

Bro. Philip Aaron
Celebrating 60 years of profession



My Marianist life has provided a variety of settings that have put me in touch with a broad spectrum of educational experiences. I have personally had great opportunities to have both classroom and experiential opportunities that enabled me to work and travel in culturally rich and diverse circumstances.

After about 30 years serving as teacher and administrator in several secondary school positions, I “died and went to heaven” when I started work at the University of Dayton, where the concerns, confinements and commotion of high school were replaced by a higher degree of personal freedom.

In 1979, the effervescence of the 1960s and 1970s had been replaced by broad dialogue about social and religious issues. This along with the large number of Marianists in the Dayton area and the professionalism of the campus provided many, many opportunities to explore new insights and creative solutions to important questions of the day.

During this time I had the opportunity to serve as the Dayton-area coordinator for the Marianist Voluntary Services Communities and had exposure to and experience with a large number of dedicated young people who were eager to serve in situations of poverty and injustice. This work provided me with experiences that broadened my understanding of justice issues and introduced me to the important role of the Marianists in promoting social justice and serving in situations of deprivation.

As principal of St. Joseph High School in the mid 1960s with 2,000 boys in my charge at a relatively young age, I had a unique, never-to-be-repeated experience of having to balance an array of strong forces centered at the time in the Church, civil society and educational circles. The Vatican Council, the Vietnam war, the civil rights struggle and consequent educational reforms all came together to produce a climate which, to say the least, were, as the Chinese proverb says, “interesting times.” This era produced situations distinctive of the times: the Vietnam war, with men becoming teachers to avoid the draft; reforms in religious life, including the loss of men in droves; students and faculty praying in tongues; race riots in urban areas; “Hair” the musical and all that went with it;

university students gunned down by National Guard troops... All of these forces were influencing educational decisions, which made for interesting times.

A couple years of graduate studies afterwards allowed me to find meaning and educational insight from what had been six hectic years.