



## The Marianists

### **FATHER JOSÉ RAMIREZ**

*50 years of ordination*

It has been said that “our God is a God of surprises.” My reflections on my vocation as a Marianist bring me to a similar conclusion. If God could surprise Mary and invite her to respond to an unexpected call to be the Mother of Jesus, and if God could surprise Joseph to accept her and become her husband, the foster parent of Jesus, then — on perhaps an entirely different scale — why could not God surprise me and call me to be a Marianist over 60 years ago?

I met my first Marianist, Fr. Ralph Dyer, when I was a junior at Laneri High School in Fort Worth, Texas. In one of his presentations, Fr. Ralph invited anyone interested in becoming a Marianist to come visit him during one of the silent breaks of the retreat. Frankly, I liked what I saw in Fr. Ralph, so I took him up on his invitation. And, as it is said, “The rest is history.”

Any response to an invitation from God is a response in faith. One never knows where a “yes” to God will take you. We know that God’s love does not come to us in a vacuum. It is incarnational, and God reaches us through others’ love and care for us. So, I am thankful for those persons who, through my years as a Marianist, have, in many loving, challenging ways, encouraged and supported my vocation as a Marianist. These are too many to acknowledge by name, but do include many of my Marianist brothers in community and the members of our MAGNIFICAT faith- and prayer-sharing group, here in St. Louis. I also include many special friends from my ministry with Worldwide Marriage Encounter many years ago. They have shared with me the beauty and challenges of their vocations as they live out their vocations as married couples.

They have believed in me and helped me keep growing and responding to my vocation as a priest in the Marianist family. Mary’s vocation began with a “yes” and continued with much daily faithful pondering and reflecting on where her initial “yes” was leading her.

My prayer is that I can keep learning from her in my vocation as a Marianist.

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