

Christopher W. Conlon, SM,

July 26, 1935 – March 26, 2017

(Try to keep before you the smiling face of Father Chris Conlon)

Chris Conlon and I have been friends since autumn, 1962.
That year we both went to Fribourg, Switzerland.
We were both beginning new phases in our lives.
We came from intense activity to a life of study.
We came from America to an international house of studies.
Chris was beginning his preparation for ordination.
I was beginning a new work on the seminary staff.
And the Church was beginning
what was called the Second Vatican Council.
For the next four years we worked together
and grew in our friendship for each other ...
We were both formed in the spirit of Vatican II
and it colored all we did subsequently.
On March 26, 1966 he was ordained a priest
to serve for the next 51 years in various ministries
in New York, Florida, Dayton – and yes, in Cupertino.

His ministry as a priest was extraordinary ...
As Brother Frank pointed out, he loved teaching ...
And he took great pride in his work
at the University of Dayton as Director of Campus Ministry.
He was on the New York Council and served on the Provincial Chapter
for the Province of the United States ...
And for a time he ministered to the faculty and students
at Archbishop Riordan High School.
Shortly after preaching our retreat here,
he asked to come to live with us – and we were once again,
after all those years of active ministry – in Cupertino.

Chris didn't come to Cupertino to retire.
He came here to continue in mission,
even though that mission was radically changed
from what he had been doing in Dayton.
He brought with him an array of cameras and computers,
intending to devote himself
to capturing some of the beauty of the Marianist Center and beyond.
He brought with him, too, his great sense of humor
accompanying his serious approach to the work at hand.
And as long as he was able to give homilies,
his theme was consistent:
he was constantly encouraging us to help each other ...
All that changed all too rapidly ...
And that's when the real learning began, that unexpected learning.
It was then that he discovered the most formative years!

He came to realize, at times with pain,
that the last years of life, although most enriching,
can also be very difficult.
God was calling so many of his closest friends ...

The challenges he experienced in Fribourg,
had now returned in another form.
He had to let go ...
He had already let go of driving;
here he had to learn to let go of celebrating mass.
At times, his desire to teach and proclaim
broke through and we had to patiently accept those episodes.
At times, his frustration erupted; but the mood passed.
And just as his sense of humor carried him in Fribourg,
so did it carry him in Cupertino ...

He had to accept being well cared for and thanked for prayerful support as though that was all he could do.

(Even though that is a tremendous support)

It took great effort on his part to realize he was still in community and not simply a resident in a Marianist retirement home.

His sense of beauty, his sense of humor,
his serious approach to all he was asked to do,
triumphed over all the frustrations ...

To the end, he was the best dressed resident!

In recent months, he would be captivated by the lemon tree glowing in the morning sunlight outside our dining room, reminding me of his love of beauty.

And shortly before his death he was able to joke with his friend Father Ted Cassidy as they recalled scenes from Fribourg ...

Along with his broad smile, captured so well in the Province Announcement and our Memorial Cards, came a contemplative attitude ...

I know that the words of John's gospel proclaimed this morning were very meaningful for him.

Do not let your hearts be troubled.

But then comes the challenge: *Have faith in God and faith in me.*

"Be at peace, don't be disturbed, don't worry!

It's all right - I'm here - trust God - trust me!"

Fr. Stephen Tutas

March 2017