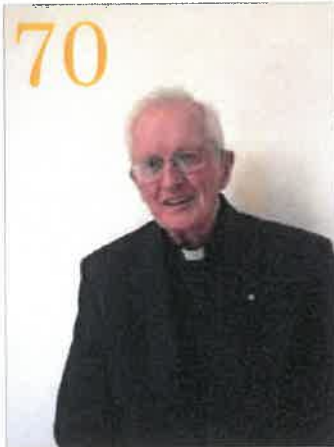


Jubilarians



“For in Him we live and move and have our being.”

(Acts 17:28)

Monsignor Frank Hickey

When I matriculated from St Patrick’s College in 1943 there were six of us who entered the seminary. In 1951, I was ordained a priest with 17 fellow men, and now, at 95, I’m the last man standing.

Taking the sacraments for the first time made a big impression. I met the Lord in that ceremony. It was the most faith-filled experience of my life. It introduced me to the idea of the priesthood. Since then, I had seen myself in a priestly role, though in a distant hazy way. I grew up on a farm near Numurkah in the depression years, one of eight children. I didn’t go to Catholic schools, other than three weeks at St Joseph’s Numurkah when I prepared for my First Holy Communion, and I always felt like an outsider. This feeling lingered when I started my last two years of high school at St Patrick’s College, Ballarat and even at Corpus Christi College, Werribee.

Even though I wanted to become a priest, I didn’t think I’d have much chance of succeeding because I didn’t have any Latin and I was a smoker. But, thanks to God, all obstacles disappeared and I was ordained a priest after eight years in the seminary.

Over 70 years I’ve seen a lot of change in the Church. Vatican II was tremendous; I agreed with everything. Now, just the fact that we are taking synodality on board is a great advance. It’s taking our brothers and sisters in Christ into real communication with one another, and with Christ. I’ve been praying the Plenary prayer and the Synod on Synodality Prayer every day. They are beautiful prayers, both of them. Pope Francis is saying we don’t have to shut doors on what is going on; Christ is everywhere, so let’s find Him and be with Him.

I think the most important thing for all Christians, and especially for priests, comes from St Paul, *“For in Him we live and move and have our being.”* (Acts 17:28).

I think prayer at home and prayer in groups is a reflection of Christ in community.

“For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them” (Matthew 18:20).

That’s what St Paul talked about; it’s the most important thing in life for any one of us. We need to celebrate and pray together with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The biggest impact on Catholic families I’ve seen in my time is the TV and internet. They have lessened our sense of “my sister my brother”. The other person is not the point of interest, but the thing on the wall, or the thing in the hand. I feel that these devices have caused the lessening of group faith and the lessening of Christ amongst us.

When I was a child, my family prayed the Rosary every night. As kids we might have been half asleep, but the point is that Christ was there, he affected us through that group. TV Mass has been great through the pandemic, but after the pandemic, we need to make sure that we continue to gather together, around the breaking of bread, if possible, but at the very least in prayer. Then we will find Christ amongst us.

I really hope and pray that the youth of today, will see themselves the way youth once did, as children of their ancestors. We need our youth to understand that we have a story; we are people of culture and we have to have that culture which we inherit as Christians influence our Australian culture. We are all children of the Spirit.

I see so many possibilities for the future in many of the good people of Nagambie, who practise the Gospel truths at the social and devotional level. This gives me hope and great joy.