

A Pastoral Letter

By Most Rev. Robert Rivas O.P., D.D.
Archbishop of Castries
Solemnity of the Nativity
of St John the Baptist
June 24th, 2021



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GRATITUDE MY CUP IS OVERFLOWING

All life begins with a journey. We are conceived and the journey begins. Along the way there are signposts, stops, detours and milestones. At age 75 I have reached the milestone of GRATITUDE. I look back and I am grateful. I look ahead and I am hopeful. I stand at my milestone in time and I am thankful for my life and all that God has done for me. I am a son of grateful parents and a grateful family. Filled with gratitude, my cup is overflowing.

After Assembly 2020, I decided to write three Pastoral Letters to the Church in Saint Lucia following on the Assembly and the theme I chose for the third Pastoral Letter was 'GRATITUDE'. This is my 'thank you' and 'goodbye' to the Church I have revered and served for almost fourteen years and where I have increased in wisdom, grace and understanding in my priestly vocation and life as a Bishop.

The opposite of gratitude is ingratitude, which corrodes our hearts and steals our joy. Choosing gratitude on a daily basis counteracts negativity and lack of appreciation and affirmation in our lives. Small, grateful acts every day can change our disposition towards others as well as our mentality and serve to uplift us. When we choose gratitude we learn to appreciate our blessings and the worth and giftedness of others. Every day of our lives there is so much for which we ought to be grateful.

We need to build a CULTURE OF GRATITUDE. In a culture of gratitude we learn to appreciate the smallest and most ordinary things. The word "thank you" becomes ingrained in us and we learn to take nothing for granted. In a culture of gratitude, we cultivate an attitude of gratitude. An attitude of gratitude helps us to appreciate our own worth, gifts and talents and to value others for who they are

and not for what they have. When we have an attitude of gratitude, our lives, our work, indeed, everything becomes sanctified. We learn to appreciate that everything we have is a gift and blessing from God. "The more grace is multiplied among people, the more thanksgiving there will be, to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4: 15). Courtesy is the beautiful, polite and gentle face of gratitude.

Gratitude puts God at the centre of our lives. No day should pass without giving praise and thanksgiving to God. At age seventy five I am swimming in the ocean of gratitude. I thank God for the gift of a purposeful life. God has given me a big mind to think and a big heart to love. What more could I ask for but to be always faithful to God. My greatest joy is to swim in the deep ocean of grace and to be filled with the joy of the Lord. The years that quickly pile up teach us wisdom and the virtue of trust. When I look at God I say, "Lord, where else can I run but to your loving embrace and tenderness?" For God's mercy, gentleness and the joy of reaching the age of seventy five, I am grateful.

The milestone of gratitude for me at this time is the celebration of my Golden Jubilee of Priesthood. I was born to be a priest. My life has been filled with priestly graces and from a very young age I found my comfort and solace in the heart of Jesus and the company of his Blessed Mother, Mary, whom I knew as La Divina Pastora, the Divine Shepherdess. She shepherded me and guided me in my earliest vocational walk. On my Ordination Day I traced my steps in the footprints of Jesus and have never looked back. As I walked in those footprints I listened with the attention of a disciple and I learnt the qualities that shape a priestly life and vocation.

I learnt to keep my gaze on Jesus—"the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14: 6). In loving with an unconditional intention I grew as a person: spiritually, emotionally and was not afraid to love and give

of myself. Celibacy freed me to love and to be a sign and witness of Christ's priestly love for the Church. Then I noticed that as I gave myself in service to others, my life was enriched so I learnt to give with greater generosity. As a result of all these discoveries, God became my treasure and I learnt to trust God completely with my life. Now my life has become an oblation, an offering and a gift for others. This is what my priesthood has come to mean for me as I seek each day to imitate Jesus in his Priesthood and to be more closely conformed to him. For the gift of my Priestly Vocation, I am grateful.

The journey begun, leads on. Where? To retirement and an uncharted course that will certainly need adjustment and faith. The journey of a disciple, a prophet or a person dedicated to God is a journey of faith. Otherwise, how would one cope with the darkness, wilderness or emptiness which only God can fill and where only God can show the light? So often we walk by faith and not my sight. Indeed my whole life as a Priest and Bishop has been a stepping out in faith, and in every step of the way I have found God and God has found me.

What lies ahead in my retirement may include a great deal of unknowing and the unknown but somehow I sense that God is already there ahead of me, WAITING. Retirement, therefore, does not overwhelm me. I am ready to go and to let go. This has been modelled for me by my predecessor who has been my mentor, for whom I have had the greatest regard and whose friendship I treasure. To take the next step in the journey; to GO, requires faith and trust.

As familiar doors close behind me I am confident that God will open new doors ahead of me. Retirement does not mean walking into a vacuum or being confined to a holding room. I am beginning to realize that I will need a new set of keys for opening the new doors to a fuller life of grace ahead of me. I never thought that retirement could

be exciting! For the faith that has sustained me, the friendships that have supported me, the joy that has ennobled me and the light that has guided me, I am grateful.

