



The Marianists

FATHER GERALD C. HABY

50 years of ordination

As I wrote in my 50th anniversary of profession autobiography, I was a reluctant religious and priestly vocation. I went to St. Mary's University in San Antonio in 1952 for reasons other than religious but seeking the answer to my question, "*How can I, given my talents and abilities, do the most good for the greatest number of people?*" I spent two years discerning whether to major in physics, zoology (with a goal of outdoor art), and thinking about chemistry (with a goal of pharmacy). In my sophomore year, I decided on a geology major because it combined my desires to be a scientist who worked outdoors — after either a career in professional baseball (and, subsequently, coaching), or the military — and, after retirement, buy a ranch and become a rancher.

During that time, I met the Marianists: the priests, as teachers and confessors; the brothers, as teachers and coaches. Their lifestyle and their work with young men were more attractive than my previous perception of the work done by diocesan priests, a call to which I had been rejecting since grade school. (How ironic: I would spend 20 of my 64 years as a Marianist administrator or pastor of four different parishes in four different cities, and in three different Texas dioceses!)

My choice to change from being a secular layman to a religious layman — and, eventually, a cleric — happened one night during my college sophomore year, at a country-western dance where, instead of dancing, I was drinking and thinking. I pictured myself next to my grave at the age of 80, and I asked myself if I went "up" or "down." I decided to take out some "eternal life insurance" by becoming a Marianist priest.

But, like Jonah, I still had plans other than those God foresaw for me. He (God) must really have enjoyed it when He frustrated my attempt to evade my call by moving: a) my feet — by granting my condition for giving the novitiate a try — but, b) not yet my heart — something He would accomplish, little by little as I learned, little by little, how to fulfill my baptismal commitment of becoming evermore like Jesus. I did this by learning and living the Marianist charism in 11 cities in six U.S. states, as well as in 12 cities in five countries, on three continents.

Now, semi-retired, (no longer having to prepare classes, moderate activities or administrate a parish) while still functioning as a Marianist priest for my fellow Marianists and as a substitute priest throughout the San Antonio Archdiocese, I am

doing what I can — with the help of the Holy Spirit in every moment and all my actions — to be sensitive and faithful to His inspirations, so that I can give a positive answer to the conversion question I posed to myself 65 years ago by going “up” with Jesus and Our Blessed Mother when they come to lead me into the presence of our heavenly Father for His evaluation of my life.

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