



Father James Fitz, SM

Celebrating 60 years of Profession

In the book of Proverbs, we read: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Marianist life has given me a vision – a vision expressed well in the opening chapter of our Rule of Life: “Our goal is to be transformed into His (Christ’s) likeness and to work for the coming of His kingdom.” (article 2). In whatever I have done as a Marianist religious, the vision and dream of God’s kingdom have been the inspiration for my ministry and life.

Much has happened in the 60 years since I professed First Vows on August 22, 1965, in Marcy, NY. My initial dream to teach mathematics for my life ministry was never fulfilled; little did I dream of the changes that have taken place in my own life and in the life of the Society of Mary during these years. After attending elementary school in Cuyahoga Falls, OH, and St. Vincent High School in my birthplace of Akron, OH, I earned a Bachelor of Philosophy from University of Dayton and a Master of Historical Theology from Saint Louis University. I was ordained to the priesthood on May 25, 1974, and have served the Marianists as a high school religion teacher and department chair as well as an adult religious educator in Kalamazoo, MI; a religious studies lecturer and graduate theology instructor in San Antonio, TX; director of novices and provincial administration in Dayton, OH; and as director of campus ministry and a religious studies instructor at University of Dayton. In 2002, I began serving as assistant provincial for the Marianist Province of the United States in St. Louis, MO, a position I held until 2010, when I returned to University of Dayton to serve as Vice President for Mission and Rector.

During my years, we have seen a world of alienation, hatred, and violence (human beings at their worst), but the dream and vision have stayed the same. Our world still needs to see caring, sharing, and forgiving (human beings at their best). The witness power of our family spirit—our community life together—still motivates me. It has given me life, and I look forward to more years of living the ideal we place before ourselves in the *Rule of Life*: “In communities inspired by faith, we seek to live like the first community of Jerusalem, having but one heart and one soul. Thus, we hope to bear witness to the presence of Christ and to show that still today, the Gospel can be lived in all the force of its letter and spirit” (article 9).

When I was a very young brother, the musical *Man of La Mancha* opened on Broadway. One song has inspired me over the years; its words speak to the vision and the dream:

To dream the impossible dream
To fight the unbeatable foe
To bear with unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go

To right the unrightable wrong
To love pure and chaste from afar

To try when your arms are too weary
To reach the unreachable star

This is my quest
To follow that star
No matter how hopeless
No matter how far
To fight for the right
Without question or pause
To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause

And I know if I'll only be true to this glorious quest
That my heart will live peaceful and calm
When I'm laid to my rest

And the world will be better for this
That one man, scorned and covered with scars
Still strove with his last ounce of courage
To reach the unreachable star

I come to this 60th jubilee year of First Profession convinced that the world is a better place because we Marianist religious have dared to dream and hope. We have committed ourselves to the dream of Jesus Christ and Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, and I promise to continue to give my energy to this proclamation of Christ's kingdom: "a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of grace and holiness, a kingdom of justice, love and peace" (preface for the Feast of Christ the King).