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Reverend Joseph J. Donovan, S. J. 1891-1977—In Memoriam

G. William Shea

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*G. William Shea**

Thirty-four years ago I met Father Donovan for the first time. The meeting took place at the Law School at its then Grand Avenue location in the beautiful classic Spanish style building that then was its home. Sayre McNeil was then Dean of the Law School and, of course, Father Donovan was its Regent. This was the beginning of a professional and personal relationship that spanned those thirty-four years. I last saw Father Donovan last spring when he was leaving for Los Gatos in Northern California.

Our first meeting was arranged by a mutual friend and it resulted in my becoming a part-time professor on the Law School faculty. My assignments were to teach the law of evidence and a course then known as domestic relations which today has the more euphemistic name of family law. Sidney Morgan was Registrar of the Law School at that time and, as she did over the years, bore the brunt of the administration of the Law School and remained always Father Donovan's solid right hand.

At the time of this first meeting and for sometime thereafter, Father was giving all of his energies to two principal Law School needs: (1) enlarging the physical capacity of the school and (2) improving the depth and quality of its law library. Both efforts were eminently successful.

In addition, Father was the spirit behind Loyola's early participation in the national moot court competition. The records of the school's participation in that program confirm how successful he was in that effort.

Father Donovan was not an academic person in a puristic sense. Results rather than philosophy were his main interest. He was the confidant of Governors Warren, Knight and Brown on the selection of judges and possibly other matters. But his participation in those selections was never parochial in terms of religion, race or otherwise—but parochialism did emerge if a Loyola graduate was involved.

Although the Law School and its requirements were a twenty-four hour problem for Father, he contributed generously of his talents to Church superiors who needed that type of assistance which only he could provide. Thus when Cardinal MacIntyre decided to stage his Institute on Natural Law, he turned to Father who organized judges and lawyers and

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other participants in a presentation of this subject at a time when it was important to remind the profession and the public of this neglected area of the law. Later when the Church was confronted with litigation challenging its school system, Father Donovan's advice and judgment was vital in determining how to respond.

His own quiet and sometimes cryptical sense of humor remained a trademark for me in all the years I knew him. That trait was best illustrated when Father initiated what became a must event at the annual State Bar Convention: the Loyola Symposium. Before I attended that first event, I was curious as to whom the panel participants would be and what the subject matter was for discussion, since no clues to these unknowns were given by the invitation. Nothing in the State Bar releases gave any hint as to these particulars also. Why not? Because, as Father reminded me, Webster defines a symposium to be, "A drinking party at which there is an intellectual discussion."

Over my thirty-four years with Father Donovan, I shared a great friendship but the generations of Loyola Law School graduates share something much more: a great Law School that would never have been without him.