



FATHER THOMAS SCHROER

Celebrating 60 years of profession

I love Frederick Buechner's definition of a vocation as "your deep passion (or gladness) meeting the world's deep need." My deep gladness was first expressed around the age of 8 or so, one night while riding with my family in our 1949 two-door Chevrolet along Ohio Rt. 127. We were passing the Precious Blood seminary in Carthagena, Ohio, returning home from visiting our lovable, petite, grey-haired Grandma Schroer. Sitting between my sisters on the floor, I announced from the backseat, "I'm going to that seminary one day." The courtship period for my deep passion and the world's deep needs began in my teen years at the Marianist Chaminade High School in Dayton, Ohio. The actual commitment at age 19 and our "honeymoon" took place during my novitiate in Marcy, New York.

It was at Purcell High School, in my 20s, and later, after ordination, with the Marianist Family in Pittsburgh that I began to experience concretely the "world's deep needs." Certainly, being the director of novices at a very young age presented a particular challenge in meeting the world's deepest needs during those turbulent post-Vatican II days. Of course, a "lifelong love affair" often has its share of infatuation, idealization, disappointment, infidelity, sorrow and reconciliation. Mine has not been an exception, but fortunately, I always can say the passion and gladness has deepened, often in unexpected ways and, thanks to the support of others, and, no doubt, my surprising and lavish Creator.

My father's death when he was only 57 and I was 26, as well as later "falling in love," brought groundbreaking pain, which eventually further cemented the bond between my deep passion and recognizing deep needs all around me. The depth and scope of the world's needs became even more evident to me as a clinical psychologist at University of Dayton and Miami Valley Hospital. My mother's passing, experiencing prostate cancer, a heart attack, bypass surgery, and sharing the last moments of more than 25 fellow Marianists at Mercy Siena not only further revealed the extent of our world's deep needs, but also my severe limitations in responding to those needs — all resulting in my increased reliance on the Spirit of the Risen Christ. Wow! So much for which to be thankful and more to come. Stand by.

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