

1986

Reverend Michael D. McCafferty, C.S.C.

David T. Link

Notre Dame Law School, david.t.link.1@nd.edu

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Recommended Citation

David T. Link, *Reverend Michael D. McCafferty, C.S.C.*, 62 *Notre Dame L. Rev.* [xiii] (1986).

Available at: https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/law_faculty_scholarship/228

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Reverend Michael D. McCafferty, C.S.C.

To every profession a handful of people seem especially called. In the profession of law teaching, Father Michael D. McCafferty, C.S.C., professor of law, was a natural.

Father Mike had the right kind of background for law teaching. He earned joint degrees (a Juris Doctor and a Masters in Theology) at Notre Dame. He earned his Masters of Law at Harvard, with Professors Archibald Cox and Jerome Cohen as his thesis advisors. His experience included public service as a trial attorney with the Office of General Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and a period of private practice in a prestigious Chicago law firm.

The combination of a fine education and practice experience served him well as a law teacher. He had an excellent command of the subject areas of his classes and understood how to ensure that students acquired both a solid base of information and the analytical skills needed to deal with such information. He could “read” a class to determine the students’ needs for further discussion and examples. His scholarship, which was motivated by his constant desire to be a better teacher, is best exemplified in his co-authored book, *Medical Malpractice, Bases of Liability*.

For all his talent as a teacher and scholar, perhaps Father Mike’s greatest contribution to the education of our students came through his counseling—with groups that gathered in the student lounge sharing coffee or with individuals who came to his office hoping to have a point clarified but finding whole new avenues of inquiry opened to them. He became the Law School’s principal student counselor, both officially while he was assistant dean and unofficially when he was not. His counseling ran the entire range of professional development, from questions of whether to stay in Law School to concerns about which job offer to accept. His advice on schedules, course selections, study methods, and summer clerkships was studied and individualized.

Most importantly, Father Mike was priest to almost everyone in the Law School community. He celebrated our community masses, presided at our marriages, baptized our children, and counseled us through personal problems. He was the source of faith and strength for many of us. His own strength came from his commitment to this place and to his priesthood in the Holy Cross Order. He loved the University of Notre Dame and everything about it; he loved the Law School, he loved the students, and he loved his role here.

On June 12, 1987, Father Mike died after a courageous battle with cancer. Right to the end of his time with us he was teaching—how to handle adversity and how to face death.

We will sorely miss Father Mike, but we are thankful for the nine years he was with us. He taught us how to live and how to love, what it means to be a professional and what it means to be a family member. One of his ordination cards reads:

To be a witness does not consist in engaging in propaganda nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one’s life would not make sense if God did not exist.

Father Mike so lived and he remains a living mystery for all of us at Notre Dame.

David T. Link
Dean

