

Dr. Bruce J Malina 1933-2017

Dr. Bruce J. Malina, Creighton professor of New Testament for forty-eight years, died at his home in the early hours of Thursday, 17 August. Health issues had necessitated his retirement four years earlier as he approached his eightieth birthday. The World Herald had featured Malina in an article 26 June, 1994, "Scholar Finds Niche in Bible," as he began to gain global recognition for a new approach to biblical studies. Bruce's method emphasized interpretation of the New Testament from the cultural perspectives in which the Gospels and Epistles were written.



Bruce was born in Brooklyn (Williamsburg), New York, 9 October 1933. He was the first of nine children born to Joseph and Mary Malina. Preceded in death by his younger brothers Tom (2015, Watkins Glenn, NY) and Joe (2016, Austin, TX), there are six remaining siblings: Bob (Bay City, TX); Mary Ann (Long Island, NY); Chris (Queens, NY); Barbara (Berkeley, CA); Edward (Watkins Glen, NY); and Joanne (Canandaigua, NY). Four of those siblings had left home for Omaha at word of Bruce's deteriorating health and arrived shortly before his death at 3 am. Another brother and his wife were enroute when he died. The Malina family is closely knit, drawing their friends into the family circle as well. As news of Bruce's death became public, one such friend sent a note of sympathy identifying herself as part of "the Malina nation."

Bruce's lengthy education began in a Polish Catholic grade school in Brooklyn (Our Lady of Consolation). His high school years were spent in a Franciscan boarding school in Wisconsin (St. Bonaventure), after which he joined the Franciscan Friars. Bruce was ordained a Franciscan when he was twenty-seven. His education continued in West Chicago, Rome and Jerusalem where he received his doctorate in New Testament studies. Bruce's teaching ministry in the Philippines ended after five years when his evolving approach to New Testament studies met with disfavor from the local Cardinal. He was hired by Creighton in 1969 as he began the process of retiring from the priesthood. Three years later he married Diane Jacobs (1972). In 1984 they adopted Musa and Sa'id El Hindi, two Muslim, Palestinian teenagers from Beirut. Their four Beirut brothers and parents became part of Bruce and Diane's family. Their grandsons are Liam and Sean, sons of Musa and Karen Falconer Al-Hindi; and Sa'id's son, Zack.

Bruce's scholarly legacy includes: numerous articles, books which were translated into a variety of languages, scholarly awards, and global recognition.

His passion for teaching, his commitment to helping other scholars; his respect for Islam, and his support for Palestine's Christians and Muslims are widely known. Bruce's love of his Yorkies and being at home, his commitment to family, both biological and extended, are known to a smaller circle. He was an extraordinary human being who will be missed by all those whose lives were enriched by his keen mind and generous heart.

Written by Diane Jacobs Malina, his wife of forty-five years.