I have written a calypso which has helped me to reflect and be humorous about the journey ahead. I concluded the first verse with the words:

*"Am on my way
Am coming home soon
With a clear declaration,
Am coming home,
Ah coming to stay."*

"Ah coming to stay." There is no turning back. The journey is taking me to that place we call home. When one lives in the diaspora one longs for home. My years of missionary life in serving the Church as a Bishop has diminished my longing for "home". Home has become the place where I have been planted. I have been uprooted and planted elsewhere more than once in my lifetime. I know how to leave home. At 75 years of age I have to learn how to return home or, better still, how to 'come home'.

The journey has taught me how to leave a part of me behind in every move to other pastures which I have made. My journey has reached a turning point at a crossroad in time where I must once more trust God with my life. When God said to Abraham, "Go!", we are told that Abraham went. I have one great consolation and it is this: I have accomplished my mission. In spite of my frailties, shortcomings and imperfections, I have led, with a grateful heart, the Church I came to know, love and serve. I am deeply thankful to all the priests, deacons, religious and faithful of the Archdiocese for accepting me, endearing yourselves to me, befriending me, loving me, forgiving me and trusting me to lead you as your Shepherd. This has been a challenging but awe inspiring period in my life.

Few generations in the Church have had the experience of a pandemic. Together we have faced the challenges and uncertainties; forged new pathways in the milieu of social and virtual communications and have not allowed the pandemic to rob us of our faith, hope and vitality. My tenure as Archbishop may be described in the words of Charles Dickens: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the winter of despair, it was the spring of hope.” Do not be afraid. Stand firm. The ‘spring of hope’ is on the horizon. I will never forget you. All I ask of you is to remember me as loving you. Remember that “dreams are built together”(Fratelli Tutti #8). For our life, mission and graced-time in building Church together, I am GRATEFUL.

I wish to thank all those who have contributed to this Pastoral Letter. It is unique because you have helped to write it. As Church we must listen to each other, be attentive to what each person has to say and always be grateful by showing appreciation for one another. In GRATITUDE I conclude with words from my calypso, *A Tribute To Saint Lucia*:

*Every day we write our own story
by the way we care for each other.
Our dreams and hopes we'll all share together,
in our quest for a better Saint Lucia.
Wheresoever we may roam,
Saint Lucia will be our home.*

*Saint Lucia is yours
Saint Lucia is mine
And without a doubt
It's what we put in
We will take out...*

My sisters, brothers and friends, never stop singing, praising and thanking God with GRATITUDE in your hearts. It is all God's work.
Tjenbá fô, pa ladjé!

THANK YOU. MERCI. MY CUP IS OVERFLOWING.
May Our Blessed Mother, Mary, Mother of the Church, with Saint Joseph and Saint Lucy, smile on you today and always. To God be the glory!

Your Archbishop,



+Robert Rivas O.P.
Archbishop of Castries
Solemnity of the Nativity
of St John the Baptist
June 24, 2021

TRIBUTES

Officials



Venerabili Fratri

ROBERTO RIVAS, O.P.

Archiepiscopo Metropolitae Castriensi

aureum ordinationis presbyteralis celebranti iubilaeum, diutinam sollicitamque eius navitatem pastorem diligenter exercitam memoris animi officiis gratulamur et magnum opus pro animarum salute peractum, cleri et populi Dei cura atque institutionis incremento insignitum, quibus in spe caelestis mercedis resurrectionem, pignus paternae misericordiae et veniae secuturæ, ministravit, exemplo ductus Boni Pastoris, qui via, veritas et vita est ovibus. Cui dum optima quæque ominamur, Apostolicam Nostram Benedictionem ei eiusque propinquis libentes impertimur, preces pro Nostro Petrino ministerio expostulantes.

Datum Romae, Laterani, die XXI mensis Maii, anno MMXXI.

Francisco



To our Venerable Brother
ROBERT RIVAS, O.P.
 Metropolitan Archbishop of Castries

Who is celebrating Golden Jubilee of the ordination to the priesthood, we congratulate him mindful of his long and solicitous pastoral activity diligently exercised and of the great work for the salvation of souls accomplished, evident in the care for the clergy and the people of God and in the increment of the institution, to whom he has preached the resurrection in the hope of the heavenly reward, the pledge of the Father's mercy and future forgiveness, led by the example of the Good Shepherd, who is the way, the truth and the life for the flock. We then wish him all the best and we gladly impart Our Apostolic Blessing to him and his relatives, and offer for him prayers as the Successor of Saint Peter.

Given in Rome, at the Lateran, on the 11th day of May, in the year 2021.

Francis





PROT. 1471/21

18 May 2021

Your Grace,

This year you celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of your Presbyteral Ordination (1971 - 27 June - 2021).

