

Bro. Frank (Paco) Gomes, S.M.
50 years of profession



It is useless to try to comprehend and to make sense out of the passing of so many years when it feels like only yesterday that I was trying on my first bow tie. It was my First Communion day, and my mother was anxious about me not swallowing water while brushing my teeth. Today I appreciate the goodness of God and how God accompanied me for 68 years.

Recently I came across my acceptance letters to the novitiate and to perpetual vows. I read them with the same amazement that I first read them many years ago. I remember my parents, Frank Gomes Jr. and Lucy DeRego, sitting beside me when I opened the first of these letters in 1958. I was only 18 years old. As I read it out loud I saw on their faces dreams being wiped away and new expectations taking their places. I also found another letter which responded negatively to an earlier request for a change in category.

I was raised in a Catholic family and attended Catholic schools for 17 years. However I attribute my vocation to Johnny. He has always been an inspiration. His faith is strong, and I know that he prays daily for me. With him I learned what generosity looks like. Watching my mother care for him daily taught me that love and service are one. Having Johnny in the family made us more tolerant of people who were different. Caring for a retarded child will teach anyone how to love. I again find myself living with Johnny.

If I have to single out one assignment, one ministry, one community that made the biggest impact in my life, I will have to mention with joy and pride the years I dedicated to the people of Mexico in the town of Apaseo el Grande, Guanajuato. It was during those years that I finally became a Marianist. It was among these caring people that I first learned to live the religious life and to share it with those I touched. It was there that I found Christ walking among the poor. Christ lives in Mexico. I never really knew what it meant to be poor. Many times we are sheltered from the sights of poverty. Reluctantly I left my ministry in Mexico in 1993. However I continue my contact with the people of Apaseo el Grande, and I still find myself searching for the

people of God that pray in Spanish. I am happy to see that the Mexican District is blessed with twelve Mexican professed Marianists. *Viva la Señora de Guadalupe.*

I regret spending so many years in the classroom. There were other ministries that I felt called to do and at which I could have made a bigger difference. The three years at St. Maria Goretti Parish in San Jose, Calif., gave me a calling to new ministries. The next three years in Hispanic Ministry in the Diocese of Honolulu expended my options to serve the people of God. Presently teaching ESL to Hispanic immigrants allows me to meet people from Latin America and to reconnect with the people of Mexico.

Let me mention the names of a few Marianists who challenged me throughout my life. Jack Rielly was my Latin and religion teacher. He was instrumental in recruiting me and forever remained a friend. Vinnie Steele, my second director, taught me that only human beings can become Marianists and that good Marianists make mistakes too. Joe Stefanelli, my novice master, caught up with me 40 years later when we moved into the Community in San Jose. His friendship and guidance were blessings. Robert Hanns showed me how fortunate we are to serve the poor and to live among them. He showed me the images of humility and love. Kevin Joyce impressed me forever with his leadership skills and prayerful calm in stressful moments. I recognize my novitiate classmates Ray Malley, Skip Matthews, and Ted Ley and thank them for their continuous edification.

It is with sincere gratitude that I participate in this Marianist celebration of our 50 years. It is a celebration of people who love and serve.

Aloha and mahalo nui loa.
Frank (Paco) Gomes