

Golden Jubilee

Monsignor Joseph D. Harrington, June 4, 2006

Homily by Father Ed Courtney

It's a beautiful day and I'm a beautiful person.

It's a beautiful day and each one of you is a beautiful person.

How special for all of us today to gather to celebrate a Golden Priestly Jubilee.

It has been said that we don't know what a person thinks and what they feel.

I am going to suggest that is not true today with our Jubilarian.

When your life has been one of service and dedication to teaching and to priesthood, then you reveal a lot about yourself.

To celebrate a Golden Jubilee is a very special occasion. It is, above all, a day of gratitude and remembrance. And what a wonderful day to celebrate this golden jubilee, Pentecost – the coming of the Holy Spirit. He has been coming on Joseph Harrington since his baptism.

His birth Mother, Veronica, was called home to God at the time of his birth. His father, Joseph D. Harrington, Sr., his aunts and then his stepmother, Florence, raised him. By the time he was 26, he had been in school for 20 years and was ordained by Bishop Joseph Michael Gilmore in 1956. That Summer, he got a taste of parish experience at Conrad and Eureka. Bishop Gilmore realized his many abilities and sent him to graduate school at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and by 1960 he had his Doctor's degree in Biology. Carroll College became his home and for the next 40 years he taught hundreds of students until 2000 when he retired. That same year, he was named Prelate of Honor – called a Monsignor. Time would not permit a full listing of Joe's involvements during his 40 years at Carroll. A highlight was he being chosen President of Carroll in 1969 – a role he fulfilled until 1974.

In addition to the many boards and positions he was involved with at Carroll, he also felt the importance of being involved in Community Activities, especially the Kiwanis of Helena and United Way. He was even club president one year!

Family has always been important in Msgr. Joe's life. He was the first grandchild. He was three years old when his father married Florence. He subsequently had four sisters and over the years they have had a wonderful relationship and family spirit. At the time of his ordination and first Mass 50 years ago, Irene, Sandy and Marlene were all pregnant! Helen wasn't married yet.

I have been impressed by Joe's love and concern for all his sisters, their spouses, his nieces and nephews and grand nieces and nephews and cousins. They have wonderful

family reunions and gatherings. Msgr. Joe is most solicitous for their faith and love of God and family.

To be a teacher is to have special opportunities to help form young minds. And not only Biology, at which he excelled, but to add the dimension of God – Faith – the mystery of creation and all other good things, as Paul talks about in his letters, is a privilege and a gift.

The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., is a wonderful school in so many disciplines. As with all of us as young students, school is a time of fun and some mischief even!!! It is my understanding that he was called “Blast Off Joe” because when it was time for class he would say, “Time to Blast Off”. He had fish in his room and would invite some of his fellow students there and always, at that precise moment, their eggs would hatch!

In those days, even in graduate school, you were closely monitored. One TV for the graduate priests. They had the “Lawrence Welk Club” as they were allowed to watch that program. On the way back to their rooms, there was a long cord connected to the bell in the bell tower. Rumor has it that Joe would give that cord a good jerk as they went by so he could keep one step ahead of the students.

At Carroll he has held almost every important position. Always concerned for both faculty and students. Even today he is concerned for all of us priests with Senior Status and retirement, and faithfully visits each one of us.

Not every priest has the opportunity to continue to be a real part of his home parish. Msgr. Joe has enriched us with his presence and ministry here at St. John’s these 50 years. He is a real part of our Faith Community. He and I have become good, good friends in my many years here. He has been gracious to be here to celebrate the Liturgy, preach and always join us for great liturgical feasts.

Joseph, we are blessed to have you as part of our lives. We are better children of God because you have shared your love of God with us. Thank you, and may we all continue to grow in faith, hope, love and all the virtues, for a long time to come.
Amen Amen Amen