On this occasion, this Missionary Dicastery would like to express to Your Grace its deep appreciation for your apostolic work. You have been a zealous and caring Pastor, selflessly taking care of the flock that is entrusted to you.

I, therefore, send you my best wishes and prayers that this celebration may be a source of joy and blessing for you personally, your Religious Congregation and the Archdiocese you serve.

May the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Mother, continue to guide and protect you in the time that lies ahead.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Antonio A. Card. Taylor
Prof.

SENT

To His Grace
The Most Rev. **Robert RIVAS, O.P.**
Archbishop of Castries

SAINT LUCIA

(via Apostolic Nunciature)

Golden Jubilee of Archbishop Robert Rivas O.P.

A Priest Forever

50 years ago, our Jubilarian, the young Fr. Robert Rivas, made a promise to God to follow Christ as a Priest throughout his entire life.

Today, we join him in renewing this solemn promise as he gives thanks to God for assisting him to persevere in this ministry.

In our modern world today, there are many who would declare, 'How can one make such a promise for life when things are changing so rapidly,' but we must bear in mind that when one says 'Yes' to God as a Priest, it is through God's grace that this can be done, since no one can claim the priesthood for himself.

The Priest of the New Covenant is a man who:

- Comes to announce the good news of hope and reconciliation.
- Gathers the community to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup.
- Is the Eucharist for the community that is nourished by the Eucharist.
- Proclaims the Word of the Lord about the Word who became flesh.

Today with joy, we join with our Archbishop and all those who have helped him to make this day possible, namely: members of his family, his good parents, relatives, friends, teachers and the whole community of faith, we call the Church. Ultimately, we give thanks to God for raising up one among us to be a priest forever.

Let us remember that we have received the faith to share it with others and that we are priests in order to serve others. Hence, we must bear fruits that will last.

May the faith that He has nurtured in our hearts and in our lives continue to bear fruit in our relationship with others as we live out our

ministry in this world.

At this time, however, let us pray insistently to the Lord, that after His great gift in our chief shepherd Archbishop Rivas, He will once again give us a pastor according to His own heart, a pastor who will guide us to the knowledge of Christ, to His love and to true joys.

Kelvin Cardinal Felix

(Archbishop Robert Rivas O.P. is the successor of Archbishop Kelvin E. Felix, who became, in his retirement, the first Cardinal in the Antilles Episcopal Conference (AEC). Kelvin Cardinal Felix resides in Dominica and is one of the religious icons of our Region.)



APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE

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**To His Grace,
the Most Reverend Robert Rivas, O.P.,
Archbishop of Castries,**
on the happy occasion of his 75th Birthday.

Your Grace,

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice” (Phil 4:4).

I gladly participate in your canticle of joy and thanksgiving on this special milestone of your life.

The Lord has blessed you with many years of fecund religious vocation and service as a member of the Order of Preachers and as a priest. He has further granted you a fruitful pastoral ministry in the Church as the first Bishop of Kingstown (St Vincent and the Grenadines), Apostolic Administrator of Bridgetown (Barbados) and subsequently Archbishop of Castries (St Lucia).

You have been able to enrich your priestly and episcopal ministry with your special talents as a gifted educator, a proficient communicator and a passionate poet and writer.

On behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis, whom I have the honour to represent in this part of the world, I sincerely thank you for your dedication, perseverance and resilience in the execution of the duties entrusted to you, undeterred by personal health setbacks and other challenges. I offer you my prayerful good wishes that you may not grow weary as you ply the road of life. In this way, when the time comes, you will not retire, but only re-tyre, putting on the new tyres which the Lord will grant you to take your human-divine adventure to new heights.

Happy Birthday, Your Grace!
Newtown, Trinidad and Tobago, 3 June 2021

+fortunatus Nwachukwu

✠ Fortunatus Nwachukwu
Titular Archbishop of Aquaviva
Apostolic Nuncio to Saint Lucia

Apostolic Nuncio to Trinidad & Tobago, Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada,
Guyana, Jamaica, Saints Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, CARICOM.

Apostolic Delegate to the Antilles

**Congratulatory Message
On the 50th Anniversary of Ordination
Of Archbishop Robert Rivas, O.P.**

Your Excellency, Archbishop Rivas:

As President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (AEC), I extend warmest congratulations to you on behalf of all the Bishops of the Region, for this, your fiftieth (50) anniversary of ordination to the Holy Priesthood. You have indeed accomplished a milestone. Incidentally and quite fittingly, this special celebration falls in the year of your seventy-fifth (75) birthday and your retirement as Archbishop of Castries. During my almost nineteen years as bishop in the Antilles Conference, I have enjoyed your partnership and collaboration on the levels of the AEC and the Province of Castries; the latter, for eighteen (18) years as Bishop of Kingstown and the last thirteen (13) years as the Metropolitan Archbishop of Castries.

