



The Marianists

Bro. Thomas Jalbert

50 years of profession

In 1965, I discovered the Marianists in “The Guidepost: Religious Vocations for Young Men.” I did not attend a school conducted by the Marianists; I attended a high school conducted by a different religious order. Fr. Joe Stefanelli was the first Marianist I met on Oct. 2, 1965.

I was attracted to the Marianists by the idea of the mixed composition of priests and brothers living in community without distinction. Then, I did not realize how different the Marianists were from other religious congregations — mixed composition with equality of membership, family spirit and a strong sense of community. I also have tried to live out these qualities in working in my ministry. So many of my colleagues have commented that they always felt at home in a Marianist community. Colleagues have commented that, when they were with the Marianists, they felt like they were with their real or natural families.

For the majority of my years as a Marianist, I have worked in a high school ministry setting. I have ministered mainly at Saint Louis School and Archbishop Riordan High School. In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, I assisted Father Rollie Bunda in establishing the retreat program at Saint Louis School and was director of campus at from 1986 to 1992. I was the librarian at Archbishop Riordan High School from 1992 to 2011, assisted with their retreat program and with the Kairos retreat program. This ministry has helped me form relationships with former colleagues, students and parents.

Prayer always has been an important part of my Marianist life. I am nourished by the example of my fellow brothers when we pray together. My spiritual journey has been nourished by the writings of Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and William Barry. Mary is an important person in my prayer life. I try to imitate her example of faith. I am especially nourished and inspired when we celebrate her feast days in our liturgical life. Like Mary, I ponder and reflect daily on the words of scripture — especially the daily Eucharist readings.

I am the only child of parents who married in their 40s. From June 1983 to January 1986, I was the caregiver for my parents; I lived with them and cared for them until their deaths. The Province of the Pacific allowed me to be with them, and Father John Bolin was especially supportive of this. This was a grace for them and a grace for me, as well.

In addition to mixed composition, I also was attracted to the Marianists for education and training. I was impressed that these were well-educated men; both of my parents only completed eighth grade. I was able to earn a bachelor of arts, a master of arts in library science and a master of arts in religious studies. I also have been allowed to attend workshops, audit summer theology classes at University of Notre Dame and allowed to purchase books for my continued formation.

As a young boy, I became interested in family history and genealogy. This has been a lifelong passion: I have collected genealogical information, and I have organized this information into family history books, which I present to family members. This work has connected me with many family members, and I am in contact with multiple generations of cousins. This contact with so many family members has been a real grace for me.