



## **FATHER GEORGE J. CERNIGLIA**

*50 years of ordination*

**“The favors of the Lord are not exhausted, God’s mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning, so great is God’s faithfulness.” [Lamentations 3: 22-23]**

Without a doubt, these words of Scripture are foremost in my sentiments as I mark 50 years of ordination and 61 years of Marianist religious life.

I was born in Brooklyn, New York, to Rose (Zito) and Paul Cerniglia. Although I have only one sibling — my brother, Anthony — I was nurtured in the wider family of my Italian heritage. Grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins were a large and important part of growing up.

At Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York, I was taken by the dedication and spirit of the Marianist priests and brothers who were my teachers and guides. Their dedication, example and professionalism led me to the postulate in Beacon, New York, after my sophomore year of high school. After two years there, I spent a year of novitiate in Marcy, New York, and professed first vows in 1958, the Lourdes Year, commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions there.

After studies in education at the University of Dayton, I taught Latin and English at Covington Catholic High School in Kentucky and at Chaminade High School in Mineola, New York. Following theological studies in Fribourg, Switzerland, and St. Louis University, in Missouri, I was ordained for priestly ministry in 1969 and taught religion at Cardinal Gibbons High School in Baltimore for four years.

With a great trust in divine providence, I responded to the call of the province to serve in formation ministry. I had a year of preparation at the Institute of Religious Formation in St. Louis. With 45 other religious from around the world, I laid the foundation for what would be a long ministry to the growth and development of our newest members. Thus, for more than 30 years, my service to the Church and the Society of Mary has been to help those in initial formation — aspirants, novices, temporary professed — to discern and deepen their religious commitment.

For seven years, I served as the rector of the seminary community in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Those were grace-filled and challenging years, grappling with issues in the Church and the world in an ecumenical and educational environment. I was fortunate

to be able to teach and study for a doctor of ministry degree at the Toronto School of Theology.

Under the provincial leadership of John McGrath and Patrick Tonry in the former New York Province, I was blessed to serve as assistant for religious life. While Stephen Glodek was provincial of the New York Province, I served as his assistant for eight years.

Although not elected as a delegate to the General Chapter of 2001, I was invited to participate with voice but no vote in my capacity as president of the Marianist Conference. Unexpectedly, I was then called to serve in the General Administration as assistant for religious life. While all of my years in religious life have been filled with blessings, those five years in Rome were extremely rewarding. To have the grace to experience our Marianist charism in so many parts of our world was an unbelievable blessing. What a wonderful and widespread Marianist Family we have! It makes me both proud and hopeful.

Following a year of sabbatical, 2006-2007, I was once again called to service in the Province of the United States as assistant for religious life. When my three-year term ended in 2010, I was asked to minister at Chaminade University of Honolulu in Hawaii. For a year, I served as associate rector under the guidance of Bro. Jerry Bommer. Following that year of apprenticeship, I assumed the responsibilities of rector. University ministry was new to me, but the Hawaiian and Marianist spirits are so closely aligned that I adjusted quickly. After five years as rector, I transitioned to the Office of Chaplain of the University. After eight years of ministry in Hawaii, I was asked to move to parish ministry as Associate Pastor of Our Lady of the Pillar Parish in St. Louis, Missouri.

In the journey of these 50 years of priestly ministry as a Marianist, I have been blessed so immensely. During this jubilee year — and, really, every day — I am so pointedly aware that indeed, God's favors are never exhausted and that they are renewed morning after morning!

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