



FATHER J. DONALD CAHILL

70 years of profession

I begin my reflections on 70 years as a Marianist recalling the Scriptural purpose of a jubilee celebration. For our Hebrew ancestors, jubilees were a call to return to an original state of covenant relationship with God. All debts were forgiven; all land exchanges reversed to the original owners; and so, each believer was to renew his original covenant with God and accept a new beginning of pardon and grace. All of them would remember how God has been active in their personal lives.

So, as I recall my life journey as a Marianist, I go back to seventh grade at Holy Redeemer School in Detroit, Michigan. The school no longer exists, but I still recall and enjoy the memory of my first contacts. That was 1940; some of my teachers, including Fr. Glennon McCarty, Bro. Theodore Hoeffken and Bro. James Pieper, kept in contact with me. So, in the summer of 1948, I went to the novitiate in Galesville, Wisconsin, to discern whether I had a calling to the Society of Mary.

I made first vows on Sept. 24, 1949. It was the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy!

I made scholastic at three different campuses: first year at Maryhurst in St. Louis, second year at University of Dayton, and third year at St. Mary's University in the newly built Charles Francis Residence Hall in San Antonio, Texas. I graduated from St. Mary's University in August 1952. My first teaching assignment was at St. Mary's High School for four years and then one year at Central Catholic High School in San Antonio before going to the International Marianist Seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland.

I spent five years at our seminary. It was my first experience of the Society as an international religious family. It was an experience of broad human differences and backgrounds that came together to build a religious family and community. I returned from the seminary in 1962 and began my priestly ministry at Vianney High School in St. Louis.

From 1962 until 1975, I taught in several schools: Vianney, McBride and Nolan in Fort Worth, Texas, then St. Mary's High School in St. Louis and back to Vianney. From 1975 until 1981, I was chaplain for St. Francis Medical Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. While learning to be a hospital chaplain, I took a six-month course in clinical pastoral education. It was a very meaningful course that taught me how to meet and approach

people with an openness to their needs rather than going to them with a definite agenda.

In 1981, I returned to a province mission by becoming an associate pastor at Our Lady of the Pillar Parish in St. Louis. In 1983, I was given a sabbatical year at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. — another opportunity to see my life as a journey with unexpected curves and turning points that help see God's and Mary's presence and guidance in life. The sabbatical was an experience to make changes in my attitudes about life and how I was living it to assist Mary in her mission.

I returned to the parish after my sabbatical. In 1993, I began teaching Scripture full-time at Vianney High School but still living at the parish and helping out on weekends. It proved to be the best of both worlds. In 2002, I retired from full-time teaching at Vianney. I stayed on at Our Lady of the Pillar until, in 2005, I was asked to help out at Mercy Siena Retirement Center in Dayton, Ohio. I worked there until I was allowed to return to the Curé of Ars Community at Vianney High School. And it is here, to the brothers and to the students and faculty of St. John Vianney High School that I continue to try to be helpful in any way I can.

I am a blessed person. During these 70 years, I have been blessed by the Lord and His Mother most generously. I thank my fellow brothers, my friends and my family for their prayers and encouragement throughout these years. Their support has made it all possible!

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