



Father Robert Ignatius Burns, S.J.

A Celebration of His Life, Scholarship, and Teaching

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

4:30 – 6 pm, Royce Hall 306, UCLA

In Memoriam

Father Robert Ignatius Burns, 87, died November 22, 2008 in Regis Infirmery, Sacred Heart Jesuit Center, Los Gatos. He was a Jesuit for 68 years and a priest for 56 years. Robert Burns was born in San Francisco on August 16, 1921. After graduating from St. Ignatius Prep, San Francisco, in 1939, he studied one year at the University of San Francisco and entered the Society of Jesus at Los Gatos on August 14, 1940. He was ordained a priest on June 12, 1952 in San Francisco. After ordination Fr. Burns pursued graduate studies in medieval history at Johns Hopkins University, earning his doctorate in 1958, summa cum laude. This was followed by studies at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, where he received a second doctorate in 1961. In 1958 he joined the history faculty at the University of San Francisco, where he taught until 1976, when he began a long tenure at the University of California at Los Angeles. He officially retired from UCLA in 1991, but taught seminars and directed reading courses, directed graduate students, and maintained his scholarly research and correspondence with colleagues around the world. Upon his retirement, a special symposium was held in his honor and the papers were published in a two-volume Festschrift. Over the years Fr. Burns painstakingly amassed a library of specialized books, manuscripts, maps, and many thousands of microfilmed documents. These became the nucleus of the Institute of Medieval Mediterranean Spain, formerly located in Playa del Rey, which he founded and directed. Fr. Burns donated his collection to the UCLA Library to serve as a research library of Catalonian history and culture to be used by students and scholars. He remained in residence at Loyola Marymount University until 2007, when he came to Sacred Heart Jesuit Center, where he continued his research. At the time of his death he had completed the manuscript of volume five of his series of medieval Spanish documents on the Crusader Kingdom of Valencia (Princeton University Press), and was preparing to oversee its publication. Fr. Burns' bibliography of published works is extensive. His scholarly interests were in two distinct areas: Nineteenth century Indians of the Pacific Northwest, and the history of the medieval western Mediterranean. His scholarly output has been well received; among his numerous book awards, he received the American Catholic Historical Association's John Gilmary Shea Award in consecutive years for books in his widely divergent fields of interest. In addition to his seven national book awards, he received eight honorary doctorates as well as several medals from Spanish historical and cultural organizations. In looking back over his 68 years as a Jesuit, Fr. Burns reflected: "Jubilees are little hills from which we can look backwards over our whole life, discerning in it the tireless providence...of God. Since my first day in the Order, down to the present moment, I have felt profoundly grateful to Our Lord and to Mary for my vocation...In my apostolate of teaching and research, He has provided absorbing work and an unending supply of fascinating friends, students and fellow Jesuits." Donations in memory of Fr. Burns can be made to the UCLA Foundation with a memo note "Robert I. Burns Fund" to support acquisitions, processing, and preservation of the Robert I. Burns collection on medieval Mediterranean Spain.

Primary source, with minor revisions and additions: Saint Ignatius College Preparatory, San Francisco, California website, www.siprep.org/memoriam/post.cfm/fr-robert-ignatius-burns-s-j-39.

A Celebration of Father Burns' Life, Scholarship, and Teaching

Introductory Remarks

Teofilo F. Ruiz, Professor, History and Spanish & Portuguese, UCLA

Testimonials

Brian P. Copenhaver, Professor, Philosophy and History, and Director, Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, UCLA

Henry Ansgar Kelly, Professor Emeritus, English, and former Director, Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, UCLA

Gary E. Strong, University Librarian, UCLA

John Dagenais, Professor, Spanish & Portuguese, UCLA

Patrick J. Geary, Professor, History, and former Director, Center Medieval & Renaissance Studies, UCLA

Mary Elizabeth Perry, Professor Emerita, Occidental College, and Associate, Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, UCLA

William C. Stalls, Librarian, Von der Ahe Library, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles

Open Microphone

Members of the audience are invited to share their memories of Father Burns.

A reception will follow on the Royce 306 Loggia.

Co-sponsored by the UCLA Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, the UCLA Library, and the UCLA Departments of History and Spanish & Portuguese.