

George E. Saint-Laurent
1932-2008
Professor of Religious Studies, Emeritus
A.B. (1955), M.A. (1966) St. Paul's College
(Washington, DC)
Ph.D. Catholic University of America (1968)
California State University, Fullerton 1975-1997
Birth: August 3, 1932; Death: April 23, 2008

George Saint-Laurent arrived at CSU Fullerton in September, 1975 to take up teaching in the Religious Studies Department. His special interest was in Christian philosophy and theology, and he taught classes related to those concerns. During the twenty-three years that he was at Fullerton, his teaching broadened into all the world's major religions. A quality of George's life was his openness to truth wherever it could be found. In all his years he continued to learn. Plato had said that the purpose of life is to pursue truth and throughout his years at Fullerton, George exemplified that challenge.

George was born to a distinctly religious family in Boston. His father, French Canadian in background, married an Irish wife. It was a good blend. Young George received a public school education in elementary grades, proceeding then to the prestigious Boston College High School, well known for its demanding curriculum. He then enrolled in classes in Boston College, but completed his undergraduate studies at St. Paul's College in Washington, D.C. George was always a true Bostonian, carrying that peculiar accent of a New Englander throughout his life. George never had ideas, he had "idears" along with John F. Kennedy.

In 1974 he married Michaelleen Nichols and had two daughters, Marie-Louise and Jeanne Nicole. For George his family was a great source of pride. He kept in contact with all three almost on a daily basis. He loved to have friends over for a meal where the women in his life were featured along with his cooking, for George claimed the kitchen as his own in his capacity as chief chef of the household. Every morning he arose before everyone else and brought Michaelleen her morning coffee. As man and wife, their lives paralleled one another for she held employment in Fullerton's Rosary High School as head of the Religion Department.

The Saint-Laurents were great travelers as a family. Because of numerous appearances as a lecturer in religion, George built up contacts which put him in touch with members of the Young Presidents Organization. Known as the YPO, it sponsored conventions in all parts of the world, allowing the Staint-Laurents to visit places in Europe and Asia and for almost ten years George was always on the program.

What marked George's teaching was his enthusiasm in every class. Unlike professors who come in to the classroom, sit down, and read their notes, George commenced each session writing an outline on the blackboard, distributing two or three handouts, and then began to lecture pacing up and down the room, frequently returning to the blackboard to point out a point not to be missed or to add a comment. Over the years his interest in Judaism and Islam grew to the point that he could have been a rabbi or an imam. He also became fascinated with Buddhism and I recall an invitation to his class in which I proposed that Buddhism was an ethical system and not a religion. George would have none of it and argued strongly that it deserved to be ranked among the great world religions.

George initiated a small group of us in a monthly discussion group on matters of religion and philosophy. He was very much the Aristotelian, arguing for the complete omnipotence of God.

His love of teaching was combined with a great love of his Catholic faith. He and Michaelleen attended Mass daily keeping close to God in worship.

George was also active in the community. He did this through many lectures for the parishes in Orange County who welcomed him to speak on a wide variety of topics. I think it safe to say that he spoke to more people in Orange County than anyone else I know.

He also was intensely interested in the Guardian Scholarship program at CSU Fullerton, volunteering his time to lead students to progress. He also served on the Academic Senate and as head of his department.

George has left a legacy of publications: two books on spirituality. His presence enhanced the University campus because of his love of teaching and the students who came

within his orbit. He enjoyed the esteem of his colleagues and students. He died a rich man, not in material possessions but in those who were his friends.

Submitted by
Charles Frazee
Professor of History, Emeritus
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