



FATHER RICHARD VILLA

50 years of profession

A jubilee year is special — special for me because it is another benchmark in my life that invites me to recall and celebrate not only the blessings that God continually bestows on me, but also to be grateful for God’s grace, which builds on my own imperfect human nature and has enabled me, over the years, to persevere in my Marianist vocation.

Little did I realize, when I first stepped onto the campus of St. Mary’s University as a freshman student with a goal of pursuing a military career, that Marianists like Fathers Louis Reile, George Montague and Ade Windisch, as well as numerous student brothers on campus from St. Louis to New York, would inspire me to change the direction of my life and enter the Society of Mary. Their witnessing of brotherhood, community life and family spirit captured my heart.

Over the subsequent years, I have found delight and joy in every community and ministry of which I have been privileged to be a part: from East St. Louis to Chicago to Fort Worth to Irving to Eldersburg to San Antonio. Even now, a number of former students remain in touch with me, and I continue to be a part of their families.

Along with my teaching ministry, my passion for liturgy, my involvement in province retreats and — with the encouragement of many brothers — an awakened sense of Marianist priesthood as a sacramental minister, primarily to the brothers, led me to ordination in 2008. Ministering to the very individuals with whom I live day in and day out — who know my comings and goings, my shortcomings and failings — humbles me to embrace the message of Blessed Chaminade: “...let the interior man in you be renewed.” Pope St. Paul VI says: “Never forget that this marvel happens in you, not for you. It is for the Church ... you become an instrument, a minister at the service of others.”

This 50th year of profession is indeed an occasion for me to be grateful: to God for his mercy, compassion and love; to my brothers who inspire me by their examples; and to the Society of Mary that invites me each day to witness to Christ with the gentleness of Mary, our Mother.