

Reverend Monsignor William H. Schwartz PA, STL. Scholarship
June 26, 2024

Reverend Monsignor William H. Schwartz was the Chaplain at Canyon Camp for 37 years – from 1970-2006. You may recognize him better by the name Father Schwartz, or simply Father as many of us knew him. Father was elected a Vigil Honor member of the Order of the Arrow, a member of the Blackhawk Area Council Executive Board, and distinguished as a recipient of the District Award of Merit, the Bridge Builder Award, the Silver Beaver, and the St. George Award from the Roman Catholic Church. He was also a member of the Rock Valley Girl Scout Council. As a Priest in the Catholic Church his title was Reverend Monsignor William H. Schwartz. Pope St. John Paul II recognized Monsignor Schwartz as a Prelate of Honor in 1996 and a Protonotary Apostolic Supernumerary in 2000 - the latter being the highest level of “Monsignor”.

Father asked to be remembered as a Priest, Pastor, Teacher, Uncle, and Friend – these words are engraved on his memorial stone. If you did not have the pleasure of meeting Father Schwartz, you will still recognize the legacy he left behind as his spirit can be found throughout Canyon Camp.

Father’s time at Canyon Camp was limited to a few days each week but his goal was always to learn the names of every scout and scouter present. He was able to do this by spending quality time with every single person. When present at Canyon Camp Father used his religious training to offer Catholic mass. He would greet every scout and leader entering the Dining Hall following the blessings he offered prior to sharing meals. He coordinated religious services for other faiths at which everyone was welcomed and he encouraged others to practice their faith in the outdoor Chapel or elsewhere. Father created a collection of the religious awards offered in Scouting and he educated scouts about the requirements for religious emblem programs so they could complete these awards with their faith leaders.

Father excelled at conducting team building activities. He was instrumental in developing a non-denominational Vesper activity that encouraged all Scouts and leaders to reflect on the 12 Scout Laws. It was Father Schwartz who started incorporating into the Vesper service a blindfold activity during which some scouts close their eyes or wear a blindfold while others tap their fellow troop mates who have demonstrated the qualities of the Scout Law. This remains a very powerful and moving experience that recognizes others for their display of the Scout Laws.

He had a serious side and a playful sense of humor that would connect with everyone. He had a remarkable gift when talking with you. He laughed at the crazy antics of the scouts and staff. His laugh was loud, distinct, and infectious. When you heard him laugh you could not help but see the humor as well. He could not wait to watch, and even participate in the skits performed by staff as well as scouts.

He was also known for his ability to focus on the matters you brought to him, whether they were intellectual discussions about history, personal successes and accomplishments or the challenges and difficulties that life often brings. He would always make time for you. He cared. He was present. You would feel like you were good friends after a brief contact with him. Interacting with Father made you want to be a better person and he was there to help you do that. Father's influence on those that knew him was profound and lasting, and his friendship extended well beyond the camping season.

One of the lasting ways Father's legacy continues at Canyon Camp is through his work with homesick scouts and those in need of first aid. His patience and incredible listening skills made him a natural when dealing with homesick scouts. He taught these listening skills to the Camp Staff and had them practice them so they were able to aid scouts who might be experiencing distress, and he was always available to assist the Camp Health Officer administer first aid and distribute medications – using this time in the Health Lodge to connect with scouts and leaders. Many of the communication techniques he developed are still practiced and used by the staff today. In addition to his influence on the Canyon Camp Staff, Father wrote and taught the first curriculum used to prepare summer camp Chaplains for the National Camping School of the BSA.

Father's presence at Canyon Camp was welcomed by all no matter who he was with or the type of interaction. It was always a special time when Father stopped by to offer you his friendship and ask how you were doing. It is fitting that Reverend Monsignor William H. Schwartz is honored with this scholarship in his name for ongoing contributions he has made to the Spirit of Canyon Camp, and to his legacy as a Priest, Pastor, Teacher, Uncle, and Friend.