

Please pray for all priests who willingly embrace the Cross, and yet try, on good and bad days, to witness to The Resurrection.

Today, 11th May 1991, is the anniversary of Ordination of our Parish Priest. An ordinary working day! He thanks warmly those who remembered, and already sent an important assurance of prayers for him, and thanks for his life and ministry which they mostly say “is much valued and needed!” Which is nice to hear. Some generously sent or left cards and gifts. He extends prayers and good wishes to all, and to those, who attribute hurt and fault to him, he apologises, and, where necessary, asks forgiveness for real or perceived wrongs. In the same spirit he offers unconditional forgiveness who have, surely unintentionally, hurt him in speech, writing or in any other way (gossip, lies, spreading false rumours, and knowingly withholding the full facts about encounters he may have had with them, for whatever reason, or whatever disputed excuse or basis they claim to have.

At the Chrism Mass in our Cathedral, on Wednesday of Holy Week, our Bishop, who was the man, as the seminary Rector, who presented Michael for ordination said in his homily:

“.....with the passing years of priestly ministry have I come to grasp something more of what the gesture of prostrating myself on the floor of the Church that day really meant; it’s a gesture of profound self-abandonment, of a handing over of one’s life to the service of the Lord and his people. Such self-sacrifice comes only from great love; it’s impossible without generous love. Such sacrifice I gradually came to see, comes only from a close friendship with Christ crucified, from the one who, in the love he lives out on the Cross, makes possible our own loving response.....

Very often, this is first brought home to us, before perhaps we begin to live it ourselves, when we encounter in our ministry parishioners who have been going through sufferings of one kind or another, suffering that could so easily have made their faith falter, but who have discovered, in their darkness and pain, the suffering Jesus, and have felt themselves bound close to him in a way they had never experienced when things were going well. My brothers, I think you would agree that closeness to the crucified and risen Christ can be at its most real and most intimate when we are sharers in suffering, sharers in the Cross. It’s then that we begin to learn the truth that it is impossible to truly follow Jesus at a safe distance. We are always being called to follow him up close. Today, as we renew our priestly promises, Jesus, our great High Priest and Suffering Servant, asks us again as his priests if we are willing to drink from his cup. Again, we are invited to answer, Adsum, Here I am! Each year, at this Chrism Mass, the invitation is to follow Jesus up close; not to fear the cup, the chalice of suffering in our lives, not to fear the Cross. So let us pray for each other, not just today but each day, that we may strive to live as priests of Jesus Christ, servants of the Suffering Servant, who at Mass each day grasp the chalice of suffering firmly, who know what we are doing, who imitate the sacrifice we offer on our own behalf and on behalf of those we serve, and who are striving, by God’s grace, to conform our lives more and more to his Cross.”

Fr Michael benefitted greatly from those words, and wholly agreed with this: “My dear people, my dear religious and deacons, there isn’t a priest present who isn’t sustained by your prayers, and by your own lives of faithful witness to the crucified and risen Lord. Thank you for that generous witness and prayer. Please now pray for all the priests within our diocese, and for myself. Pray that the Lord will continue to bless and sustain us in generous service to you, and all in our pastoral care.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MANY KINDESSES TO Fr M AND ALL PRIESTS