

What being Marianist means to me...

"I, the Lord, am doing something new, which has already begun. Don't you see it"
Isaiah 43:19

This quote sums up the collection of feelings, thoughts and memories that fill my mind as I try to explain to friends or colleagues what my plans are for *life after UD*.

I have been a University of Dayton employee for almost nine years and adding four years as an undergrad makes it a total of fifteen years of my life living in Ohio, not counting two of them world trekking with *Up With People*. But I will leave that for another time...

My life in San Juan, Puerto Rico was fun, loving, tough and it was hard (ok, not too hard) for me to leave home at 17 and make my way to Dayton for college. Dad gave me his blessing, knowing of course, that he had too many friends still living and working on campus that could keep an eye on me. I will never forget the time I got caught smoking by Fr.... You thought I would say the name... No, the names will be changed to protect the innocent, or is it the guilty?

In a nutshell, I had four great years, earned my degree and after two years attempting to make the world a better place by singing, dancing and doing community service in ten different countries, (That's that two year hiatus I mentioned at the beginning), I decided to come home... Home was Dayton. Home was UD.

The UD family, the Marianist family, welcomed me back as if I was one of their own. I knew I was different, spoke a different language, brought with me different experiences and perspectives, but still, here I was. I came home and it felt right.

Working in the office of admission at UD gave the chance to grow and learn about higher education, especially Catholic higher education and the world of college admission. But what was been the most significant learning experience was the opportunity to be fully immersed in Marianist history, education, spirituality and formation. What a gift we have ... To work for Marianist education; to work in an institution where we believe we can educate students to not only become excellent scholars, engineers, teachers, politicians and business professionals, but for them to be responsible to their community, wherever it may be, while embracing their vocations. To use their skills and abilities to yes, make the world a better place.

I have learned that leadership takes education. A wise Marianist brother once told a group of students who were protesting UD's new focus on academic excellence, that

you can't have good leadership without a good education. He said that we can't make a difference in this world if we don't know what we are talking about and *THAT* takes education. It made me take education, not just my own, but all education, more seriously.

It has been exciting to challenge the high school seniors with questions on how they see themselves in five years, what kind of job they will like to have, and to quote a great colleague and friend "what do they love?" It is with questions like these that we can take students to a deeper, more reflective place.

As I reflect on my years at UD I have to also stress that being Marianist became clearer and more intentional when I became a Marianist Educational Associate. As the description of the program explains, this is not a privilege or honor. It is an invitation to study, learn and reflect on the history and tradition that is Marianist education at our universities and to look to the future of the institutions knowing that lay leadership is the key to preserve the old while embracing the new.

As a Marianist Educational Associate, I feel like I have been given the keys that open the door to a special place. This "place" is Marianist education and it welcomes all who wish to enter. We, MEAs are given the keys by our parents, or vowed religious in this case, who have been guarding the traditions as long as we can remember. They, our role models, our teachers, our spiritual directors or mentors are teaching us about Chaminade, Mother Adele and Marie Therese, our founders. This is where we came from in the Marianist world... From Bordeaux and Zaragoza, to the U.S., Puerto Rico and Mexico. To India, Africa, Korea and beyond. It is also our responsibility to be cautious, yet knowledgeable and not take the keys and lock them in a safety box. We should take those keys and make duplicates. Share the keys to Marianist education with everyone who wants to learn, lead and serve...

That is what I have learned as a Marianist Educational Associate and what I take with me at the end of my 15-year tenure in Dayton, Ohio. But where do I take all this? How many duplicates of the keys must I make? The number does not matter. What I do with them does.

This spring I renewed my public vow as a MEA , and even though I am leaving the University of Dayton campus, I will continue to work for Marianist education from home. Home **IS** home and it is in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Another friend and colleague said to me today, "the journey took me to this place". The journey he was talking about was his Marianist journey. The prayers, reflections and

conversations he has had with so many who also “speak” Marianist. The classes, the readings we have all done: that is part of the journey. It all takes us to a different place than we were when we began the journey. I see that now and I am grateful.

My journey brought me to UD and now it leads me back home where I can continue challenging students to embrace their journey, their education and their place at the table, the Marianist table. So, like the Isaiah quote, I am taking a different path in my journey. It is a new path but it is the same journey, which I will continue to embrace no matter where I am at.

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