

Welcome & thank you for coming to join me in celebrating and in thanking Almighty God for all the blessings of the past 50 yrs and a life time.

In a special way I want to thank Fr. Vang and the people of St Vincent's for the invitation to be here today. I'm delighted to be here. My memory goes back more than 60 yrs to my years in the St Vincent's school. And they are happy memories.

Like the book entitled All I Need To Know I learned in Kindergarten, what I learned here in grade school have been life long lessons. I am profoundly grateful for that experience. Of course, the ~~most profound~~ deepest and longest influence was <sup>that of</sup> my parents and their influence combined with the school and parish influence. They reinforced one another.

Father Griffin comes to mind immediately. I served Mass for him regularly, ran errands, counted the collection and many other things. That association undoubtedly emboldened thoughts about the priesthood in very ~~of~~ impressionable years. The debt I owe him is immense and I try to repay him regularly in my prayers and masses for him.

Then there was Fr. Mac Cormac, assistant pastor, a wonderful man, a very devoted priest. My association with him covered my years. As a

a seminarian I prepared a confirmation class for him when he was pastor in Raymond, Me. I also ~~visited~~ stayed with him in Waterville and I had the privilege of preaching his funeral sermon.

There are so many others I should mention - Fr. Richard O'Connor who succeeded Fr. MacCormac as assistant to Fr. Griffin and who ~~remains~~ remains a dear friend - Ill health prevents him from being here today - Major Steiner a boyhood companion and a friend ~~until~~ to this day is another - ~~My~~ Fr. Peter Meade was the pastor 50 yrs ago when I offered my first Mass - My Fr. Frank Gilligan presided at that Mass - I visited him this week at the Regina Nursery in Hasting -

In my memories of St Vincent's school a large role was played by Sr. Frances Begis who was principal and 8th grade teacher. Sr. Marie de Lourdes was another who influenced me.

~~My list of~~ And then there was Mae Moyle, secretary of the parish, ~~undoubtedly~~ undoubtedly the best human person in the history of St Vincent's - Her service here <sup>spanned</sup> ~~spanned~~ at least 50 pastorates - What a marvelous example she has given to all of us.

Then there are so many who were here in school when I was here and whose associations and memories I cherish. In a special way I want to thank all who have prepared the events

of this day especially the work for the refreshment  
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I don't know how to express my deepest  
gratitude for my brothers and sisters and their spouses and  
children and grandchildren. They have been and are an  
enormous source of support over the years. I  
love them all and I have a pity for the poor priest  
or any one who has no family. Life must be very lonely.  
I pray in a special way and very frequently for  
my family.

Fifty years is a long time - Many  
changes have occurred. The changes in this  
parish are a sort of microcosm of what the  
changes in the church and in society. Yet amid  
the changes there are certain constants, certain  
enduring values and principles that haven't  
changed, that in fact have become ever clearer  
and stronger over the years.

Certainly that is true of my reasons for  
becoming a priest. I remember so clearly being  
asked by a ~~new~~ retreat master why do you want  
to become a priest. My answer then and now was  
two fold: to be able to offer holy Mass and to  
accomplish good in my work. There are  
other important reasons, but none more basic  
than these two.

Today is a wonderful day to celebrate

an anniversary of the priesthood because it is the feast of the Body and Blood of ~~our Lord~~ <sup>Christ</sup>, what we formerly called Corpus Christi. Eucharist & priesthood go together always.

In today's Gospel Jesus said: "I myself am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he will live forever; the bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.... He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day." (Jn. 6)

It is the profound privilege and at the same time an awesome one of the priest to stand in Christ's place each day and pronounce the momentous words of consecration: this is my body; this is my blood, What could be more worth doing? The Almighty and ever-loving God becomes present.

He enters into an ever deepening relationship with the priest and with all you come to His table.

And that is not all. He promises "life eternal" to those who come to Him in faith and love.

Think of what eternal life is - never ending, ever lasting, goes on and on, all the happiness we are capable of having and having it without end.

