

## HOMILY FOR THE JUBILEE MASS

of Monsignor David Bell, Father Peter Fahy and Bishop Owen Dolan

Saturday 27 July 2019

What gathers us today is not  
just the count of years  
whether it be 50 for Dave and Peter  
or 65 for Owen  
since hands were laid on them  
and the Holy Spirit bestowed  
in priestly ordination.

Since then, parish ministry for each, plus  
tertiary chaplaincy for Peter  
seminary work for Dave and vicar general  
foreign missions and episcopal ministry for Owen.  
Still I say it's not just about  
so many years and so many places.  
Today's about milestones of service  
and witness to faithfulness.

I often reflected after calling on priests  
in country parishes of our rural diocese  
simply their presence  
in the midst of their people  
week in week out, month in month out  
year in year out  
whatever about our record  
– the good and the bad –  
just being there – availability  
is prophetic witness to faithfulness  
in a world that isn't sure  
whether faithfulness is even possible anymore.

Being faithful has a price, personal sacrifice;  
not something we take on lightly.

It never was:

Moses said God was asking too much.

God said: *"I shall be with you."*

Isaiah: "Don't send me, I'm not holy enough."

*"I will make you holy."*

Jeremiah: "They'll slaughter me, I've a terrible stutter."

*"Go anyway."*

Paul: "I'm not worthy to be called an apostle."

*"I never said you were."*

Peter, in Jesus' hour of greatest need:

"I do not know the man."

*"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, be my rock."*

Think on that. Paul was right:

"In the midst of human weakness  
God's power is more manifest."

At Vui's ordination

– nation to nation reaching out  
church to church in communion –  
we recalled that Jesus never left off  
or handed over

It's still He, our only priest  
who now through others acts and speaks  
and calls to ordination.

But this must be more than simple fact  
it must be what our very self becomes  
in mind and heart and life  
through keeping company with Jesus of Nazareth  
thinking as He did, feeling too  
urged to be, as Owen's motto says:  
"Of the same mind as Christ Jesus."

Have you ever wondered how Jesus felt  
on waking in the small hours  
as often He must have done?  
Knowing the prophecies, He knew his doom  
the price of faithfulness.  
How that must have weighed,  
heaved his stomach  
disturbed his sleep.

But on He went, day after day  
one day at a time  
not covered by the evils  
He was sent to beat.

His style He pictured for us  
    seeing the shepherds of his time,  
their intimacy with their flocks,  
    spending the time of day with them;  
        seeking – with them and for them –  
            better places to be;  
    their lives on the line for them,  
He saw in himself what He saw in them  
    and hoped to see in us.

As every priest knows, or quickly learns  
    it's the faith, love, sacrifices, hopes, struggles and courage  
        of those he serves  
that urges him on, inspires, empowers  
    and enables his perseverance.

And so to all of you  
    who have inspired us,  
        prayed for us and supported us  
with Dave and Peter and Owen,  
    we say "thank you."  
This jubilee is your day too.  
    You are rightly proud of them  
        and they of you.

Also to families who gave sons and brothers  
(in other callings daughters and sisters too)  
    siblings and rel'ies here with us  
    parents gone before us,  
    but in this Mass all of them surrounding us:  
To you all, for your generous sacrifices,  
    Thank you.

And to Owen, Dave and Peter  
    we all thank you  
for what only the Good Shepherd  
    can properly reward you for  
        and treat you to.