On the AEC level, your tremendous work with the Youth Commission cannot be ignored. Despite attaining the age of retirement, you remain young at heart. This is seen in your passion for the youth and their development. We thank you and applaud your youth-filled efforts.

During your tenure as Archbishop of Castries, you seemed to have received a new lease in your creative and literary skills; you produced a well-documented and picturesque volume on Saint Lucia, as well as penning many poems and calypsos. You will always be remembered for your spontaneous renditions and recitations. On your return to your homeland in Trinidad, be sure to let your friends and relations know that it was necessary that you lived away from the land of calypsos to discover and develop your prowess in this great art-form.

You have a gift of hospitality which is strongly expressed in your culinary abilities, and this makes for good company. No one can doubt that you are a man of extraordinary tastes and talents.

During your thirteen (13) years as Archbishop of Castries, I am certain there were moments of great joy and contentment. There were also moments of pain and disappointment, but these are all part of a ministry of dedicated service to a people entrusted to your pastoral care. It is part of the mission for the kingdom. Many of the faithful, I am certain, have been touched by your warm and affable personality and your witness to the faith.

As you attain the new status of *emeritus*, I wish God's abundant blessings on all your future endeavours. Retirement has never been synonymous with inactivity. It can serve as a new beginning for the things you've always dreamt of doing and for which time did not permit while you were consumed with the task of bishop.

We the Bishops of the Antilles Conference will be counting on your wisdom to help us navigate the challenging times that lie ahead.

Thanks for your friendship, generosity and kindness. May Saint Dominic, the patron of your religious congregation, our Blessed Lady, mother of our Blessed Lord, and all your cherished saints, be your constant guide.

Yours fraternally,



**Most Rev. Gabriel Malzaire
Bishop of Roseau
President, Antilles Episcopal Conference**



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June 2021

Dear Archbishop Robert,

It is hard to believe that you are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of your Ordination to Priesthood. It seems just like the other day we were student brothers here in St Mary's Priory, Tallaght, where our friendship was honed and blossomed on the anvil of Dominican community life and all which that entails.

Little did we think back then that you would be Archbishop of Castries, St Lucia, when you came to celebrate your Golden Jubilee of your Ordination to Priesthood, and I would be writing to congratulate you as Prior Provincial of the Irish Dominican Province to which we both belong.

Thinking back over the fifty five or more years since first we met there are wonderful memories to reflect on and cherish - memories are not just from my homeland of the island of Ireland but also from your homeland of the twin islands of Trinidad & Tobago and, indeed, beyond.

So Brother Robert as I congratulate you on behalf of your Brothers of the Province of Ireland on reaching this wonderful milestone in your life, I also thank you for the long years of our friendship which has, I believe, enriched both our lives.

May St Dominic, St Catherine of Siena and all our saints and blessed smile on you as you celebrate your Golden Jubilee.

fraternally,

Fr Gregory P Carroll OP
Prior Provincial

TRIBUTES

St Lucia

Clergy, Religious

and Laity

A LETTER FROM PRIESTS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE

Dear Archbishop,

As you approach your retirement, we, your priests, wish to thank God for you and congratulate you on your Golden Jubilee of Priesthood. We wish to thank you for being our Shepherd, father, brother and friend during the past fourteen years. This is the time for remembering the positive impact your leadership, example, witness and ministry as Archbishop has had on all of us. It is clear that some of us may gaze upon you with admiration while others may have their reservation but no one would question or deny your kindness, generosity, servant-leadership and hospitality. Your spirit of Synodality and pastoral care for the Youth of the Archdiocese and the Region will forever be appreciated especially when we “give the Word a chance to shape our lives”.

We thank you for your preaching, which is your Dominican charism, your love for the Word of God, your contemplative attitude and love for the truth. Among us you lived out your motto: “I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6) by being a Jesus person and walking in his footsteps. We thank you for your vision of life, big-heartedness and care for the Church. To many of us you have been a mentor and guide. “Working with you has been an astounding experience that we will forever cherish. We want you to know that your legacy will forever remain deep in our hearts. You will be missed dearly by each one of us in our parishes...”

Many of us have tasted your hospitality and love for sharing. Nothing is too much to give. You have walked humbly among us. We will remember you with your apron on and serving us, your brothers, with joy and delight. Your hospitality has become a mark and symbol of our Archdiocese and will never be forgotten. Your hospitality and kindness made you approachable and welcoming. Indeed, Hebrews 13:2 reminds us: “Don’t neglect to show hospitality, for in doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it.”

Your Grace, we see you as a man of prayer, highly motivated and gifted, a teacher, leader, administrator, organizer and spiritual guide. You shepherd and lead with great intelligence, understanding and creativity. As a man of God you have been a gifted communicator who lives the Gospel and your priesthood with joy. Our parishioners enjoyed your visits to our parishes especially for your preaching and lively faith.

