



Dr. John Roll's relationship with the Jesuits began when his father Matthias (front row center) attended Xavier University, where he also quarterbacked the football team. He's pictured here with teammates before the 1912 season.

Thinking Right and Doing Right

A FATHER'S LEGACY...A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP

“**M**y dad wasn't a real holy roller, but he loved the Jesuits” says John Roll of his father, Matthias J. Roll, who was born in the late 19th century in a working class neighborhood in Cincinnati.

Matthias' family eventually moved across the Ohio River to Newport, Kentucky, but this didn't stop his par-

ents from sending him to St. Xavier High School. He walked across the river every morning and returned in the evenings after school and sports practices. He did well at St. X and continued his studies at Xavier University, where he quarterbacked the football team, garnering recognition on the Legion of Honor in 1912.

“My dad loved Xavier and the Jesuits,” recalls John, a retired Dayton

doctor. “He had such great reverence for the men who taught him both in high school and at the university. I can remember Jesuits who'd taught him in high school coming to the house to visit when I was a boy. There was a real camaraderie between them.”

John believes the Jesuits deeply influenced his dad, not just as a student but as a professional and as a

father. Hard work was in Matthias' blood. An athlete at heart, his competitive zeal helped him succeed as a salesman for the Chatfield Paper Company in Cincinnati. He was later transferred to Dayton, OH, where he and his wife raised their four children. John, one of two boys in the family, says the Jesuits' influence was evident in everything his father did. "He always tried to lead by example. His favorite saying for us was 'Think right, Do right'."

Matthias applied this principle both to his own life and to the education of his children. There were no Jesuit schools in Dayton for the Roll children, but, John says, "Dad would always tell us how much he respected the Jesuits, and how much he still looked up to them."

And so, it seems, Matthias Roll passed on the lessons he once learned to his children. His son John attended medical school at St. Louis University, a Jesuit school, and for years made retreats at the Milford Spiritual Center, just as his father had done. Today he still shares his father's enthusiasm for the Jesuits. "The Jesuits walk the walk," he says, "and they do it in so many different phases of



Today Dr. Roll and his wife Patricia remain supporters and friends of the Chicago Province Jesuits.

life." He adds that he's long been impressed by the Jesuits' commitment "to the materially needy and to the educational process. They're also involved in communities, and the development of communities. You see this at Xavier University, Marquette, and at Cristo Rey."

John's youthful admiration of the Jesuits was cemented by his cousin Don's decision to become a Jesuit. Don was ordained a priest in the Chicago Province and served in the physics department at Loyola University until his death in 1986. John's admiration for the Society, however, lives on as he and his wife Patricia have continued to support the Jesuits. They've most often opted to contribute to the Jesuit Seminary Association, which provides a 12-year program of formation for Jesuits preparing for ordination. John says he supports the JSA because it prepares "the young Jesuits to work in the world at various levels of influence, academically, in the communities, in medicine, and in science."

Fr. John J. Foley, SJ, director of the

Jesuit Seminary Association says "I can't tell you how grateful I am to steady donors like Dr. John Roll and his wife Patricia. They're the backbone of the Jesuit Seminary Association." The support of partners like the Rolls is absolutely crucial to the formation of young Jesuits. Chicago Province treasurer Fr. Daniel Flaherty, SJ, says the cost per year of each Jesuit's formation is roughly equivalent to a year of tuition plus room and board at a private college or university. Each Jesuit completes a two-year novitiate as well as a three-year First Studies Program and then a three-year program of theology studies. That means eight years of college costs.

But the importance of this formation cannot be understated. "This is part of their development," John Roll says, explaining his motive to contribute. "It's important. This is why Jesuits are so well trained in their chosen fields." It's also why Jesuits like Charlie Rodrigues and Bill Murphy are so well prepared for their work teaching students at St. Xavier High School how to "think right and do right." ■



Don Roll, SJ, John's cousin, spent much of his career as a professor of physics at Loyola University Chicago.