

BRO. BILL FARRELL

Celebrating 50 years of profession

My life as a member of the Society of Mary has been filled with challenges and many blessings. Although few, we band of brothers form a great group of people. Despite our dysfunctions we are still able to work together and inspire others.

Like the Blessed Virgin Mary our best work in my opinion occurs when we are in the background of the forefront. Despite the prevailing culture I have been able to seek and at times find a way of being a religious in an often hostile climate and at times within the oppressive structures of the church.

I have consciously tried to align myself with the poor and the marginalized who often times by the circumstances of their lives are not or cannot live up to the norms of the powerful. The Jesus that I have come to know doesn't demand conformity of thinking or of being. What Jesus is looking for is not so much conformity to the correct norms or thinking as such as integrity of heart.

As chaplain of the Santa Clara County Jail system I was quick to learn from the prisoners that it is not 'there but for the grace of God go I' but rather "there with the grace of God go I." I have come to realize that the Lord is interested in those who are outside the structures, outside the norms, those who are marginal: the leper, the Samaritan, the centurion, the blind, the adulterers. Jesus is someone who liberates them from the rigid law and structures. He engaged them and walked with them as brother. And thus our very way of life could be called into question; our experience of church; our faith; our values and our knowledge and recognition of Jesus of Nazareth.

By this I have been challenged to discover a new world order in the Gospel. Every time that my path has crossed that of a poor person, his or her experience has opened a new part for me to find a new encounter with the Gospel and the compassion of God and thus with Jesus himself.

As a Marianist I have had the opportunity to help folks find their own way to the man of compassion. Once they find Him they have no difficulty in recognizing in the Suffering Servant the mystery of God in Jesus of Nazareth. I hope by my life that I have helped a few in these past 50 years to find this treasure. I look forward with hope and look back with gratitude and continue to struggle to build a new world.