At the time of the great tragedy some years ago, when seventeen people lost their lives when a mini-bus went over a precipice, you were a great source of strength for an entire community in grief and pain. You visited the families and walked with the people in their agony and loss. At a National Ecumenical Service, while other Church Leaders shared their sentiments and said prayers, when you conducted your part of the Service your compassionate preaching comforted the families and in calling all the deceased by name you astounded and touched everyone. Your compassion was deep and genuine.

We recognize your generosity towards the poor, marginalized and less fortunate. We thank you for your example of living stewardship and for encouraging us to make our parishes welcoming, stewardship parishes, sharing our faith with others through evangelization and outreach to the poor and those in any need. You have been a benevolent Archbishop. Your act of kindness and generosity in giving your entire pension of EC\$20,000 to help reconstruct the church in Sandy Bay in St Vincent, which was severely damaged by a volcanic eruption, was exemplary. We remember Pope Francis’ words which you often repeated to us: “To be a Church of the poor for the poor.”

Confirmation every year in our parishes was always meaningful. You challenged the candidates to serve in their community and do works of mercy. You also challenged them to know their faith and witness to their faith. Almost a generation and a half of young people will have wonderful memories of their Confirmation Day and the ways in which you touched their lives. “The Archdiocese has a lot that the Archbishop has left behind to develop and grow by the guidance of God.”

Thank you for your graciousness and commitment to the Clergy of the Archdiocese. Your fraternal and paternal love infused with wisdom

and the Holy Spirit have accentuated your Episcopal Leadership. We thank you for listening to all and trying to be available to all. We also thank you for your sense of humour. “It is not always easy to go to a foreign land to begin a new ministry but Archbishop Rivas has been a gentle pastoral and supportive presence...Thank you your Grace for your support and encouragement to our missionary vocation over the years...Ad Multos Annos!”

You have used your gifts and talents creatively in your Ministry. You have been “gifted with words and your poems and songs have always added beauty and that special touch to various celebrations”. You have also been familiar with suffering, like one of your predecessors, Archbishop Webster OSB, who was also a man familiar with suffering. We thank you for your endurance and perseverance as you carried and continue to carry your cross patiently. May the Church in Saint Lucia continue to benefit from the fruits of your suffering.

We want you to know that we appreciate your courage in facing challenges and difficult situations in your Ministry as Bishop and we also share the pain, anguish and anxiety that you have endured. You have cared for us but we also care for you. We want you to enjoy good health and peace of mind as you retire.

Finally, we thank you once more for being our Archbishop and ask God to bless you abundantly as you journey towards new horizons. Congratulations on reaching the milestone of your Priestly Golden Jubilee. Our prayers are with you. Well done good and faithful servant. Wherever you go may Our Blessed Mother, Mary, and Saint Joseph, keep you in their special care.

Fraternally in Christ,

Your brother priests

This Letter was compiled by Fr Joseph Raj, Judicial Vicar, from the contributions made by brother priests both local and missionary.

Dated: May 26, 2021.

THE LEGACY OF ARCHBISHOP ROBERT RIVAS O.P IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CASTRIES THROUGH THE LENS OF HIS DEACONS

The approaching retirement of His Eminence, then Archbishop, Kelvin E. Felix in 2007, saw the arrival of His Grace, Robert Rivas O.P. in the Helen of the West to shepherd the flock in the Archdiocese of Castries. This robust native of Trinidad & Tobago was now elevated from Bishop of the diocese of St. Vincent & The Grenadines to Co-Adjutor Archbishop of Castries.

He came, arrived heavy in many respects – physical stature, gifts, talents and char-isms. He brought to the new vineyard gifts of pastoral planning, visioning, strategic planning and a sense of stewardship service. These gifts he used in his attempt to de-velop the Church, and were clearly evident especially during synod sessions, church assemblies and other planning sessions. He demonstrated a distinctive ability and willingness to listen and so he was always open to new ideas from both the clergy and the laity.

During his tenure in the Archdiocese, he was able to use other gifts and talents through his dynamic preaching, poem writing and composing songs reflecting the so-cio-cultural realities of the St. Lucian society.

Every shepherd is remembered by those whose lives were influenced or impacted by their work, their leadership and achievements. Archbishop Rivas will be remembered for his excellence in hospitality. He always ensured that his guests were well cared for and got the best cuisine. He will also be remembered as a shepherd who placed high value and emphasis on the diaco-nate in the church. Through the local program he instituted for the formation of deacons, a total of sixteen deacons were ordained and installed to assist with pastoral work and service within the Church.

He was relentless in his attempt to engender unity in the Church, especially among the clergy. His approach to his ministry was gentle and non-confrontational. He was the type of shepherd who appeared

to work best with self-motivated and self-regulated coworkers and partners. This may be the reason why he was not very successful in addressing some of the critical problems within the Church.

Above all, Archbishop Rivas was a compassionate leader, especially to the disadvantaged, charitable, respectful and personable chief shepherd.

