



SANDPIPER

Issue 78: 21 June 2024

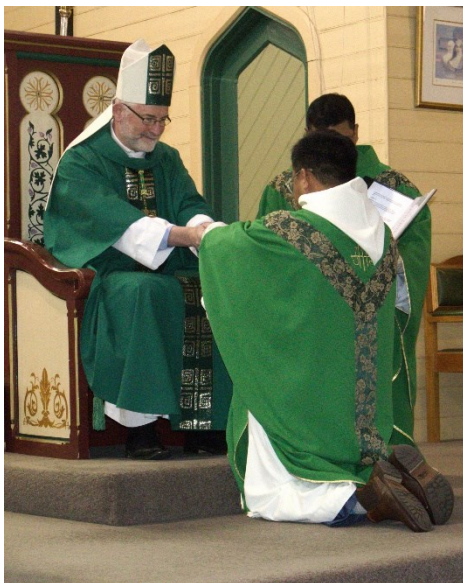
A Ray of Sunshine for Sandhurst

On the occasion of his incardination to the Diocese of Sandhurst, Fr Junray Rayna shared a heartfelt reflection with his parishioners, finishing with the phrase *'Daghang Salamat'*.

The congregation not only understood these Cebuano words but were moved by the poignancy of their sentiment. For Fr Junray, the words to best express the depth of emotion he felt on the day were words of his native tongue: *'Daghang Salamat'* – 'Thank you very much'.

The excardination and incardination rituals were presided over by Bishop Shane Mackinlay at the 12:10 p.m. Mass on Friday 12 June at St Kilian's, Bendigo, where Fr Junray has been Parish Administrator since 2019.

In his Homily, Bishop Shane related the Reading and Gospel of the day to the ministry of priests and, in particular, Fr Junray's ministry:



"The true prophet is one who points to the true God ... a priest needs to point to God, to help us to find God in our lives and in our world. And that is certainly one of the key things we have seen, and recognised, and are grateful for in Junray's ministry amongst us – his faithful witness to God's presence amongst us. He keeps on pointing to God; he clearly looks to God himself; and he helps us to look to God as well."

Another facet of that ministry, which is evident in the Gospel, is faithfulness to the tradition. A critical dimension of a priest's ministry is to help us look to God; to help point to God and to help root us in our tradition; and to draw on the depths and riches of that. As I was reflecting on Fr Junray's ministry, I recalled how frequently and richly he draws on our tradition, going back to various mystics and writers from centuries and centuries ago, helping us to be aware of them; to be engaged with their thinking; and to be nourished by them."

Bishop Shane expressed his gratitude to Fr Junray on behalf of the people of Sandhurst. “Fr Junray, thank you for your generosity; we are enriched by your presence amongst us, and we assure you of our support in your ministry.”

Fr DJ Suguitan, fellow Sandhurst priest, read the Decree of Excardination issued by Archbishop José Palma of Cebu, which provided for the excardination of Fr Junray from the Archdiocese of Cebu at the very moment he is incardinated to the Diocese of Sandhurst.

Fr Junray then, in the presence of the Bishop, fellow clergy and the people he serves, renewed the promises he made at his priestly ordination and declared his intention to be received as a priest of the Diocese of Sandhurst.

Monsignor Frank Marriott read the Decree of Incardination with “great delight,” after which Bishop Shane ‘pronounced, declared and decreed’ that Reverend Junray Lebumfacil Rayna is now incardinated as a priest of the Diocese of Sandhurst to overwhelming applause from a joyous congregation.

Fr Junray was born and raised in Toledo City, in Cebu, the Philippines. He commenced his priestly formation at San Carols Seminary in Cebu City and later, with the support of the Diocese of Sandhurst, completed his priestly formation at Corpus Christi College, Carlton.

He was ordained as a priest of the Archdiocese of Cebu in 2015 and, soon after, returned to Australia to commence his first appointment as Assistant Priest in the Parish of Wodonga, where he served until his current appointment as Administrator of St Kilian’s Parish in Bendigo.