The holy Eucharist is the most profound of mysteries and the promise it carries is beyond our wildest dreams and imaginations. It is literally too good to be true, but it is true! The promise

of eternal life is one that only God could make and can fulfill and He does make it to all of us and will fulfill it. Only infinite, and unbounded love could do so good and generous. It is not just a matter of endless time, but ~~the~~ it is endless time in the possession of God Himself, of a face-to-face, person-to-person, possession of God Himself.

Truly the holy eucharist is the center of the priesthood. ~~It~~ To be ~~able to~~ a priest is a lofty, noble and challenging calling.

A second reason for my becoming a priest, and one that is energizing even to this day, is the wonderful opportunity to help people. A priest is called to be a servant of people, especially in their religious needs. As a young person one tends to think of this service in terms of temporal needs but as one matures you see ~~the~~ better the meaning of Our Lord's statement that "man does not live on bread alone." There is a deep ~~has~~ spiritual hunger that can be satisfied by prayer and sacraments and giving a true meaning of life.

As I think of the many careers that ~~are~~ possible today and that are geared toward improving the lives of people, there is none that seems to ~~be~~ me to be as helpful to people as the career of a priest.

Certainly my life has been very different from anything I ever thought about when I was a seminarian. I've been a parish priest, an AF Chap, a prof, Univ pres. Over the yrs I've traveled extensively, met all kinds of people, poor and rich, ordinary people and popes and presidents. I've loved all the positions I've held. Above all there has been the presidency of St Thomas University. I can't ~~imagine~~ <sup>imagine</sup> any thing being busier, <sup>more</sup> unrelenting business, than that position ~~but~~ but it afforded <sup>innumerable</sup> opportunities to do significant things. Some people would not look ~~at~~ upon the presidency as a service because they see it as the top of a pyramid ~~but~~ and because it removes one from direct and immediate contact with the people being ~~served~~ served. It is, however, one of service to many, many people, many of whom I ~~will~~ <sup>will</sup> ~~meet~~ <sup>meet</sup> ~~there~~ <sup>there</sup> is, business, a satisfaction ~~is~~ in ~~seeing~~ enabling those who ~~are~~ immediately ~~help~~ <sup>help</sup> others, such as teachers of students, so they can do their job better. It is satisfying to see a great Catholic institution grow and reach out to ever larger numbers of people, to see it become a stronger witness of the Church and the Catholic faith to the community and to the many different people the community embraces. St Thomas makes a rich and enduring contribution to the lives of many, many people, people of all ~~ends~~ <sup>ends</sup> of life and of many <sup>walks</sup>.

possessions - It has been gratifying to have a role at St. Thomas -  
 Holy Mass and a meaningful life are all remain reasons to be a priest

While many wonderful, ~~at~~ satisfying and meaningful things have happened, I'm always very conscious of falling short of the ideal. Christ calls us to be perfect like His Son Jesus and yet we know we ~~are~~ fall far short of that goal.

It is so very easy to get caught up in the rush of activities, of activities that are good in themselves but should always be pointed toward God. As a seminarian I read a book by a great French spiritual writer <sup>+ I may forget its title</sup> and it could be summed up in his statement that we must not confuse the ~~God of good works~~ God of good works of God with the God of good works, that is, don't get so caught up <sup>up</sup> trying to do good that you neglect the God who is all good and who fills the earth with His goodness. Good works should begin with the good God and end by leading to Him.

We must not ~~so~~ get so engaged up in the good works of God that we neglect the God of good works. That means more attention to the interior life, to purity of motivation, to awareness of God's grace in all our accomplishments, to a kindling warmth that radiates the ~~heart~~ love of Christ.

I am very conscious that on the day of judgment the Lord will not ask what work

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does not need our work but He wants our love and to love us " . . . "

As we move closer to that day let us pray for one another. I will certainly pray for all of you, for mother and dad, for all my relatives and friends, ~~both~~ living and dead, for all who have helped me and for all whom I have tried to help. I ask your prayers and I assure you of my prayers for you. God keep you always.

## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination

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be able to offer holy Mass and to accomplish good in my work. There are other important reasons, but none more basic than these two.

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