



Father James Russell

Celebrating 60 years Ordination

As a grade-schooler at St. Norbert parish in Pittsburgh, I greatly admired our associate pastor. This led me to choose the priesthood as my vocation, and I entered a high school seminary. Having failed freshman algebra, I had to take it in summer school. It was available at North Catholic, where I met some impressive Marianists. Brothers Joseph Panzer, Richard Dinneen and Bernard Plogman come to mind. As they say, the rest is history. I completed high school at Mount St. John and made the novitiate and first profession of vows at Marcy,

N.Y., in 1951.

After graduation from the University of Dayton, I was assigned to teach in a variety of places: Washington, D.C.; Rio Piedras and Ponce, Puerto Rico; and Pittsburgh. Other short assignments followed ordination in 1964: one semester in campus ministry at UD, one at Chaminade in Dayton, two years at Chaminade College School in Toronto, and five at Chaminade in Dayton. Next followed two years as director of novices and a long period of campus ministry at UD until June 1995, followed by pastoral work in Hollywood, Fla.; San Antonio; and Coatzacoalcos, Mexico, until 2002; at Governor's Island from 2002 to 2014; at the UD Alumni Hall Community volunteering with campus ministry from 2014 to 2022, and then became a member of the Health Care Community (Siena Woods/St. Leonard) in 2022 until the present.

I believe this variety contributed to my flexibility and willingness to serve where needed. Working with young adults in high school and university ministry has been enriching, and parish ministry has given me a strong sense of compassion for those struggling with difficult life situations. Expressions of appreciation from others remind me that it is the Lord and not I who has been the minister.

Finally, I am profoundly grateful for having been called to the Marianist life – a life of ministry and service flowing from faith and Fr. Chaminade's charism. The motto I chose in the novitiate was "Behold your Mother." I thank God for Mary's presence and action in my life and ministry. May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary.