

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

Fr Eugene McKinnon recently celebrated his 40th Anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood with Mass at St Mary's Church, Birchip on Sunday, May 24, 2015 at 10.30am. A catered lunch followed at the Birchip Leisure Centre. On the previous evening, Fr Eugene had celebrated Mass for Wycheproof and nearby communities who also celebrated with him on this occasion. Family members joined Fr Eugene for Mass and the St Michael's Ladies Guild provided a supper after Mass. Mr Len Storey presented Fr Eugene with a gift of appreciation from the parish as well as expressing how blessed the parish feel to have him be part of it. Fr Eugene also celebrated Mass at St Joseph's Church, Warrnambool on Friday, June 5 2015 at 6.30pm.



Fr Eugene was born in Terang and grew up on a dairy farm at Port Campbell and his early education was conducted at Timboon Consolidated, a state school, where he travelled to by bus for eleven years. Fr Eugene enjoyed the space and freedom of a farming life. He later attended St Patrick's College, Ballarat.



After spending six years in the seminary, before taking a short break teaching at St Arnaud while he decided on his future direction, Fr Eugene was ordained at Timboon in 1975, prior to beginning his ministry. Fr Eugene spent the short time teaching at St Francis Xavier College in St Arnaud, as well as serving the parishes of Mildura, Swan Hill, Portland, Ballarat, Hamilton, Warrnambool and Terang. He also spent five years in West Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea, which he described as being a very poor area. Returning to Australia, Fr Eugene spent three years in Edenhope, four years in Swan Hill, five years at Warrnambool, followed by stints at Portland and Terang.

Fr Eugene also has a passion for sport, in particular Australian Rules football. Prior to his time spent in Papua New Guinea, Fr Eugene enjoyed playing the game and represented a number of clubs in the parishes where he served. On his return, he thought his playing days might be over however he pulled on the boots with Edenhope and continued playing until he retired aged forty-three. Fr Eugene then took up umpiring, most recently serving with the North-Central Umpires' Group.



It has been a long and very interesting journey from a dairy farm at Port Campbell to Donald, but the many experiences have helped shape a parish priest who is ideally suited to the demands of serving parishioners in Donald, Birchip, Quambatook and Wycheproof. An old parish priest in Papua New Guinea once asked Fr Eugene: "What are you going to do here?", to which he replied, "I don't know." "You don't have to worry," advised the old priest, "You will find God here among the people" This has been Fr Eugene's approach whenever moving to a new parish or situation.



*Article part adapted, courtesy of the Buloke Times 2012
Part words by Juliya Ambrizas and Debbie Matheson*

Photos: Top to Bottom

- Mr Len Storey and Fr Eugene
- Fr Eugene at St Anne's in Warrnambool
- Arrival in Birchip
- Fr Eugene at a Northern Zone Meeting with (B) Fr John Monaghan, Fr Jim McKay, Fr Marcello Colasante, Fr Peter Hudson, Fr Peter Jose and (F) Fr Neville Stanislaus and Sr Marion McDonald