

Pastor's Column

Rev. Michael Ratajczak
michaelr@stmoside.org
758-4100 x100

"The 32nd on the 31st!"

This Wednesday, January 31st, 2007 marks the 32nd anniversary of my Ordination to the Priesthood. I give thanks to God for the gift of my vocation and God's willingness to allow me to share in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. I pray for continued strength as I head into "the home stretch."

I am so grateful for the Church of St. Thomas More, this Community of Faith that I have the privilege and joy to pastor.

A Pastor needs to be fed, just as the flock needs to be fed. Please know that I am being fed by you, the Church of St. Thomas More! Your commitment, your desire, and your efforts to live as Disciples of Jesus, and to witness to God's Kingdom in this time and this place mean much to me. You feed me and you strengthen my commitment to be faithful to my promises and vows. Always remember that we need each other. You need a pastor, and, just as importantly, a Pastor needs his community.

As I celebrate 32 years of ministry, two phrases come to mind: "permanent commitment" and "humor."

Firstly, the most important charism that is needed for our time is, I believe, "permanent commitment." There are many people in our world today who believe that people cannot make a commitment that lasts "until death." All of us, married, vowed religious, and ordained are called to give to this generation the gift of "permanent commitment."

Our young people, especially, need to see that people can make commitments that last a lifetime. That is what I have chosen to do. No matter what the problem or difficulty, I choose to believe that, with the help of God, it can be worked out.

On January 31, 1975, in Mt. Clemens, Michigan, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, the Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, ordained me. I will not walk away from this commitment because I believe that this generation needs to see the charism of permanence. People can say "yes" and that "yes" can last until death.

Secondly, what has "saved" me in my ordained ministry over and over again is "humor," the ability to laugh at myself and to laugh, not at others, but with others. Our very existence is Mystery. Continually we face the unknown, and as we face the joy, the turmoil, and the tragedy of life, humor is a vital gift that sees us through.

I give thanks to God that, in my 32 years of ministry, the gift of humor has found its way into my life and ministry. So much of life is unknown, and, at times, may seem meaningless and even absurd! So, in the face of "not knowing" and consciously "living the questions", I choose to laugh, regale, and enjoy the Mystery, and to be in awe of what life places before us, knowing that God walks with us through it all.

I ask that you celebrate with me. I ask that you pray for me, and for all priests, in a special way on Wednesday, January 31. I need your prayerful support! Through your commitment to this Faith Community, help me to be a priest that is faithful until death.

These are the words of my Ordination Prayer Card. I pray this prayer often. Please pray it with your household on Wednesday, January 31:

Nothing Less Than All of You Is What I Want

*"Who is that Figure walking by the waters,
along the shore white, shining and terrible?
He looks at me with Knowing eyes that hurt.
I think He sees my every fiber with those Eyes...
glowing, blazing, probing, loving Eyes,
dreadful, asking Eyes.
They say straightforward
Nothing less than all of you is what I want."*

I feel that I am giving more of myself to the Lord today than I did 32 years ago, but I still have a long way to go before I am able to give the Lord everything. I encourage you to join me on the journey.

Let us pray that all of us, as Disciples of the Lord Jesus, each day, give a bit more of ourselves to Him until the transformation is total and complete.

Fr. Mike