

January 31, 2016

## MARIANIST LIFE AND INFLUENCE – MY STORY

Thank you, Fr John for this opportunity to reflect and rejoice on the influence that the Marianist community has inspired in my life and my story. While you hear from me as one voice; I know I speak for the many, many lay-persons who have been, and continue to be, touched by the formation we have received as part the Marianist society in Winnipeg.

My personal story began in the late 1970s when, shortly after Ardelle and I were married, we encountered friends who extended an invitation for us to join them one evening for a social event at the Marianist house in St. Boniface. Our friends belonged to some kind of group known as Christian Life Community (CLC) so we went, if anything for the social occasion that it was. I had some vague notion of the Marianist community (I knew of Fr Ray and Fr John) and was aware of the community's affiliation, as teachers, with my alma-mater of St. Boniface Diocesan High School. What began as a simple invitation, a simple call, grew over 40 years to become an important part of the life of Ardelle and I, which deepened our spirituality, shaped our understanding of service and blessed us with life-long friendships and relationships.

In the early years, the Marianist community of Priests and Brothers (and as we found out later, Sisters), became a physical and spiritual home for us. It was here, and particularly in connecting with Fr Ray, Fr John, Fr Luis and Brothers Richard, Andre, Joe and others, that I learned of the Marianist charism, of Mary's real presence in our lives, of the foundation laid by Fr. Joseph Chaminade and the power and grace of smaller faith-sharing groups, known as sodalities. It was here in the faith-sharing groups that I was indeed further formed. I was able to understand and appreciate the faith stories of others which in turn shaped my faith experience. The faith-sharing groups evolved and transitioned - as we ourselves changed and transitioned. Together with the Marianist Priests and Brothers that originally formed the 'Large Group'; a cellular division occurred where smaller subgroups formed along natural lines so we had the Genesis Group, the Magnificat Group, Faith & Family and Living Faith Group each with their area of focus as well as demographic characteristic. This cellular division allowed the unique aspect of each group to flourish and deepen based upon the gifts, initiative and call of each sodality.

For Ardelle and me, the Faith and Family group formed an important influence in our lives. I learned to appreciate the wholeness of my faith. Whether it was times of joy, tears, wonder, grieving, doubt, despair or profound gratitude; the spirituality formed by my Marianist commitment was the connective tissue that held all together, as one. My faith life was not compartmentalized and brought out on special occasions - it defined who I was and who I am.

Through the gentle guidance, teaching and witness of the Marianist community, I learned of the discipleship of equals and this is profoundly important to our Faith & Family group as we, men and women, equally continue to seek and share in our faith journeys. My Marianist roots influences my daily life be it in the realm of business, family and friends. As a Husband, Father and Grandfather, I am profoundly grateful for what God has granted in my family and the preciousness of this time that we call life. In my friendships, I know I am accepted for my weaknesses as well as my strengths. In my business dealings, my Marianist-shaped spirituality calls me to value people and the unique giftedness they bring (even when they can be irritating!). It has influenced the creative dimension of who I am in the music I have composed as musician and the spaces and buildings I have created as an Architect. It is indeed reflected in the song *Joined Are We* as composed for the 1991 Continental Assembly and the design of the Marianist Residence in Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada.

With delight, I am proud to call myself a Lay Marianist. If in small measure, I am able to give forward to others the faith gift and perspective the Marianists have placed in me, then my heart is full. And it all began some 40 years ago when I received a simple invitation...and I said, Yes.

My deep thanks to Fr. John and the entire Marianist community for shaping the uneven and lumpy clay, which is me.

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