

Back Home Again, for Good and for God

I had wanted so badly to go to the missions that I really enjoyed the opportunity of working in Pleebo, Liberia, and being of service to the Brothers while working for the Bishop. I really looked forward to the weekends to help out in the school, enjoy the days at the beaches, run errands, and help the local pastor.

The mission received funds from the SMA Fathers in New Jersey monthly that took care of salaries and other expenses. It was great to be with the community. I felt needed and useful as we had meetings of all religious once a month to celebrate birthdays and special holidays.

When malaria hit me, I was laid up three times under the care and treatment of Sister Sponsa, our Diocesan nurse. She was wonderful and helpful, but when I had the attack for the fourth time, she felt that we should see a doctor. He was the one who told her that if I had malaria four times there was nothing to do about it but to return home. It was bitter news to hear but I had done whatever I could, and since the country was not the place for me, I followed the doctor's advice and decided to return where I could be treated. Brother Leo agreed that it was best to leave, for the same thing had happened to Brother Norbert and he had to return home as well.

Since the Lord seemed to be saying no to my staying on, I planned to return home as soon as possible and applied to help out at Marist College where my heart had been for so many years. I was given my choice of where to stay on campus in three different places and I chose to settle in the Gatehouse. I was determined that if I stayed there it would be to honor the memory of Bro. Kieran Thomas who had done so much to care for the young Brothers, and I would ask if we could name that building in his memory. The request was granted and the house was called the Kieran Gatehouse, and his two sisters came to attend the dedication.

It was fantastic to be here in this place that had so many wonderful memories for me. It was really home for me and has been every day for the past ten years. It has been fantastic to see it grow. The continued spirit of dedication for its growth was evident everywhere and mostly encouraging. The many new buildings and the increase in our enrollment are all a tribute to the hard work of President Dennis J. Murray, who is himself so Marist at heart. He and his wife were invited to join the group of affiliated Marists and have been very loyal to the Marist spirit.

I have enjoyed being a life member of the Board of Trustees and helping the Advancement Committee. So much of our Marist spirit has remained active here that one feels right at home at all times. I can honestly say that it has been so during my entire life. Dr. Murray has never neglected to acknowledge the work and dedication of the Marist Brothers and always praised the Marist spirit, which is so sacred here with so many former Brothers still serving on the staff along with eight Marist Brothers.

Linus Foy is an active member of the board and dedicated a building in my name while I was still Assistant General. When this building had to be replaced, care was taken to have the building replacing it also be known as the Fontaine building. In this new building there will be classes for the various needs of the Humanities program as well as Advancement and the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. After having been close to the roots of the college, it is indeed a privilege and an honor to be present to enjoy the incredible good that is being done and the recognition of the blessing this college has been for the entire Poughkeepsie area, and in fact for all of Dutchess County.

I had been hesitating to put all this on paper, but I must say that what made me decide to do so was the constant pleading of a dedicated member of the Board of Trustees. Mrs. Franny Reese was like my own dear mother, ever reminding me of what should be done to commit to writing the history and exceptional growth of the our small college. Thanks, Franny, for keeping after me, and also encouraging me.

Also, Kathy McHugh was persistent in helping with the printing and details to attend to in finalizing my work. She has also been a helpful "mother" always checking on my needs. Thanks, Kathy.

We had the exceptional Board of Trustees to push and guide all this along. We are a legend in the city of Poughkeepsie, and it is right to credit all this to our dedication to Prayer and Hard Work started here by our first Marist Brothers who selected this spot and started the work. It is the family spirit left to all the Marist Brothers of the world by our founder Saint Marcellin Champagnat that has made it possible for us to pass on our spirit of Prayer and Work to the dedicated members of this entire Marist College family.

My return to the college seemed to be timed by the Lord, for I came back only to find many foreign family friends that I had sent on to America for their studies who decided to settle here. Thanks be to God these close friends have remained completely loyal to our Marist spirit of Prayer and Work. They have remained loyal and dedicated, as have the many foreign students who have kept in touch with me. My beloved mother once told me how happy she was that I had so many children all over the globe. And all these disciples have remained faithful and loyal to me in my old age. They have not been mentioned in my biography because they were given to me not for school, or work, but for my life. My greatest blessing from the Lord was to have had these last eleven years to live in the peace of this college life, recalling all the blessings of the Lord in the actual living of our Marist motto: All to Jesus through Mary.