

Bro. John Dempsey

Celebrating 50 years of profession

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, to James Dempsey and Mary Graham, both offspring of Irish immigrants, I am the fourth of six siblings now scattered in Cleveland, Chicago, Atlanta, Marietta (GA), Seattle, and myself in Los Angeles. We attended Catholic schools from K-12 and we are grateful to the Ursuline Nuns of Cleveland who educated us in elementary school. My father graduated from the old Cathedral Latin School in 1923 and had the “Brothers of Mary” who wore the Prince Albert suits, of whom he highly revered. We grew up in Cleveland Heights near University Circle where Latin was located and all four boys graduated from there—Tom, ’53, Jim, ’59, myself, ’61 and Mike, ’65. We appreciated our Marianist education.

I truly believe that the word “vocation” is a *calling* because that is how I became interested in religious life. At various times I was invited to consider becoming a vowed religious. I filled out a vocation inquiry card as a freshman at Cathedral Latin and was visited by the province recruiter, Bro. Leonard Kuntz. I declined his invite to me because I wanted to graduate from Cathedral Latin School. Later on Bro. Chris Conlon, my Latin language teacher, Bro. Joe Bischoff, math teacher / yearbook moderator, and Bro. George Dury, junior religion teacher, all “invited” me on different occasions. I made a senior class retreat at St. Stanislaus Jesuit Retreat House which was preached by Marianist Fr. Karl Wilhelm, my sophomore religion teacher. It was there on St. Patrick’s Day in 1961 that I resolved to become a Marianist lay religious. By early July after graduation, I took the train to the Marianist Novitiate in Marcy, NY. Thankfully, I never had any crisis where I wanted to “turn back” as described in the autobiography of an ex-religious entitled “*I Leap Over the Wall.*” Sometimes as the novitiate bell rang in the early morning calling us to Mass as I was tying my shoes, I would dazedly muse to myself, “I wonder about this if there wasn’t a God...”

In reviewing the “*Novitiate 1962 Souvenir*” booklet, I quote St. John the Apostle, my Patron Saint, “*Let us not love in word neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth*” which happened to be the motto of Cathedral Latin School, “*Opere et Veritate.*” Living this motto for me is an ideal *yet a daily cross* to personally practice what I preach.

After graduating from Dayton, I moved on to provide service to youth primarily as a secondary school counselor for 45 years at St. Joseph H.S. (Cleveland, OH, 1966-78), Chaminade H.S. (Hollywood, FL, 1978-79), North Catholic H.S. (Pittsburgh, PA, 1979-2000,) Villa Angela-St. Joseph H.S. (Cleveland, 2000-2010), and Chaminade College Preparatory H.S. (Los Angeles, CA, 2010-present).

I had some very interesting summer experiences: 1) working with disadvantaged youth at St. John's Home, Rockaway Beach, NY; 2) teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to students from Spain at St. Laurence College, Dublin, Ireland; and 3) assisting an Italian youngster from Rome who came to Pittsburgh with her parents for a successful liver transplant. I am thankful to Bro. Paul Forgach (+RIP 1996), classmate and entertaining story-teller, who encouraged and mentored me to do the ESL program in Ireland for four summers. Afterwards, he was able to regale us on our travels which made them sound more interesting and unbelievable than what really happened.

In 1967 when I applied to our Superior General in Rome for perpetual vows in the Society of Mary, I stated, *"I would like to more explicitly and perpetually profess the Marianist life of total consecration and service to the people of God."* I wanted to *"dedicate myself to the Church as a Marianist religious leading souls to Mary's Son."* I am happy to renew this dedication at our Jubilee celebration. I want to especially thank my deceased parents, both active Legion of Mary members, who created a loving Catholic environment which nourished my calling to the consecrated life.