



Bro. Thomas Suda, SM

Celebrating 60 years of Profession

I was born in 1947 and grew up in Affton, MO, where I attended Seven Holy Founders grade school and St. John Vianney High School. The decision to attend Vianney guided me toward choosing religious life and my vocation as a Marianist Brother. Several brothers who befriended me during those years encouraged me to enter religious life, and with their friendship and my belief in God, I made the choice to enter the Society of Mary at the end of high school. I began my life as a Marianist in July 1965 at the Novitiate in Galesville, WI, and professed my First Vows in August 1966.

I went on to attend St. Mary's University, graduating with a BA in History and minors in geology and art education in 1970. My early intention was to teach, but I soon learned that was not my calling and decided to be a Marianist working brother—the most significant decision of my young life. I learned to express myself in the practical world and to rely on my soul and the type of work that could be done with my hands. By learning the skills, practicing the arts, and engaging in the manual labor of each day, I began to define my life in the form of a Marianist vocation, and it became clear that I was on the right path.

Being a working brother is God's special gift to me. This blend of artistic expression and practical application has allowed me to work in many Marianist communities to create contemplative environments that are fresh, alive, colorful, and inviting to the people we serve so that they may find their own way of communicating with their spiritual self. I appreciate being entrusted by the Province in this labor of love.

From 1972 until 1984, I was fortunate to work closely with Bro. Mel Meyer, one of the most prolific contemporary artists many of us have known. Artists learn from other artists, and my life flourished under his tutelage as I learned to make bold color choices while keeping my simple design aesthetic. During those years, we were involved in nearly 35 church and chapel renovations. As the liturgy and prayer spaces were changing, so was I as I developed unique skills with wood design and became a master wood craftsman. Over the next several decades, I dedicated what my friends call my "soulful hands" and my religious perspective to the creation of many altars, ambos, tabernacles, candlesticks, furniture, and religious art for not only churches and chapels but also high schools and universities, parishes and retreat centers, hospitals and healthcare facilities, and other religious communities. With installations that include prayer gardens in Cupertino, CA, to etched glasswork and frescoes in Ranchi, India, my work has taken me far beyond my wildest imagination.

For the past 38 years, I have resided at the Ligustrum Marianist Community, where, in addition to serving as a formation assistant and continuing my craft, I am an avid softball player. I have played ball since childhood and play on three teams at any given time, including the Senior Olympics qualifying team, which travels around the country to more than 60 tournaments and has won several in recent years. I play because I love the sport, but also because it keeps me moving and able to continue to do God's work, God willing, for a very long time.