



Diocesan e-News

A REFLECTION FROM A SEMI-RETIRED BALLARAT PRIEST

Dear Friends,

I was ordained as a priest on August 22, 1986 in St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat. This year I celebrated thirty years of Priesthood whilst I was in Northern Ireland supplying for two friends there while they took their holidays.

My life as a priest in the Ballarat Diocese started in Mildura under a very pastoral priest in Fr Frank Madden in 1987 with my time in parishes finishing in mid-January 2015. I now reside in the Geelong area. I semi-retired when I was sixty-eight years of age as over the years I suffered depression, with four times needing treatment for it. I have now been well for over nine years. My previous best before that was eight years. I have also experienced some stressful times in parish life which is now water under the bridge.



In my parish life as a priest I felt it was most necessary to listen to the people, hoping they had a sense I was with them, especially at time where there were just no answers. I found this was most necessary when families were dealing with the loss of a loved one, more often when death involved suicides or in other tragic circumstances. In all this I felt helping families prepare for funerals was a real gift to me by the people themselves, trusting me to walk with them sometimes in the deepest of their pain.

The other ways I have enjoyed being a priest is performing the sacraments, Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Eucharist. With the children I found it very helpful in using pictures to get them involved. The aim of this was to help children get to know Jesus better as well as guiding them to become their best selves. As I love sport I found that this was also a good way to teach good values especially around football, netball, cricket and basketball. All these sports have strong team elements to them which was about WE and not I.

An observation I have made is that I sense communication between people is breaking down somewhat! For example, as a child I was sent outside to play with other children. We came back inside when called for dinner. Now, children stay inside and play on their computers so not speaking with others. My hope would be that the adults in their lives do more things together with them and they learn the art of conversation again. In this technical age, adults are following young people. Technology is here to stay. Perhaps though we can create a good balance and perhaps the balance is time when we put technology aside, do something outside together or perhaps do something together on the internet. To get this balance it needs to be seen that it is not school driven, but parent driven. Schools do a lot already.

Finally, in my being semi-retired I do a lot of relieving in parishes to give priests time to take a holiday. I find that for a fulfilling life I need prayer; giving forgiveness when dealing with major hurts; being thankful for all we have, even the difficult things; see the Eucharist as the best gift you can get; have some hobbies; not take oneself too seriously and finally, enjoy life.

*Best wishes,
Fr Denis Ryan.*