



BROTHER JAMES VORNDRAN

60 years of profession

Surprise!

As I look back to 60 years ago, I really don't remember having any kind of special aspirations other than being a Marianist and teaching. The then-Cincinnati province had just started a school in Nigeria, but that was far from my mind. I had never been an outstanding student, nor had I ever been interested in sports. After two years of study at University of Dayton, I was asked if I would be willing to "go out early" to teach English and religion. It was an opportunity, I thought, and I agreed, only to find out the day before I entered the classroom that I would be teaching typing to five seniors and a typing-spelling class to one freshman. It was the first real surprise in my career as a Marianist. It also came as quite a shock since I never really had learned to type, and I had failed typing at North Catholic high school, simply because the teacher and I were like oil and water. In the end, my students actually did learn to type — and so did I!

Teaching typing and actually seeing those kids learn how to type gave me a sense of courage and a willingness to try new things, even if I didn't know much about them. I saw such things as challenges and opportunities and, since then, my life has been filled with opportunities and challenges. I have benefited from them by being willing to take a challenge and a risk. Furthermore, I always have found learning new things to be satisfying and exciting.

New challenges continually have presented themselves — either from the situations in which I found myself or actually from within me. My father always encouraged me to take risks and try new things, and that included going to Africa when I was 23 years old. At some point early in my Marianist life, I remember Father William Ferree saying "a Marianist can do anything." Rather than being a single surprise, my life has been a string of many surprises.

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