

A TRIBUTE

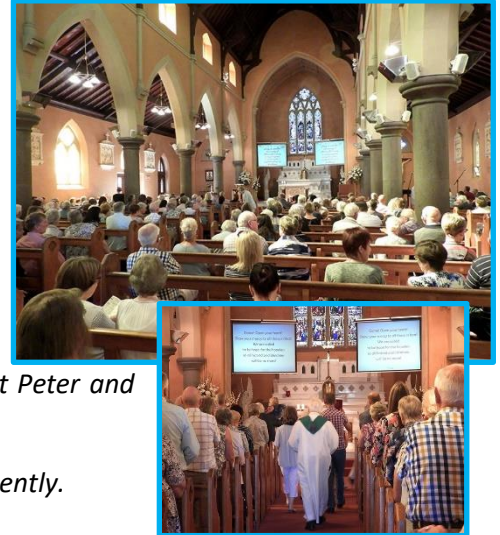
Fr Adrian McInerney celebrated his final Mass as parish priest of the Ballarat East Parish on the weekend of January 21 and 22, 2017. Parishioners and family and friends from far and wide came to celebrate this occasion at Saturday evening Mass and the two Masses on Sunday.

St Alipius Church at 10.30 am Mass was filled to capacity as those attending wanted to be part of acknowledging Fr Adrian's service to the parish and to the diocese. After Mass, a farewell gathering was held in the parish hall where tributes were paid to Fr Adrian and wishing him all the best in his retirement. Farewell gifts were presented including a beautiful sculpture, which was the original artwork upon which Fr Adrian based the altar at St Peter and Paul's Church, Buninyong.

Below is a tribute to Fr Adrian from Eileen Rice, who wrote for SAP news recently.

Fr Adrian McInerney - A Tribute

Prior to Christmas our thoughts often turn towards gifts; buying that gift for someone special to tell them how we feel, putting gifts under the giving tree for those who would otherwise miss out, acknowledging people in our lives with a little gift that says 'thanks for all you do.'



In this tribute, I'd like to acknowledge the gift that Fr Adrian McInerney has been to our community; not just at Christmas-time but throughout the ups and down, the turmoils and triumphs, the messy and the mundane of our every day living.

Fr Adrian was appointed as assistant priest at St Alipius for a period of three years when he first left the seminary in 1969 and joined the St Alipius community, for the second time, in March 2001.

How lucky are we, the communities of St Alipius and St Peter and Paul, to have been the bookends to Fr Adrian's 47 years of incredible service to the Diocese of Ballarat.

Every Sunday, and at other times throughout the year, we are treated with a homily from Fr Adrian that allows us to hear the Word of God with new ears and to see how the Word applies to our lives with new eyes. Many of us are amazed that Fr Adrian can stand and speak to us, without notes, sharing his knowledge of scripture and the context in which it was written, applying its message, in relevant ways, to our lives today.

It is a gift he gives us. Like most worthwhile gifts, Adrian's homilies are the result of careful planning and deep commitment. The ten minutes of wisdom that he shares with us are the result of hours of praying the scripture, reflecting on the commentaries of other scripture scholars and 'walking with the Gospel' in light of what is happening in our world.

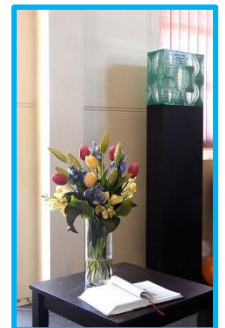
Sometimes I feel that he is speaking directly to me, always I leave with a deeper understanding of who the Gospel invites me to be.

Fr Adrian is a storyteller; and he shares this gift with insight and sensitivity. The students of St Alipius, when preparing for the sacrament of Penance, relate to his story of the young Adrian McInerney breaking his mother's rose bush while playing football, and the reconciliation that happened afterwards during an exchange over a freshly baked biscuit. His 'Life to Faith; Faith to Life' metaphors and analogies help us all make sense of a world that can sometimes seem too complex to navigate.



Fr Adrian is a gifted speaker. More importantly perhaps, he is a gifted listener. His capacity to be wholeheartedly 'present' as people share personal stories (perhaps during a time of grief or uncertainty, perhaps at a time of joy or blessing) is a treasure that many parishioners hold dear. That he can give one person his profound attention when there is so much else going on in his parish, is a gift he gives selflessly.

Fr Adrian has an eye for beauty. Beautiful sunsets, beautiful flowers, the beauty in people's faces, the beauty in a leaf turning from green to orange, the beauty of the Australian landscape and especially of the Murray river where he learned to look for God in the environment of his childhood home at Nangiloc. Whilst in Rome in the early 70s his eye for the aesthetic took Fr Adrian's gaze and imagination into exploring how sacred spaces help to lead us into closer relationship with God. This interest has grown over the years and we, as a parish, have been the recipients of the fruits of this gift in the sensitive restoration of St Alipius Church and the beautifully recreated church of St Peter and Paul.



Fr Adrian's vision and his tireless work in collaborating to see this vision fulfilled, is his legacy to us. Two places of worship which invite us to gather as a community of prayer and action.

Fr Adrian's love of liturgy and his desire to ensure that symbolism, music, words and actions all assist the community to Gather, Hear the Word, Celebrate the Eucharist and Take the Celebration into our lives, have been evident in the liturgical life of our parish. Fr Adrian is sensitive to the seasons of the church in the same way that he is sensitive to the seasons in the environment and the seasons in our lives. The liturgies he prepares reflect this deep understanding of the power of symbol and sacrament; our Easter Triduum ceremonies our particular evidence of Fr Adrian's love of liturgy.



Fr Adrian is a teacher and a learner. These two activities are intrinsically linked and Fr Adrian models both in his reflective nature and his understanding of how learners learn. Staff and Advisory Councils in our schools have been impressed by Fr Adrian's capacity to embrace contemporary learning models and to reflect on his own experiences of learning to help guide our decision-making. Fr Adrian's wisdom has been constant as we endeavour to create learning programmes that enliven the Gospel message and enrich our contemporary society. Our schools are thriving under his wise and generous leadership.

Fr Adrian has shared his gifts as a story-teller, a teacher, a visionary and a faith leader. He has done so with a humble generosity and an unwavering faith and we are grateful for the gifts he has shared. We have learnt many things from Fr Adrian in the past sixteen years. Many messages of hope and positivity. When I ask the children of St Alipius 'What have you learnt from Fr Adrian?' There is one message that comes through clearly; 'Fr Adrian has taught me that God is love - and that God loves me'

That is the greatest gift of all.