



## **BROTHER DONALD SMITH**

*Celebrating 60 years of Profession*

The counsel from Mary, “Do whatever He tells you,” has been a constant source of direction in my vocational life. From my earliest years to the present day, Mary has been a guiding star.

In grade school, a Sister of Notre Dame encouraged my mother to send me to art lessons. In high school, a Brother of Mary encouraged me on a path to my vocation as a Marianist. It was not until I was 28 that I finally had the courage to do what he was telling me to do over the years. By that time, as the tradition in the SM says, I was speckled fruit. However, no matter how speckled I was, I knew that as soon as I stepped on the Novitiate property in Marcy, NY, and met my Novice Master, Fr. Fred Mathues, I had found my proper direction.

Because I was ten years older than my fellow novices, I was looked upon as a wisdom figure by them, and following our founder, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade’s motto, “Do whatever He tells you,” I had a joyful Novitiate year. I professed my First Vows on Feb. 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, in 1963.

After more studies during my scholasticate at Mt. St. John’s, I was assigned to the community at North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, PA, the home of the Trojans.

In those days, we had no say in where we were assigned. We gathered at the University of Dayton chapel, and the assignment list was read from the pulpit. Like it or not, that's how you discovered where you were going. "Do whatever he tells you."

That's when I found out that there was more meaning to that motto. At North Catholic, there already was an art teacher, so I was assigned to teach religion- four junior classes and one sophomore. Having had no training in teaching religion and coming on the scene of the Second Vatican Council, I was at a loss, and the students knew it. That was a year that tested my vocation and my sanity. It was only with the help of Mary's counsel, "Do whatever He tells you," that I was able to survive. You might say it was similar to the miracle Jesus performed at Mary's request.

Over the years, I have had many wonderful experiences following that counsel. Some of them were at my request and others at the request of the Society of Mary authorities.

At North Catholic, I worked closely with Fr. Mathues, developing a strong retreat program. As a result, when I had finished six years of teaching there, Fr. Tom Stanley from the provincial administration asked me to direct high school retreats at Bergamo Center. Having done that for three years, I asked to return to the classroom. This time, I was able to teach art at Chaminade Julienne and one summer, at the invitation of Bro. John Jansen, I volunteered to spend eight weeks in Appalachia, supporting UD students living and working there in one of the poorest counties in Eastern KY. That turned into a time of 13 summers where I set up a house and recruited Marianists from all the US provinces to help UD students. That led to Fr. Bert Buby's request that I join the Campus Ministry team at UD and direct the service organizations. When I left Campus Ministry, after nine years, I asked for and received permission to pursue my career as a professional artist, leading to my cooperation with other Marianist artists in establishing the Gallery St. John on the property at Mt. St. John. Then came another Provincial Administration request, in the person of Bro. Ron Overman, I become the

director at Governor's Island. Shortly after assuming that position, I suggested we begin a Family Vacation Retreat program on the island, similar to those held at Cape May. We have been running that program for several years and look forward to its continuation in July.

After serving as director of the Governor's Island community for nine years, I returned to Dayton. Ten years later, Bro. Charley Johnson, acting on behalf of the provincial administration, requested that I return to support Bro. Roger Bau.

This is where I am today, looking back over 60 years and continuing on with the aid of one of Blessed Fr. Chaminade's favorite Scripture quotes, "Do whatever He tells you."

As you can see, the counsel of Mary has led me on a truly awesome adventure. It's one I would never have taken on my own without the support of my family, both natural and Marianist.