

PERSONAL BUT NOT PRIVATE

Celebrating forty years of his ordination to the Priesthood in April this year was Fr Wally Tudor. He was ordained to the priesthood at St Patrick's Church, Gordon, by Archbishop Little on April 5, 1975.

After serving in the Philippines as a Columban missionary for several years, Fr Wally returned to Australia to undertake a variety of pastoral appointments. In recent years, he has served the people of the Diocese of Ballarat as parish priest in many parishes throughout the diocese. He is currently the parish priest of "Our Lady, Star of the Sea" parish, Apollo Bay. Fr Wally comes from Gordon, near Ballarat.

The Diocese congratulate Fr Wally as he marks this occasion. Mass and Dinner were held to honour the priests of the Diocese who were celebrating jubilees this year.

Reported in **The Far East**, the St Columbans Mission Society Magazine Fr Wally delivered the **following homily** on the call to the ministry of priesthood at the Eucharist where he celebrated his anniversary of his ordination to priesthood.



*The call to the ministry of priesthood is **a personal call but not a private one**. It comes from the grace received in Baptism and is based on God's love and faithfulness.*

It is a call to serve rather than to be served and is always strengthened by the support of family, friends and parishioners. It is in this context that I give thanks today for all of you who have come here to celebrate this special occasion with me.

My vocation grew out of God's love for me which I discovered in family life, especially in the groundwork and love of my parents whose Christian values they shared with us.

My siblings and extended family have also encouraged me over the years and I'm very pleased to say that my only living aunt has come all the way from Queensland to share this occasion with me. Thank you, Mary, for that honour.

The parish community of Gordon (95ks west of Melbourne) can lay claim to the rising grace within me to serve God. The Sisters of St Joseph, affectionately known as the 'Brown Joeys' encouraged me in primary school and I owe them a great deal for care and teaching in showing me the way to love God. In Secondary College, the Christian Brothers challenged me to overcome adversity in a way that I didn't understand at the time.



I don't need to go into every detail of my journey to where I find myself at this time but I am pleased to have gathered around me a number of Columban priests with whom I have studied and who have become lifetime friends and supporters.

Above L-R: Frs Neville Stanislaus, John Monaghan, Dan Arundell, Wally Tudor and Andrew Hayes.

Naturally enough the diocesan priests are unable to be with us because of their weekend commitments but the spirit of the priests of the diocese is wonderful and a great support on the journey of ministry often in very difficult circumstances, as we will all find ourselves in with the Royal Commission in Ballarat for public hearings. Much of my 40 years of priesthood has been overshadowed by the inexcusable events of clergy abuse and cover-ups by people in leadership.

It is indeed thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives that we can gather together today to celebrate Christ's gifts to his people even though some have let us down very badly. Enough about that at this time except to say that we need to show continual support to those who have been abused and let down by people who should have been able to shepherd them through rough times, leading to a breakdown of trust and loss of hope. May they find justice, healing and peace through the Royal Commission.

I stand before you humbly admitting that my growth in the priesthood is due mainly to you parishioners in this wonderful parish of Apollo Bay and to all the parishioners of every parish I have had the privilege to serve as a priest. I thank you sincerely.

Having had the experience of living and working in the Philippines for the first six years of my priesthood, I want to share with you two pastoral experiences which have stayed with me over the years.

It was my first funeral. Indeed it was the blessing of a stillborn baby brought to the church by a very poor family in a shoe box wrapped with brown paper and a makeshift bow as a gift - a gift from God returned to God with sorrow and sadness but believing that God would welcome that baby home.

That was a very powerful lesson about appreciating all that comes from God and people's encounter with the God of hope.

One of the few names I remember from those days is Teresita Tabilon, who suffered from polio and was confined to a wheelchair at the little sari-sari store (a small convenience store) in a barrio (district) that to me was very depressing. Teresita always had a smile and never complained and always looked forward to receiving Communion on my weekly visits. She was so delighted to meet my parents and my sister Anne and one of my brothers when they came to visit in 1978.

Reflection - Personal but not private I relate these two experiences not simply to reminisce but to confirm that they played a substantial part in the way my ministry has evolved from those early days and they are a practical example of today's Gospel in which we are called to love one another as Christ has loved us.

I was first loved by God and my parents and so many friends and relatives along the way in such a way that I have been able to love others.

This is the gift of discipleship - loving through thick and thin - graced by the Sacrament of Baptism and reinforced by the other Sacraments along the way, especially the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is at the centre of my priestly life. It is where I find God's love in all my weakness and sinfulness and where I discover God's faithfulness and mercy, the gifts that Pope Francis emphasizes in calling for a Jubilee Year of Mercy beginning in November.

It is why our celebration today is firmly embedded in community life - it is not so much about me and my vocation but more about us and our various vocations in discipleship - a discipleship that keeps Christ among us and brings Christ to those around us.

We are called to various ministries within the community and the challenge for all of us is that we respond appropriately to the specific call given to each one of us so that Christ is truly present in our lives and we help to make him present in the lives of others through the way we live the Gospel values of compassion, justice, peace and equality.

As Jesus reminds us in today's Gospel: "I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from the Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last."

This is indeed the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.