

# The Father Robert C. Baumiller Fund for Genetics and Society

This fund has been established with the American College of Medical Genetics (ACMG) Foundation in 2006 as a memorial to Robert C. Baumiller, SJ, PhD, who was known for his contributions to bioethics, cytogenetics and genetic counseling and was a Founding Fellow of the College. Father Baumiller was committed to ensuring that the highest quality genetic services were accessible to all and was a lifelong advocate for families. He initiated and nurtured an active prenatal genetic counseling program at Georgetown University Hospital—the first of its kind in a Catholic hospital in the U.S. He worked towards genetic literacy of professionals and the public at home and overseas, and he was committed to educating clergy of all faiths in genetic decision-making. With funding from the March of Dimes, Dr. Baumiller conducted workshops for clergy across the nation and at Georgetown University. In addition, he was the founding Director of the National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health (NCEMCH), which was established in 1982 at Georgetown University with support from the federal maternal and child health agency. Under his guidance, NCEMCH evolved from a genetics information clearinghouse into a leading national education and information resource for the maternal and child health community. Father Baumiller's contributions in these areas continued to flourish in the fifteen years after he left Georgetown University for positions in Detroit and then Cincinnati.

Donations to this fund will be applied to ACMG activities that continue Father Baumiller's work in the areas of bioethics, genetics education and increasing access to genetic services. Activities to which the funds have been applied will acknowledge the support of the Father Robert Baumiller Fund for Genetics and Society.

Gifts to the "Father Robert Baumiller Fund for Genetics and Society" may be made out to the ACMGF and sent to: 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20814-3998. For further information about the fund, please call Nan Jefferys, Philanthropic Director, at 781-860-0781, or email her at: [nanjefferys@rcn.com](mailto:nanjefferys@rcn.com). Beginning in October, you may also make contributions via the Foundation website at [www.acmgfoundation.org](http://www.acmgfoundation.org).



The ACMGF is a not-for-profit, 501(3)(c) organization whose mission is to translate genes into health.“

# REQUIEM FOR A PIONEER

## The Father Baumiller Story

Judith Benkendorf, MS, CGC, Jan K. Blancato, PhD, Kevin T. FitzGerald, SJ, PhD, Cathy M. Fomous, PhD, Rochelle Mayer, EdD, Jeanne M. Meck, PhD

**W**e wish to honor the memory and celebrate the accomplishments of Robert C. Baumiller SJ, PhD, who died at the age of 75 on July 13, 2006 following heart surgery at Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio. For those of us who had the opportunity to work with him or know him well, he will be missed for his intellect, commitment to genetic counseling and cytogenetics, his ironic and incisive sense of humor and hearty laugh, the twinkle in his eye, his love of Hoya basketball, and his great stories.

Bob is best known for his work in the field of bioethics and genetics. He was a Jesuit priest and a classically trained geneticist. He received his PhD at St. Louis University, and did postdoctoral research in population genetics with James Crow at the University of Wisconsin. His early work on viral and x-ray induced mutations in *Drosophila* was published in *Science* and *Nature*. Bob spent much of his genetics career at Georgetown University where he started in 1967 as an Assistant Professor, established and directed the Cytogenetics Laboratory from 1970 – 1985, and was Chief of the Division of Genetics in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Georgetown University Hospital from 1974 – 1991. He initiated and nurtured an active prenatal genetic counseling program—the first of its kind in a Catholic hospital in the US. Bob was committed to educating clergy of all faiths in genetic decision making so that they could support the needs of families in their communities. With funding from March of Dimes, Bob conducted workshops for clergy across the nation and at Georgetown University; he welcomed clergy from around the world who wished to spend time with him and his genetics colleagues at Georgetown. In addition, he was the founding

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Director of the National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health (NCEMCH), which was established in 1982 at Georgetown University with support from the federal maternal and child health agency. Under his guidance, NCEMCH evolved from a genetics information clearinghouse into a leading national education and information resource for the maternal and child health community. He was also active in the Council of Regional Genetics Networks (CORN), chairing its bioethics committee and publishing several of the regional newsletters through the NCEMCH. While at Georgetown University, Bob also served as a mentor to graduate students in human genetics, and held another position he fully enjoyed—as a residence hall chaplain.

Among Bob's numerous genetics and scholarly activities were: Consultant for Genetic Counseling for the Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Research and Education Institute, Advisory Committee member for the Alliance of Genetic Support Groups, member of the Panel on Genetics for the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, Chairman of the Research Committee for the Mid-Atlantic Region Human Genetics Network, and Educational Resources Editor, *American Journal of Human Genetics*. He was a Founding Fellow of the American College of Medical Genetics, and a Fellow of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics (Georgetown University) as well as the Ohio Academy of Sciences. In 2002, he was appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetic Testing.

Bob left Georgetown University in 1991 to take a position as Professor and Dean of the College of Health Sciences at the University of Detroit Mercy. In 1995, he left Detroit for Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. At the time of his death, Bob was Associate Dean for Health Education Programs at Xavier University, and Professor in the Departments of Biology and Philosophy; Guest Professor at the University of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Division of Genetics; Chair of Xavier's Institutional



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majors at Xavier University. He will be missed by his colleagues, friends, students and the many families he knew with genetic disorders. While his contributions to genetic services and bioethics will sustain our field for years to come, he left a void that can only be filled by carrying on his good work in these areas.

To ensure that this happens, the family has requested that donations be made to the American College of Medical Genetics Foundation (ACMGF) to address issues related to the ethical, legal and social aspects of genetic service delivery. The ACMGF is a not-for-profit, 501(3) (c) organization whose mission is to “translate genes into health.” Gifts to the “Father Robert Baumiller Fund for Genetics and Society” may be made out to the ACMGF and sent to: 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20814. For further information about the fund, please call Nan Jefferys, Philanthropic Director, at 781-860-0781, or email her at: [nanjefferys@rcn.com](mailto:nanjefferys@rcn.com). Beginning in October, you may also make contributions via the Foundation website at [www.acmgfoundation.org](http://www.acmgfoundation.org).

Review Board and the Goodwyn IRB, an international commercial IRB; member of a Drug Safety Monitoring Board at the National Heart Blood and Lung Institute of NIH; special consultant to Project Hope for its Gaucher Disease Initiative; member of the Ohio Connections for Children with Special Needs Advisory Board; Consultant on Genomic Medicine for Catholic Healthcare Partners, and member of the Board of Bioethics Network of Ohio. Bob was a diplomate of the ABMG in Clinical Cytogenetics and PhD Medical Genetics.

Bob was a unique human being who deftly combined his faith and science to help people lessen the burden of genetic disease. He listened to patients' concerns intently and always had just the right words to bring them comfort. He wanted genetic services to be of the highest quality and worked towards increased access and genetic literacy in all the places around the world that families and communities sought support. He rarely missed a national genetics meeting and was traveling internationally until the time of his death, helping other nations develop their genetic service programs. At the March 2006 Annual Clinical Genetics Conference in San Diego, Bob interacted with colleagues in a number of the sessions and beamed as he described the course on Ethics and Genetics Technologies that he was teaching to undergraduate Philosophy