We, the Deacons of the Archdiocese of Castries thank Archbishop Rivas for his contribution to the development of the Church here in St. Lucia and wish him a restful and happy retirement.

We pray that his successor will continue to build on the foundation he and his predecessors have started and that the local Church here will come to realize the glorious future prophesized by Pope Saint John Paul II when he visited St. Lucia in 1986.

(The sentiments expressed in this article were contributed by Deacons of the Archdiocese of Castries through a simple survey).

TRIBUTES FROM THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

THE SISTERS OF JESUS OUR SAVIOUR

I have known the Archbishop for the past (13) thirteen years of his pastoral administration in St. Lucia. I would identify him with the following virtues or qualities:

Accessible – The Archbishop is always available to listen to you and try as much as possible to resolve any issue/s you bring before him.

Hospitable – You can NEVER go to His Grace's home without him offering you food or a drink. He likes to cook (a very good cook at that), he's a great entertainer and, above all, a humble servant who derives joy in serving his priests and religious during any religious function. I always admire him with his apron on during the Marian Home Poverty Meals (soup) at Coubaril serving the people.

Humble – He associates with everybody and is very generous with the vagrants around the Cathedral Church. I believe our young people have been inspired by his generosity during Confirmation and other occasions. This has been a way of encouraging them into participating in church activities such as reading and singing in the church.

I also admire his peaceful and gentle attitude; I have never seen His Grace being angry to the extent of shouting or demeaning anybody, especially in public. He is very gentle and peaceful in his approach to things and sometimes people mistake this virtue as being cowardly or afraid of confrontation.

I would like to remember him as an Archbishop who was meek, peaceful, generous, kind, hospitable, and down-to-earth. Surely we are all going to miss him, especially cooking and sharing food to the religious communities every Christmas.

THE CARMELITES SISTERS

Qualities and Remembrance of our dear beloved Archbishop Rivas

What virtues and quality would you identify /associate with Archbishop Robert Rivas?

Hospitality: there is a place for everyone at the table. The little and the great – whether it is the gardener, the driver, the priest or an unannounced visitor. All are welcome! Sharing a meal is important.

Perceptive: Evidence of creative sermons. There is always an element of creativity and relevant connections which make his sermons original in nature.

Thoughtfulness: This is evident in his acts of kindness, his ability to reach out doing the little things that make people happy.

Spontaneity: A quality that must be admired in those who possess it. Being spontaneous allowed a certain openness to the Spirit, which led to the discovery of his poetic skills.

Self-acceptance: Having undergone physical and personal changes in life. He embraced and submitted to the reality of those changes. Never allowing change and limitations to become obstacles.

We would like to remember Archbishop Robert Rivas as easy going! His love for life. His love for cooking and having a good and exciting time in the kitchen. Always eager to share his cooking secrets or even a lesson or two in cooking. His love for company – ready for a “lime”. A man who is comfortable in his skin. He is first Robert and then Archbishop Robert Rivas.

He will be remembered as a man who saw through the eyes of Christ. One who embraced and shared his space with others. One who made himself at home with whatever situation presented itself. His love of family values and his gratitude for family support complement each other.

THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF CHARITY

Our thoughts towards our dear Archbishop is best described as “Gratitude is the song of the saints and Music of heaven”.

His Grace Archbishop Robert Rivas has taken care of Christ’s people very well. He is gifted with many virtues, just like his own Master. He is generous, loving, humble, kind, a good listener, patient, prudent and the list goes on. He is aware of the needs of the sheep of his flock. He accepted the call to serve God’s people with love, generosity and joy, following in the footstep of his Jesus Christ. Why do we say this? It is because we see the pain and humiliation which he endured in carrying out his mission.

We can make use of the many gifts which he constantly shared with us throughout his ministry, especially after recovery from a serious illness. We should emulate his virtues of courage, humility, generosity and love. To sum it up, we can say that Archbishop Rivas demonstrates what it means to give until it hurts.

We recall some of our own personal experiences with His Grace. He is always ready to share whatever he has with his “little flock” in the Mother Teresa home and the residents in the surrounding areas. He never abandons us. When we need him, he is always ready to make himself available to us. He loves to cook and he would feed his “lambs” without hesitating. Archbishop Rivas is an excellent cook. We were being fed with the Word of God as well as with the appetising dishes from his kitchen.

It was a pleasure to see that His Grace was full of love and zeal in doing God’s work with a big smile. We remembered quite vividly that one of our MC Sisters asked, “Your Grace, aren’t you feeling weak and tired and yet you give such a long homily?” To which he replied, “Jesus wants me to give His Word to the fullest. I must share His message with the people.”

Archbishop Rivas never forgot his roots, and was known for composing and singing jingles of a religious theme to remind us that music will bring us closer to Christ. If he had not chosen to do the work of God, he would surely have made it as a performer, but thank

God he chose to serve God instead.

