



## Rev. Gerald Haby, SM

### *Celebrating 70 years of Profession*

As I wrote in my 50th-anniversary autobiography, I was a reluctant religious and priestly vocation. Born in Hondo, TX, in 1934, I am the oldest of seven brothers and two sisters who grew up on a farm and ranch near the hamlet of Rio Medina, TX, about 25 miles west of San Antonio. After finishing both grade school and high school at St. Louis Parish School in Castroville, TX, I went to St. Mary's University in San Antonio in 1952 for reasons other than religious, but seeking the answer to my question, "How can I, given my talents and abilities, do the most good for the greatest number of people?" I spent two years discerning whether to major in physics,

zoology (with a goal of outdoor art) and "thinking about" chemistry (with a goal of pharmacy). In my sophomore year, I decided on a geology major because it combined my desires to be a scientist who worked outdoors—after either a career in professional baseball (and, subsequently, coaching) or the military, and, after retirement, buy a ranch and become a rancher.

During my secular time at St. Mary's, I met the Marianists: the priests, as teachers and confessors; the brothers, as teachers and coaches. Their lifestyle and their work with young men were more attractive than my previous perception of the work done by diocesan priests, a call to which I had been rejecting since grade school. How ironic that I would spend 20 of my 70 years as a Marianist as an administrator or pastor of four different parishes in four different cities in four different Texas dioceses—Christ the King in Kilgore (1985-1992), St. Michael in Mount Pleasant (1992-1997), St. Mary of the Assumption in Fort Worth (1997-2001), and St. Michael in San Antonio (2002-2005).

My choice to change from being a secular layman to a religious layman—and, eventually, a cleric—happened one night during my college sophomore year at a country-western dance, where, instead of dancing, I was drinking and thinking. I pictured myself next to my grave at the age of 80, and I asked myself if I went "up" or "down."

Then and there, I decided to take out some "eternal life insurance" by becoming a Marianist priest. But, like Jonah, I still had plans other than those God foresaw for me. He must really have enjoyed frustrating my attempt to evade the call by moving my feet, granting my condition for "giving the novitiate a try" (hitting for a better batting average in my sophomore year than in my freshman year as the catcher for the St. Mary's varsity baseball team) but not yet my heart, something He would accomplish, little by little, as I learned, little by little, how to fulfill my baptismal commitment of becoming ever more like Jesus. I did this by learning and living the Marianist Charism in multiple locations in six U.S. states, five countries, and three continents.

And so I left St. Mary's University in 1954, moving directly to the Novitiate in Galesville, Wisconsin for a two-week postulate, followed by entrance into my novitiate year beginning August 15, 1954. I

professed my First Vows on September 8, 1955, in Galesville, WI, and earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Math through the Scholasticate in San Antonio (1958), followed by a Master of Education in Counseling from Loyola University Chicago (1962) and a Master of Arts in Spirituality from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA (1982).

My teaching career began in 1958 as a math teacher and sodality moderator at Central Catholic High School in San Antonio. I professed my Perpetual Vows on July 19, 1959, at Our Lady of the Pillar Parish in St. Louis, MO, and then spent three years at St. Michael's High School in Chicago, IL, as a math teacher and moderator for sodality and student council before returning to Central Catholic in my role as a math teacher and moderator of sodality, student council, and the athletic booster club.

In August 1964, I relocated to Fribourg, Switzerland, studying philosophy at Fribourg University and serving as assistant dorm prefect at Villa Saint Jean International School until September 1965, when I entered Regina Mundi Seminary for the next four years. I was ordained to the priesthood on July 26, 1969, at Holy Rosary Parish in San Antonio.

For the remainder of that year, I served as a staff member at the Marianist Retreat Center in Eureka, MO, before spending the first three months of 1970 learning Spanish as assistant pastor of Santa Maria Reina Parish in Lima, Peru. I spent the next eight years in Peru, serving as math teacher, chaplain, and sodality moderator at Colegio Santa Maria School in Monterico (1971-1973); community director, chaplain, and novice master at Colegio Santa Maria Marianist Community, also in Monterico (1971-1973); and as math teacher and chaplain at the school, and chaplain and buyer at the Marianist community, both located in San Antonio de Varones (1974-1978).

I returned to the U.S. and to Central Catholic High School to serve as assistant chaplain and religion teacher from 1978 until 1981, at which time I began a one-year sabbatical living as a hermit in a deer cabin in Hunt, TX. I was then in residence at North Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, PA, for one year while earning an MA degree in Spirituality from Duquesne University. From 1982 until 1984, I was assistant chaplain and a religion teacher at both Nolan High School in Fort Worth, TX and Daniel J. Gross High School in Omaha, NE, serving one and two years, respectively.

The next twenty years of service were spent in a variety of pastoral work in parishes including Christ the King Parish in Kilgore, TX (1985-1992) and St. Michael Parish in Mount Pleasant, TX (1992-1997) followed by two more sabbaticals--one in summer 1997 at Comunidad Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Corregidora, Mexico, and the other for 10 months in 2001-2002 at the Woodlawn Marianist Community in San Antonio, during which time I participated in the Ministry to Ministers program.

I returned to an academic environment in 2002, returning to Central Catholic High School and serving for three years as assistant chaplain and sodality coordinator. From 2009 until 2020, I was semi-retired, continuing service at Central Catholic and the Marianist Community in San Antonio. During this time, I also provided supply ministry at St. Francis Chapel at Medina Lake in Mico, TX, a mission of St. Louis Parish in Castroville, TX (2010-2013).

Now retired at the Marianist Residence in San Antonio, no longer having to prepare classes, moderate activities, or manage a parish, I am still functioning as a priest for my fellow Marianists and providing support throughout the Archdiocese of San Antonio. I am doing what I can — with the help of the Holy Spirit in every moment and all my actions — to be sensitive and faithful to His inspirations so that I can give a positive answer to the conversion question I posed to myself 71 years ago by “going up” with Jesus and Our Blessed Mother when they come to lead me into the presence of our heavenly Father for His evaluation of my life.

While my body has been aging toward its demise, with the help of the Holy Spirit and Our Blessed Mother, the Spirit of Jesus has been growing — maturing — in my spirit in conformity to Jesus. I ask the Holy Spirit to help me be sensitive and faithful to His inspirations and help me continue to give myself to Our Blessed Mother so that she can continue forming Jesus in me. I hope to become ever more like Him so that I may participate ever better in His filial piety to His father, foster father, and mother, and, in Him, I may benefit from their paternal and maternal guidance.