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Central Catholic High School

What do we celebrate today? What is so special, so important that we stop all classes and regular school activities to take the time to reflect and celebrate?

I have been given the task of speaking to you today about a group of people and something very dear to my heart, the Marianists and a Marianist education.

As I thought about what I would say to you I was completely overwhelmed. How could I put into words how blessed you are to be receiving a Marianist education and how blessed we all are to have the presence of Marianist Brothers and Priests in our school?

My grandparents had a great devotion to Our Lady. They prayed a rosary every day for each of their three grandchildren. It is no surprise to me that I am now teaching in a school consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, under her special protection and run by the Marianists.

The Marianist influence runs deep in my life: my grandfather delivered mail here, my father came to school here, my parents were married by a Marianist priest and my two older brothers came to school here. When I was in high school at Incarnate Word, I was a member of a singing group at Central Catholic High School that was run by a Marianist, **Bro. Richard Martens**.

Bro. Martens was the first Marianist that I was introduced to. He was truly an inspiration to me. He talked a lot about dedication, commitment and the service of God. But what spoke volumes to me was the dedication and commitment he had for us teenagers and how he lived his faith.

For over 15 years, Bro. Martens took this group of 24 teenagers to the Riverwalk to sing at various restaurants: four nights a week in the summer, two nights a week during the school year. Each night it was 10:30 or 11 o'clock by the time we got back to school. It must have gotten old. But I can't remember a time when he

wasn't there. He was always there teaching us about dedication and commitment by his example. I am sure that he is teaching a new generation about dedication and commitment at St. Mary Magdalen.

In college, I continued to be touched by the Marianist presence at St. Mary's University. While there I had the opportunity to student teach under the guidance of one of my mentors, **Bro. Jim Burkholder**. His gentle way, and joyful presence in the classroom have greatly influenced my own teaching style...and you guys are right, he is the smartest man in the whole world!

I will always be grateful to **Bro. Leonard Rudy** who hired me, enabling me to become a part of this Marianist mission. And to **Bro. Harry Cornell** who was the first department chair I worked with. A person of great commitment, dedication and generosity, the "voice of the Buttons," my dear friend, Bro. Harry Cornell is an inspiration to us all.

How blessed we are to have **Fr. Don Cowie** with us. A gentle, prayful man, Fr. Cowie demonstrates a great love for his students and this school. His caring ways are expressed in his loving dedication and a listening ear.

When I first started at Central Catholic, **Bro. Martin McMurtrey** taught across the hall from me. Bro. Mac passed away earlier this year. My Marianist reflection would be hopelessly incomplete if I did not mention this great Marianist.

The spirit of Bro. Mac lives on in those lives he touched and in the school he loved so much.

Our own **Mr. Robert Trigilio** called Bro. Mac his idol. He has modeled his own teaching style after this great English teacher. **Mr. Robert Bain** fell under his influence too. Mr. Bain has said that Bro. Mac was one of his role models. He was a completely dedicated teacher, challenging his students in a kind way.

After Bro. Mac retired, his number one priority was building up the scholarship fund that bears his name. Bro. Mac could often be seen picking up pecans and recycling aluminum cans to be sold for that purpose. As an author, Bro. Mac teamed with **Bro. Herbert Janson** to write, publish and sell books with proceeds going to the scholarship fund.

His scholarship fund has provided more than \$1 million in scholarships and has assisted over 3,000 students wanting to attend Central Catholic. Some of you are benefiting from his efforts.

It was Bro. Mac that started the Guardian Angels and his legacy continues in **Mr. James Bendele** and our own Guardian Angels today. Bro. Mac was a generous, charitable man. He often spoke of giving to others and especially the poor.

But to us ... he didn't have to say anything. One could receive an education in Christian charity, an education in service, justice, and peace simply by observing this good man. As St. Francis once said to his followers, "Preach the gospel everywhere, and when necessary use words." This could have been Bro. Mac's motto.

The Marianists are humble people. They do their work without fanfare, but with generosity, faith, purpose and love. I believe the charitable, generous spirit of Bro. Mac and the Marianists who have served Central Catholic have inspired many.

I know a graduate who took it upon himself to feed the homeless. We would get up very early on Saturday mornings make hundreds of breakfast tacos and drive downtown looking for homeless to give them to. He found them congregating under a bridge. His example has led to one of the largest under the bridge ministries in the city... and I believe the Marianist influence was there.

I know a graduate with a talent for music, he was part of the singing group Bro. Martens led. Now he and his wife sing and entertain the homeless as they are serve a hot meal in their city's soup kitchen... and I believe the Marianist influence was there.

You may have heard the story of the recent Central Catholic graduate who won a contest sponsored by a Mexican restaurant. His prize was three burritos a day for a year and 20 burrito parties. Who were the invited guests to one of his parties? The homeless ... I believe the Marianist influence was there.

I know a Central Catholic graduate who volunteers 3 hours a day at a local nursing home. He visits with the residents and prays with them, especially with those who otherwise would not receive any visitors. Each evening, as the residents gather in the dining hall for supper, he plays his guitar and sings for them to let them know how much they are loved by God and to bring them a moment of joy...and I believe the Marianist influence is there.

Each day your teachers strive to provide you with the best possible education you can receive in the Marianist tradition.

At Central Catholic High School you don't just learn how to write a quality essay, solve an equation with the quadratic formula, or apply Avagadro's number. You learn much more than that. You learn a way of life. A Marianist education changes you, it molds you and shapes your life. You may not notice this transformation taking place, but others will see it in you and recognize the characteristics of a Marianist education.

Where will the Marianist education you are receiving lead you? Will you dedicate your life in service of God?

Will you become the next **Bro. Tim Pieprzyca**, acknowledging the top guns in your classroom?

Will you be speaking words of wisdom and providing a listening ear to others in the footsteps of Fr. Cowie as a Marianist priest?

Will you be the next **Fr. Joseph Tarrillion**, president of Central Catholic who suffering with the effects of a spider bite, continued to work from his hospital bed for the good of this school?

Will you be the next **Bro. Richard Thompson** who works everyday to realize the dream of attending Central Catholic for students who would otherwise not be able to attend?

Will you be the next **Bro. David Quigley** who attends many junior and senior retreats to witness and share with you his life of faith?

Will you be the next **Mr. Eddie Ybarra**, Central Catholic graduate, raising a good Catholic family and a future Button, and participating in the mission of Marianist education?

Whatever you choose to do in life, may the spirit of these good Christian men, the Marianists, and the Marianist education you have received influence you.

To the Marianist brothers and priests, on behalf of all of us gathered in this gym today I say thank you for following the example of Mary, and saying yes to God and to dedicating yourselves to Marianist education.

Thank you for making a difference in our school and in our lives.