

Fr Steve Bohan

Eulogy

by Michael Ross, Parishioner of Sacred Heart, Yarrawonga

My name is Michael Ross. I am here to share some reflections on Fr Steve on behalf of our parish, a place where he served twice, with this second time being here for 19 years. I remember when we first came to the parish over eight years ago, being warmly welcomed by Fr Steve and embraced by the parish community that he led, and welcome was a hallmark of his ministry here. Fr Steve welcomed everyone into our parish; those in the centre and those on the margins, families, single parents, the young, the older, those with a deep faith and those struggling with faith. This was our church, our community, and Fr Steve was our priest who led us and taught us.

In many ways, Fr Steve was a relaxed and very down-to-earth man, though blessed with extraordinary gifts, and as our priest, he was always with us in the many ways that we celebrate our sacramental life as a parish community, and as a school community. Listening to the students at the College speak of Father Steve all week reminded me of how embedded he had also become into our town. For many he had baptised them and given their First Communions; he had married many of their parents and celebrated the funeral for some of their grandparents. He had performed all these special occasions for so many of us here.

In our life as a parish community, we shared and participated in his ecumenical activities, and he led our support of Caritas and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. But it was particularly in the constant faithfulness that he showed in leading our Eucharistic celebrations, that he was always there at the focal point of our lives.

As a preacher, Fr Steve was able to open up the scriptures for us so that we could all see the meaning that can sometimes be hidden in plain sight, along with how we can incorporate the teachings of scripture into our own lives. Fr Steve was well read in his biblical and theological studies and had visited many parts of the Holy Land. When he spoke, he did so with a deep knowledge and understanding of Christian and Jewish traditions. Over the years, we as a parish, got to know not only the wonderful message of his homilies but also the deep resonance of his voice. The tone and colour of his speech was so well modulated and he often spoke without the need for notes.

Through his story telling, Fr Steve also opened up for us the history of our community of Yarrawonga, a community in which he had become a particularly significant member. In his sharing of local history at Mass, whether it was the history of a particular person, or family, or that of a significant building,

Fr Steve reminded us that we are also part of the ongoing history of our town, and that we have a contribution to make.

Most importantly, Fr Steve provided for us that most nourishing and spiritually enriching of food, the Eucharist. Through all of his time here we saw his faithfulness to this ministry, but it was particularly in the last six months of his time as parish priest that this faithfulness was most apparent. Not just apparent in his being physically present to celebrate with us, but also apparent in the fragility of his body and the struggle that came with it, and his not allowing that to keep him from celebrating with us. Weekend after weekend we would come to Mass to find Fr Steve already seated in his chair as we gathered with him.

St Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, described the role of priest as being “*ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God.*” In his ministry to our schools and within our parish, particularly in the greatest gift, our Eucharistic celebrations, Fr Steve faithfully led us with love, passion, grace and wisdom. Fr Steve, we owe you so much and we thank you greatly, and while your presence will be sorely missed, we know that you will continue to advocate for us from your new posting.