



The Marianists

FR. JOHN A. LEIES

60 years of ordination

As a Marianist, I have been able to work with many dedicated people (priests, religious, lay), young and old. I have been called to engage in teaching, counseling, administration and various forms of sacramental ministries. While not totally aware of what my work has accomplished, I have felt that it has contributed, through the grace of God, to the growth of the Church. This has given me a sense of helping to fulfill God's plan for the world.

I grew up in St. Michael's Parish on the near-North Side of Chicago. My parents were of German and German-Swiss descent, hard-working Catholics. Two younger sisters and a younger brother completed the family. I attended St. Michael's grade school and high school. Although two of my uncles — Bro. Herbert Leies and Fr. John G. Leies — were Marianists, I rarely had the occasion to see them. However, my contact with Marianists at St. Michael's High School was daily. I came to admire them and desired to follow their way of life. Those most memorable and influential to me included: Bros. Ed Goerdt, Gene Feld and Ed Dunne. In 1943, I entered the novitiate of the Society of Mary in Galesville, Wisconsin. I made first vows in 1944. My life as a Marianist unfolded quickly: a year at Maryhurst Normal (St. Louis), completion of university studies at the University of Dayton (1947), an appointment to teach at Don Bosco High School (Milwaukee, 1948 to 1952), assignment to the Marianist Seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland, (1952 to 1958) and ordination (1956).

After returning to the United States, I was appointed chaplain and teacher at Don Bosco High School, provincial assistant for religious life of the province of St. Louis, followed by designation as superior of the region of Peru. After that, I was appointed chaplain and teacher at Chaminade High School (St. Louis, 1968 to 1974). Since 1974, I have been at St. Mary's University in San Antonio as president for three years, academic vice-president for three years, chair of the theology department and chaplain/teacher for the other years.

I believe that a religious vocation is always, first and foremost, a work of grace, a calling from God. I thank the Lord and His mother for the graces of these past years, 60 of which I have served as a Marianist priest.