



FATHER CHRIS WITTMANN

25 years of ordination

Today, some consider the life of faith in Christ to be foolish. Even more foolish, would they say, is the consecrated life of celibate chastity, poverty, obedience and stability lived in community under Mary's banner. It is an uncommon life, for sure, and foolish by the standards of the world.

The past seven years as director of novices has given me reason to reflect often on these questions. This ministry has been an unexpected gift and a blessing. It has challenged me to understand our vocation as Marianist brothers more fully — and to live it more deeply. It is a great privilege to walk with men in formation, who often teach me more than I teach them. My prayer life has been enriched by the example of fellow brothers, some much younger than I. Blessed Fr. Chaminade's Purification Virtues keep reminding me to trust more and more in God, and less and less in myself. And increasingly, I appreciate how Mary forms me and us into the image of her Son, Jesus, and how she invites us all into her mission of transforming lives and society through faith-formation in community.

On my 25th jubilee of ordination, I am especially grateful for the brothers who have supported and been patient with me in the ministry of priesthood. Presiding, preaching and ministering the sacraments are holy experiences that humble me, often to tears. Clearly, the most powerful moments are those that the Holy Spirit provides, rather than something that I plan.

Overall, however, I am most grateful for sharing this crazy life in community with my fellow brothers. Through their generous support and honest challenge, their strength and frailty, their seriousness and silliness, they teach me true humility, which opens me to God's mercy and to gratitude for being raised up with them to new life in Christ in community with Mary.

With them, I am delighted to be considered a consecrated fool for Christ. Together we are Mary's consecrated fools, whose deepest desire is to allow "Christ to take full possession of our lives" (RL 23, 55) so that together we might "be transformed into his likeness and ... work for the coming of his kingdom."(RL 2)