

**Founders' Week**  
**Seth Richardson Reflection**  
**Daniel J. Gross Catholic High School**  
Bellevue, Nebraska

As we begin the activities of Marianist Founders' week, I would like to start off by welcoming Brian Reavey, Fr. Al McMenemy, Bro. Richie, Bro. Jack Ventura, and all of the Lay Marianists here with us today. Our Marianist Heritage is very important as to whom we are as the Cougar Family and it is wonderful that we can celebrate this heritage together.

My very first assignment my Freshman year was to come back to school the next day with a list of these things called the Characteristics of a Marianist Education. "Look in your agenda," my classmates told me. Or, "Look at the big sign in the commons," others said. At the time, I was obviously not very informed about these people called the "Marianists" and why they were so important that I had to take the time to write out all five characteristics. I vividly remember how annoyed I was with this task. "Why am I wasting my time to copy down these 5 short phrases," I remember thinking. "This doesn't mean anything to me." Well, I did the assignment without thinking much about it and certainly didn't realize the effect it would have on me. Now, as a senior, I would like to share with you how the past 4 years have educated me in formation in faith.

Our education in formation in faith is seen here at Mass today. Gathering for Mass as a student body is a very powerful way to help us form our faith. For the short time between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> period on Mass schedule, we can forget about everything that is causing us stress in our life and go to the place where we know that we can always be accepted. The most unique aspect of going to a Catholic school is that we are lucky have the opportunity to come together as a family and pray. So for the hour that we are here, let us take advantage of this gift that sets us apart from the other high schools in Bellevue.

The focus on our faith is an important part of our heritage. This heritage sets us apart from every high school located in a 500-mile radius because we were founded by and are affiliated with the Marianists. I say a 500-mile radius because I am pretty sure that the closest Marianist high schools are in St. Louis, Missouri.

I love the fact that I can say, "I go to a Marianist High School," not only because it sets me apart from thousands of other students, but because of how my Marianist Education has help me become the person that I am today. One of the biggest influences in my life has been joining our student Marianist LIFE Community. Just for reminders, LIFE stands for Living In Faith Experience, and the LIFE Team is a diverse group of students ranging from freshman to senior to Gross Catholic Alumni. One thing I regret is waiting so long to actually join the

LIFE Team. During my freshman year, I wasn't really aware of the "LIFE Team" or "Once a month LIFE Meetings." As a sophomore I remember hearing about it, but at the time it wasn't very popular. It wasn't until my junior year when a few of my senior friends kept talking about their "Summer LIFE Trip" and LIFE this and LIFE that....that I decided to go to my first meeting. Ever since then I have been an active member and lucky enough to be chosen to go on the summer LIFE trip. This trip really had an impact on my life. Being able to meet Marianist students from all over the United States and the world has really opened my eyes and shown me things about myself and my friends that I never had imagined. I have never been exposed to such amazing people or witnessed how beautiful my friends really are until that trip.

I also mean it when I say that those 7 other people that I got to share the experience with are my best friends. Even if they don't know it, they have each taught me so much about myself and helped me to form my faith. I am extremely grateful for all of the amazing friendships and once in a lifetime experiences that I can not begin to show my gratitude and really appreciate that the Marianist give us this opportunity. I have been so affected by the Marianist tradition and how it has formed my faith that I plan on continuing my participation in the Marianist Community by attending the University of Dayton next year. When I visited the school a few months ago I could feel the same atmosphere that I do

when I am here at Gross Catholic. “What are you talking about?” people would ask me. “How can being on a college campus feel like being in a high school building?” If you know anything about the Marianists, you know that they are big on community, and that is what really drew me to the campus. It has been the only place where I have felt the same connection that I feel everyday here at Gross Catholic.

Thinking about it now, my first assignment as a high school student was probably the easiest assignment I ever had. Four years later I am now proud to say that I can recite the 5 Characteristics of a Marianist Education. If you’re a freshman and you don’t know these by heart yet, then now it’s time to listen up.

- Educate for Formation in Faith
- Educate in Family Spirit
- Educate for Service Justice and Peace
- Educate for an Integral, Quality Education
- Education for Adaptation and Change

During your time at Gross Catholic, you will see how these characteristics make us special and different from other schools. Our Marianist Heritage is the foundation of what makes us the Cougar Family.