

Robert Earl Hollingsworth, SJ

1930 - 2005

Robert Earl Hollingsworth was born on January 27, 1930 in Linton IN. A Baptist by birth, he was baptized a Catholic in 1948. After working a year for Coyne Electric in Chicago, Bob served in the U.S. army in a tank division (1951-53). He subsequently formed a construction company in Corpus Christi TX which specialized in concrete. During a job at Corpus Christi Seminary he met Dutch Jenniskens whose mass he served daily. Bob and Dutch had frequent spiritual conversations, with the result that on February 9, 1962 Bob entered the novitiate at Grand Coteau. He was thirty-four years of age when he pronounced his vows as a Jesuit Brother (1964).

In 1966 Bob joined the New Orleans Province mission in Brazil, the scene of almost forty years of his devoted service. Besides serving as director and treasurer of the Centro Social Presidente Kennedy in Campinas, he wore many other hats. Ever the constructor, he built Nossa Senhora de Pompeia Church, then Bom Pastor Church – surely with expert concrete work. Many said that his most important construction project was forming the lives of those in vocational training at Centro Kennedy.

In an interview, Bob spoke about the Centro and what it does. He said: “About 1,900 people come here every day for some kind of service. We estimate 456,000 persons per year.” “We take care of many of them almost from birth to the grave. Seriously we offer all kinds of services.” “We’re helping all the immigrants who come to the big city with no preparation. A corporal work of mercy, eh?”

Alas, Bob failed to learn Portuguese, yet his colleagues maintain that he truly communicated. When listeners “would turn on their imaginations,” they could figure out what he was trying to say. He spoke, they say, the “language of love,” and his sense of humor was loud and clear. The best

way to measure the success of Bob's labors is to imagine the hundreds of thousands of students who studied at Centro Kennedy, were trained there and now have successful professions, especially in the hospitals of the region.

Bob was a pious and dedicated leader – remember that he was in an Army tank division. He exuded competence and so confidence. One boy said of Bob, “He was always positive and never complained.” A girl said that he was never able to pronounce her name, Zoraide,” so he called her Dona. Bob was, she said, “her friend.” Where, now, is the formidable man who entered the Novitiate in 1962? Some described him as “the suffering servant who did not open his mouth.” He began to have health problems, but leaving Brazil was not an option. On September 25, 2005, Robert Earl Hollingsworth. SJ died in Campinas, Sao Paulo, Brazil at the age of seventy five.