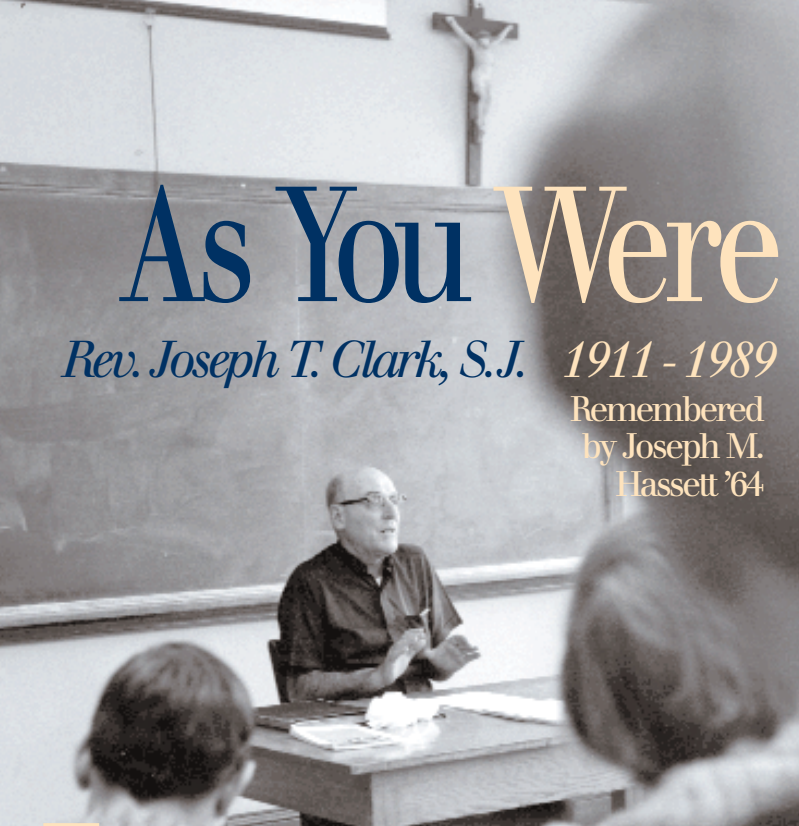


As You Were

Rev. Joseph T. Clark, S.J. 1911 - 1989

Remembered
by Joseph M.
Hassett '64



The vibrant Canisius of today stands on the shoulders of giants – dedicated Jesuit priests like Rev. Joseph T. Clark, S.J., who taught at Canisius from 1954 - 1973.

Joe Clark was an unforgettable teacher. The first time I saw him in 1958, he was introducing a basketball to students at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute as "Omar, the well-rounded man," the ideal product of a Canisius education. Within a few years I saw photographs of Clark, discussing questions of medical ethics at

Canisius while outfitted in surgeon's garb and saw him enter our class during the college's Fine Arts Week in the guise of "Jacques Le Clerc," complete with beret and ukulele, and leading a prayer to "Our Lady of da Left Banc."

Clark's melding of Bronx and brilliance is evident in his memorable taxonomy:

The natural scientist asks 'how are tings in Glocca Morra?'

the philosopher 'how can tings be as they are in Glocca Morra?'

The positive theologian asks 'how does God say tings are in Glocca Morra?'

the speculative theologian, 'how can tings be as God says they are in Glocca Morra?'

This synthesis, no doubt, reflected the arduous intellectual and emotional journey Clark had taken, in the footsteps of his beloved Galileo, from Aristotelian metaphysics to philosophy of science. Clark's own approach to the subject was reflected in the instructions that regularly appeared on his exams: "Iterative assertion is rhetoric. Philosophy is reflective analysis."

The dazzling power of Clark's mind fairly bristled beneath his philosophy lectures, which featured a capsule history of thought, beginning with the "dissecta membra" of Babylonian mathematics, moved through the "corpus doctrinae" of Greek philosophy, paused briefly on David Hume ("we are all sniffing dogs") and ended where the day's lecture began. But Clark was much more than set pieces. His students frequently saw him struggling with a question, while he deployed the characteristic Clark pose of looking

toward the ceiling, stretching his right arm upward as he pushed his cassock down the arm with his left hand and pondered aloud "How shall I express it?"

Clark's course in philosophy of science, Pl. 4, was packaged and marketed with the skill of a born showman. The syllabus and scheduled advertised lectures devoted to such subjects as "Stars in your Eyes;" "The Greece that Egypt and Babylon Begot;" "Greek Science Stymied by a Square;" "Aristotle at the Throttle" and "Getting to Know Galileo."

The force of Clark's engaging personality was felt by his colleagues, as well as his students. Father Thomas Aquinas ("Stewie") McGovern, his arch intellectual rival and cousin, once told us about a dream in which he died and went to heaven. Upon entering the divine presence, his first thought was to ask God "Who was right, Joe Clark or me?" Turning to face McGovern, the God of his dream gazed toward the ceiling, raised his right arm in the air, pulled down his sleeve and inquired "How shall I express it?" ■

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