

BRO. TOM GIARDINO

Celebrating 50 years of profession

On the first day of the novitiate, I was given to read Fr. William Ferree's "Program of Studies in Marianist Documents." The adventure of reading that book changed my life and set the trajectory for my prayer, community life and ministries. I became enthralled with the life and vision of Fr. Chaminade for the Marianist Family in its varied expressions.

It was in 1998 that I realized that the simple dream I had as a teenager to gather my relatives into one family business was the basis for God's more significant dream for me. In fact what I had been doing – and continue to do – was to gather folks around the Marianist Family table and try to connect their own dreams to those of our Founders in service of Mary's mission.

It was my great grace to have a mentor in Hugh Bihl, SM, who continually asked me challenging questions and blessed my journey. He helped me to learn from my avid reading of Marianist documents and to make them real through MLC work in high schools and with adults in Pittsburgh, Kalamazoo and around the Marianist world. I kept learning by serving on Provincial and General Administrations with the many struggles to keep the vision alive. All this seems one movement to me, not disparate activities. Throughout, I have been grounded in a Marianist community with persons diverse and delightful – well, most of the time.

I would never have expected any of this as an only child who said in his senior year of high school, "Well, I guess I am going to be a brother" to an initial vocation conversation. The week before I had gone on a college tour with my parents and they, like myself, thought that if I didn't make it as a professional baseball player I would take over the family real estate business, marry the girl I was dating and give them the grandchildren they were longing for. My first years in the Society of Mary were tough for them, but God's grace touched their heart. So we both had our dreams fulfilled in mysterious ways beyond our expectations.