

## **Bro. Hugh Bihl**

*Celebrating 60 years of profession*

My Marianist life began when I was a freshman at Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York. I strolled into the opening session of the after-school Sodality meeting season and heard then-Brother Robert Mackey speaking eloquently about "her big job" (i.e., Mary's) and how we could be a part of it. I was hooked instantly.

Many unexpected developments followed -- including leadership within the Sodality movement, which included heading up the post-graduate Sodality after Father Bertrand Clemens, its founder, had fled to Dayton to take over as Master of Scholastics. Like the first Marianists, I came to the S.M. through a strong lay commitment and have always seen the two as intertwined.

After eight years of high school teaching, I was appointed to the newly-created position of Province Sodality Secretary with headquarters at U.D. Among other things, I founded the American version of "The State of Religious Living in the World," which has echoes of Father Chaminade's work in Bordeaux and which still exists today. Eventually I wound up at Fordham University going graduate work in theology and some time later received a PhD. Soon after there followed a fascinating stint at Xavier University of New Orleans, North America's only black Catholic university, a mind-blowing experience which probably opened the way for my move to Africa.

Then followed ten years in Kenya, climaxed by years of teaching at Saint Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Nairobi. There I experienced the struggle many Africans have integrating their Africanness with their recently-found Christianity. I tried to join in as well as I could, which resulted in a great learning experience for me.

The next major event in my life was moving to the Philippines to teach Marianist ways to novices and aspirants. I came to see the Foundation of the Philippines as really crucial for our whole mission in Asia, even though we're just at the beginning there. I am very optimistic about our future possibilities there.