Sadly the time has now come for us to say goodbye to our dear Archbishop, but as the Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, we want to let His Grace know how much we will miss him. We will continue to keep him in our thoughts and prayers.

We offer up this special prayer on his behalf:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of His Grace Archbishop Robert Rivas, who gives his time generously to us. May he be guided by the Holy Spirit to be a true instrument of your love and peace for many more years. Amen.

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF DELIVERANCE

As an Archbishop, we were very happy to have a brother Bishop among us as on our sweet island St. Lucia. He did not only look after us, the Dominican Sisters, as his flock but simultaneously as his sisters in St. Dominic. We were very proud to have Archbishop Robert Rivas at our side as we shared the same religious family. He did not only nourish us with the physical baskets of delicious fruits but also with the sweet spiritual fruits of his contemplation.

Archbishop Robert Rivas, you are:

A bishop of immense love who mirrors the love of Jesus Christ and St. Dominic A dedicated servant who works tirelessly for the salvation of souls

A bishop of joy who easily inspires others to be life giving.

A bishop who is humble and God fearing.

A bishop of the WORD who shares with others the fruits of his gifts and talents through preaching, poetry and song.

A bishop who loves and lives the TRUTH.

A bishop who listens compassionately.

A bishop with the missionary heart of St. Dominic.

A shepherd of hope who has left an indelible mark on our hearts.

Merci! Merci! Merci!

Bon voyage!

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CLUNY

We remember him as a generous, kind-hearted, pastoral bishop. One who had great interest and care for the Religious on the island. A good cook and host. Very passionate about the Arts. A poet.

SISTERS OF THE SORROWFUL MOTHER IN VIEUX-FORT, ST. LUCIA

What virtue or quality would you identify/associate with the Archbishop?

We, the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother in Vieux-Fort, identify the virtues and qualities of Archbishop Rivas as being very generous with self and to others.

Hospitable to everyone: open heart, open mind, open hands
Accommodating in every sense of the word and soft-hearted.

We would like to remember him as the Archbishop

- Who served with an open heart, an open mind and open hands
- A most generous person, always accommodating and hospitable to everyone
- An intellectual and master of words as evident in his homilies, writings and poetry
- A down to earth person who was easy to work with and made everyone feel at ease
- A thinker who put his thoughts into words and actions
- Very humble

Magnanimity – generosity. Ambition – pride. Patience – temper, calm. Friendliness – social IQ. Honest, respectful, courageous, forgiving, and kind, for example.

RETIREMENT FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM BABONNEAU

On behalf of myself and the entire good parishioners of the Good Shepherd Parish Babonneau, we heartily bid Happy Birthday and Farewell to You, Our Most Esteemed and Magnificent Archbishop, Robert Rivas, OP!

- A Great Dominican
- An excellent preacher
- A Lover of the Word of God
- A Man of Prayer and great faith
- An example of Jesus's love to others
- Someone who gives so much of himself everyday than he receives
- A Generous and meek servant of God
- An amazing poet
- An inspiring song writer

What an opportunity to thank you for all the support and guidance that you provided these years. You have led us in ways that no other has done.

Thank you for being a great mentor.

Thank you for being the best Archbishop ever.

Working with you is an astounding experience that we will forever cherish. We want you to know that your legacy would forever remain deep in our hearts.

You will be missed dearly by me and each one of us here in Babonneau in particular.

May God continue to watch over you. And may you enjoy your retirement to the fullest in continuous good health of mind and body. Amen.

A Very Happy Birthday and Happy Retirement.

Fr. Celestine Nwakuwo, OP
Parish Priest, Good Shepherd Parish Babonneau

HE GAVE HIS TIME, TALENT AND TREASURE TO THE CHURCH

From the Laity on the occasion of His Grace, Archbishop Of Castries, Robert Rivas's 50th year as a priest and service to the Archdiocese as chief shepherd.

His Grace gave focus to the growth of the Church in Saint Lucia by presiding over the first Synod of the Laity and his attention to the youth and their involvement in the Church. He initiated the formation of the youth group in Castries and encouraged their participation in the Church.

In commissioning the book "The Way Forward", he gave instructive guidance to practicing the faith. An ardent supporter of the vulnerable, His Grace championed the feeding of the poor and encouraged the delivery of food packages to them.

Members of Couple For Christ will forever remember his support for this Family Ministry at which he was very often present at their Assemblies and Conferences. This high-level endorsement from His Grace was a source of strength and encouragement for the members of this Ministry.

Few will forget his Grace's ability to compose a witty and catchy calypso. Listening to him sing his calypsos, you got a sense that he would have loved to be competing on a calypso stage, convention allowing.

He will be remembered for his humility and being ready to admit when he erred. A man always mindful of being grateful, he remained prayerful and compassionate and gave his talent, time and treasure to the Church in Saint Lucia, in the same way that he asked of others to do.