Fr Junray said he requested to be received as a priest of the Diocese of Sandhurst because he could see a real need for priests here and now feels at home here. “I realise that this is where I belong now,” he explained.

Leaving one Diocese and joining another understandably evokes mixed emotions which Fr Junray said he finds hard to articulate. “I was talking with my professor from the Seminary in the Philippines; he said, ‘I’m happy for you, but I’m in mourning’,” said Fr Junray as a way to explain his own feelings. “I think the word ‘excardinated’ and the words of the Decree are quite shocking,” said Fr Junray, hypothesising that when issuing the Decree, Archbishop of Cebu would have understood that he was following God’s call to meet a need.



“I’m not leaving my past, or my culture,” said Fr Junray. “I’m bringing my heritage, my story, all of my background with me and I’m hoping to be a gift here.”

Reflecting over the fourteen years since he first came to Australia, Fr Junray now realises that faith has led him to where he is. As a young seminarian he never anticipated that, by embarking on the “adventure of a lifetime,” he would change the course of his life.

Initially Fr Junray applied to become a seminarian for Sandhurst out of a sense of adventure. "I'm naturally very adventurous; I remember the promotion headline 'Come to Australia as a missionary.' I thought, it will be a great experience; a real adventure."

Having said that, Fr Junray hadn't expected he would still be in Australia fourteen years later. "I'm very close to my family, so, the thought of living abroad for such a long time was too scary to even entertain," he said. "It takes a lot of growth and a lot of courage to listen to where the need is and then act on it."

Fr Junray's resolve is galvanised by the constant support of his widowed mother who still lives in the Philippines, as do his three younger siblings. "I've been doing things for the Church for a very long time, so whatever decision I come to, my Mum supports me." Acknowledging that communications technology makes it easier to keep close with his family, Fr Junray said his mother keeps up to date with all St Kilian's news. "My Mum watched the *St John of Sahugan* Feast Day Mass which was livestreamed from St Kilian's on the night of my incardination; she was so happy."

Congratulating Fr Junray on his incardination, Bishop Shane joked that Fr Junray has decided to park his ute in the Diocese of Sandhurst. For many in the Diocese, this nature-loving, hiking, surfing ute-driving priest, Fr Junray has always been a Sandhurst priest, but his incardination now assures that he will not be called back to the Phiippines.

Fr Junray is living up to the beautiful name his parents gave him. Junray means 'little light'. "I'm living up to at least half of it, because I'm only five feet tall," jokes Fr Junray with healthy self-deprecating (Australian?) humour.



Monsignor Frank Marriott, Fr Rom Hayes and Fr DJ Suguitan, and of course Fr Junray concelebrated the Mass presided over by Bishop Shane Makinlay.

Fr Junray's Reflection on the Occasion of his Incardination to the Diocese of Sandhurst

12 June 2024

"For a little time as a priest, celebrating the Eucharist, I have come to know that this communion with God will slowly lead us to what we have consumed, that is, to be broken and shared. This very slow journey and realisation can only be done in love. John of the Cross says, "Whoever knows how to die in all, will have life in all."

Allow me to read to you a little stanza from his Spiritual Canticle:

When you looked at me

Your eyes imprinted Your grace in me;

For this You loved me ardently;

And thus my eyes deserved

To adore what they beheld in you.

"Today, as I have renewed my promises to the priesthood in this mighty Diocese of Sandhurst, I have renewed that my priesthood is only a gaze of God, full of mercy, grace and beauty.

And now, my heart, my life, my priesthood is an act of love.

I resolve that everything I do, I do with love, and I shall keep my strength for God alone and his beloved Diocese of Sandhurst."

Dear friends,

Thank you very much and *daghang salamat*

12 June is an auspicious day for Fr Junray Rayna. It is the anniversary of his baptism, the Feast Day of John of Sahagún, patron saint of his childhood parish; and, this year, the day of his incardination to the Diocese of Sandhurst.