hosting of the annual meeting in 2001 (and all the delicious lunches he prepared), to the insightful comments and suggestions he offered to fellow scholars at symposium gatherings on their works-in-progress, to his deep connection to the Spirit, to his bright smile and sincere embrace of welcome. Though most were not able to attend his funeral, loving messages from around the country have given comfort to his family.

We give God thanks for our brother, Father Paul Marshall, S.M. and we ask God to continue to comfort all who mourn him, especially his siblings Iris, Isaiah (Kit) and Aaron and members of the worldwide Marianist family.

Photos by Msgr. Patrick Wells