



## **FATHER THOMAS SCHROER**

*Celebrating 50 years of ordination*

I love Frederick Buechner's definition of a vocation as where "your deep passion (or gladness) meets the world's deep need." My "deep passion" was introduced to "the world's deep need" way back in 1956 at the tender age of 14, at Marianist Chaminade High School in Dayton, Ohio. That relationship, like many enduring partnerships, has been a story of infatuation and exaltation as well as idealization — accompanied by disappointment, anger and agony — all leading eventually to a certain mature and loving "very comfortable fit."

Deep passion had its "honeymoon" in the Novitiate at Marcy, New York, in 1960-61 when it was fully introduced to its new partner, "the world's deep need," thus beginning a lifelong love affair, which, of course, has had its share of disappointment, infidelity, sorrow and reconciliation. How else can a loving relationship grow? Eventually, more attention was paid to "the world's deep need" when teaching at Purcell High School in Cincinnati as well as ministry with the Marianist Family in Pittsburgh after ordination.

The sudden death of my father when he was only 57, as well as "falling in love," brought groundbreaking pain which eventually helped to further cement the bond between my "deep passion" and "the world's deep need." The depth of "the world's need" became even more evident to me as a clinical psychologist in the Counseling Center at University of Dayton and then in the Department of Pastoral Care and Counseling at Miami Valley Hospital in Dayton. Prostate cancer and a heart attack followed by bypass surgery, my mother's passing and sharing the last moments of more than 25 fellow Marianists at Mercy Siena further revealed to me not only my own deep need but also my limitations in responding to "the world's deep need."

In many ways, up until the last 15 years of my life, I was 50 percent psychologist and 50 percent priest in my professional life. Then came retirement as a psychologist and the beginning of full-time priestly ministry, especially as Pastor of Queen of Apostles Parish. Never expecting to ever become a pastor, the QAC community has pulled out of me new aspects of my deep passion and challenged me to meet its “deep needs” as a 100 percent priest with an advanced psychological background. What a blessing to be challenged to integrate my psychological background into my priestly role and identity. My “passion” all along was to integrate psychology with my spirituality and my faith in order to meet “the world’s deep need.” QAC has enabled me to come full circle, i.e., ending up fulfilling my initial hopes and dreams and answering the call of my vocation. Thank you, everyone.