

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Many relatives, friends and parishioners from places where Fr Barry Ryan has ministered, gathered in St Columba's Church, Ballarat North on Sunday, July 19 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Barry's ordination to the priesthood. Fr Barry was ordained on 21st July in his home parish of Warrnambool.

The celebration had many serious and lighter moments. This came through in words spoken and the symbols used in the entrance procession - a fishing rod, Fr Barry taking time for recreation; the Geelong Football club logo, his nearly weekly comment on the demise or delight of 'The Cats' and books, his passion for learning and his sharing of this passion with those he has met in both teaching and ministry over many years.

Before leaving the church different people spoke of Fr Barry - his family, a parishioner and an academic colleague. A presentation was made in honour of this wonderful occasion to which Fr Barry responded.

Those gathered moved to the 'Iona Hall' in the St Columba's School where acquaintances were renewed, further words were shared, the cake was cut and last yet not least the enjoyment of delightful refreshments supplied and organised by many parishioners.

I left the celebrations energised by Fr Barry's reflections on many aspects of his ministry and life experiences intertwined by his sense of humour. Thanks to the many parishioners who gave their time and energy.

Thanks Fr Barry for your faithfulness to the Gospel, to ministry, to the people of God and your tender, loving, listening ear in the many aspects of your fifty years of ministry.

Sr Geraldine Mugavin rsm



Sr Veronica Lawson rsm spoke at Mass on the occasion and her words can be read below:

Barry Ryan: Fifty Years of Priesthood

The tender mercy of our God has given us, in the person of Barry Ryan, a faithful and faith-filled priest, pastor, mentor, counsellor, story-teller, consciousness-raiser and, above all, a friend to the many. I speak for those who have had the privilege of working with Barry.

Barry's first appointment was to Ballarat East where his duties included weekday Masses at Sacred Heart Convent of Mercy. He would cross Victoria Street at 6.50 each morning to celebrate Eucharist with a chapel full of boarders to left and right and a central chapel of Sisters of Mercy, some of whom made their way here to St. Columba's primary school immediately after breakfast. Barry was, as the Americans say, "something else" in our experience. He introduced a peculiarly Ryan phenomenon, namely the two-minute daily homily.



We heard about the felling of trees in the Amazon, the degradation of the soil and the polluting of skies and of seas long before the discovery of the hole in the ozone layer. There were those who wondered what on earth the felling of trees and the polluting of waterways had to do with the gospel. Some had to wait for the pope's latest encyclical to connect the gospel and the distress of earth in the ways that Barry understood and taught so long ago.

If Barry had a mentor in those early days it was Sr. Clare Forbes who was quickly taken by the warmth and intelligence of this young priest. She took him under her wing and drew him into the team on the Catholic Enquiry Course operating out of SHC on the cold winter Tuesday evenings of 1966. Barry was nothing short of brilliant in managing to condense the grand sweep of Christological debates into forty minutes or so for the seventy enquirers! Mind you he had a counterpart in Sr. Anne Forbes who taught 2000 years of Church History in 20 minutes. I think I had 30 minutes to deal with seven sacraments.

From the very outset, Barry attended to his own on-going education, working full time in the Ballarat East parish while enrolling for an Arts degree at Melbourne University where he completed studies in Psychology, Philosophy, Comparative Religions and Biblical Studies. He was to return to Melbourne College of Divinity for further studies in the late 1970s. Barry's talent as an educator was affirmed by his appointment in 1971, just six years after ordination, as the Diocesan Director of Religious Education. The Religious Education Centre began with two, Barry and Vin Dillon, and grew into an institution to be reckoned with-addressing the needs of teachers in the schools, catechists in the parishes and the parishioners who have always been Barry's first priority.



Post-graduate studies at Fordham University in New York were to follow. Barry's fees were paid by the Diocese. His board with the Marist Brothers was his own responsibility. To cover his costs he taught in the Marist High School in the Bronx where he was assigned a group of students for whom learning was anything but a high priority. He brought to his work with these students the famous Taverstock approaches to learning that were part of his studies and that have continued to inform his engagement over the years with adult groups, university students, communication groups, parish groups and various support groups. The Marist principal, Br. Charles Marcellin,

told me when I visited New York in 1973 that, after a very short time, Barry had those tough young adults eating out of his hand and actually learning as no-one had ever thought possible. When I saw the film Spare Parts featuring street kids who were the bane of every teacher's career yet loved into life and even national acclaim by one teacher who believed in them, I thought of Barry with those kids in the Bronx.

For two decades, Barry taught theology at Aquinas. For twelve years he was Head of Religious Education and Theology. Every school and most teachers in this diocese owe a debt of gratitude to Barry Ryan. His influence extends far beyond the Ballarat Diocese of course, but Ballarat has been the greatest beneficiary of his wisdom and considerable learning. One of the loveliest things about Barry is that he carries it all so lightly. Others will speak of his contribution to parish life which paralleled his academic ministry. I simply want to give thanks for fifty years of partnership in teaching the gospel with one of the planet's inspirational educators in the faith.

Go from strength to strength, Barry, as you continue to proclaim the gospel you have lived so powerfully and to grace the priesthood you have exercised so faithfully for the past five decades. In the words of Les Murray, "I wish you God".