

Bro. John Samaha, S.M.
60 years of profession



As the youngest of the four children of my Lebanese immigrant parents, John and Anna Samaha, and the only boy, I was born and raised in San Francisco and grew up in St. James Parish. Neither of my parents had the benefit of formal education, but they valued highly the importance of a sound education. At St. James Boys Grammar School, I was entrusted to the care of the Brothers of Mary beginning in the fourth grade. Then I attended St. Ignatius High School. But the Marianists had made a lasting

impression on me, and early in my high school years the idea of becoming a Brother began to gel. Later I enjoyed living with some of my early teachers in several Marianist communities. They were my heroes.

The same month that I graduated from high school the Pacific Province was formed, and I was the Province's first new candidate when I arrived at the Marianist novitiate in Beacon, N.Y. Entire new worlds opened for me at that time and during college years at Maryhurst near St. Louis and at Mount St. John and the University of Dayton. Adjustments were sometimes difficult, but life was always challenging and interesting. I was eager to begin teaching, but diffident about being prepared.

Once propelled into the world of Marianist Catholic education I served in high schools at Alameda, Los Angeles, and San Francisco in California, and later in Walla Walla, Wash. As the sole Marianist pioneer in the opening year of the new St. Joseph School in Cornet Chahwan, Lebanon, I taught elementary age students, and this was a fascinating experience in the culture of my parental heritage.

Interspersed with the teaching assignments I served as assistant novice director three times (twice in Santa Cruz and once in Cupertino), and in full-time positions with the San Francisco Archdiocesan Department of Education, the Oakland Diocesan Catechetical Ministry Office, the San Francisco Bay Area Catholic ETV Center, at a parish shrine, with a Catholic religious education publishing company, and in public relations efforts for two Catholic universities.

As a contributed service and to represent the Brother's vocation I served on and chaired various committees in the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the Diocese of San Jose.

Thrust into such a variety of assignments, I was a jack of many trades and a master of none, and generally ill-prepared for the challenges. But God's grace was sufficient for survival. A redeeming feature in all these instances was working with many truly wonderful people, some of whom became lifelong friends.

For all these opportunities to serve and for all of the exemplary persons I encountered, Marianists and others, I am very grateful to God and to our Blessed Mother.