As we say good bye, the laity wishes his Grace the best of health and God's blessings. Thank you for being our shepherd for the time you were with us.

Compiled by Mrs Rosemarie Husbands-Mathurin
and Mr Everist Jn Marie

YOUTH: BOLD, UNAFRAID DISCIPLES AND GOOD STEWARDS

Letter of thanks to the Archbishop on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood and retirement.

Your Grace,

On the occasion of your Golden Jubilee of Priesthood, on behalf of the youth of the Archdiocese of Castries, I want to express gratitude and appreciation for you. Thank you for your ministry, your service and your leadership.

You have challenged the youth over the years to be bold, unafraid disciples, and good stewards. You tried to draw us near, like a hen covering her brood, even though we sometimes went darting like chicks in a storm. As you leave our shores in Saint Lucia to enter another chapter of life and ministry, rest assured that your leadership has left an indelible impression on us. Our discipleship is still forward moving, as we are constantly transforming into the stewards you have dared us and showed us to be.

Let this be our record, dear Archbishop Rivas, of sincere gratitude for you and your gifts you have shared with us during your tenure.

We thank God for you, and we pray for his continued blessings upon you and your ministry.

Love and hugs, yours in Christ,

Berthia Nickson (for Youth Ministry)



TRIBUTES

Dominicans

TRIBUTE TO ARCHBISHOP ROBERT RIVAS, O.P. GOLDEN JUBILEE OF PRIESTHOOD

Congratulations Your Grace Robert, on your 50th Priestly Anniversary. In the Book of Judges we read of Micah appointing a Levite for his sanctuary. In doing so he requested that he be a Father and Priest, that is to be a caring Pastor and Teacher. Christ in instituting his Priesthood would remind his Apostles that although they called him Lord and Master which He was, He washed their feet leaving them an example to follow. Such were and must be the qualities of a Priest.

These qualities were clearly understood by you, Robert, as demonstrated from your early days as assistant to Fr. Damian Byrne O.P. in Port of Spain or as you journeyed the rugged road to the remote village of Toco to serve God's people. In the same spirit, you traversed Latin America undertaking long and tedious journeys that would take you to Cusco even by night.

In the same spirit of Fatherly love, you served as the Master's representative promoting Caribbean Dominican vocation. Your qualities as a humble caring Father and Priest continued after being appointed the first Bishop of St. Vincent as you sailed across the Grenadines serving with love and humility.

In the same caring spirit you never let an opportunity go by without thanking God, celebrating with your family, friends and flock.

So today must be no exception. Fifty years is more than a life span for many and fifty years of humble priestly service is even a greater reason to celebrate! So my dear brother and friend celebrate your 50th Priestly Anniversary with great joy and may Christ our humble High Priest bless you from on high on this day and keep you always in His loving care.

Holy Father St. Dominic, pray for us.

Fr. Matthew Hugh Ahye O.P.
Holy Cross Dominican Community
Arima

A GOLDEN JUBILEE TRIBUTE

FINDING MY VOICE

On a quiet December evening at Mount St. Benedict attending my first ever retreat at the age of seventeen, I was introduced to a Dominican priest named Robert Rivas. To me, the designation 'Dominican' bore little or no significance. However deeper meaning revealed itself hours later when, during his homily, Fr. Rivas with bold conviction declared that a Dominican is a person of the Word of God. Those simple words of this preacher opened up for me and gave insights into three important pillars which have shaped my life. In this, his Jubilee Year, I would like to reflect briefly on this servant of God who has mentored my relationship with God and taught me how to ponder the Word for the past 40 years.

With God

In true Dominican fashion, my brother Robert has espoused the incarnational spirituality of God with us. Anyone who has spent time with Fr. Robert would learn that this spirituality is informed by a theological model which is rooted in the family. I am not sure whether his operating principle in this regard was conscious or not, but I am convinced that the family model has greatly shaped his pastoral ministry. In the 1980s I observed his care for the members of his biological family — an uninterrupted love which he then extended into friendships. By closely monitoring Fr. Robert's pastoral style during those years, I concluded that for him God has a human face, therefore every person is an image of God. This gift of care which he possesses has taught me that regard and respect are intrinsic to ministry. This is a practice I am still learning.

The Word

An OP is steeped in the word. After one of his many visitations in his capacity as Delegate to the Master of the Order, Fr. Robert told the story of his experiences in Central America at a Dominican Convent chapel, during the time of the Sandinista Revolution. He had observed

a bible enthroned among sand, rocks and debris on the floor of the chapel. This made him curious, so he inquired of one of the sisters about its significance. The response was simple. She said, “This is a time of hardship, violence, aggression and abuse of power but this is the context in which we are seeking to preach the gospel. Preaching is always contextualized.”

By the end of my novitiate in 1984, Fr. R had shared with me some of the communication skills he had acquired at specialized courses in Ireland. He shared the mechanics of the preaching act and its centrality to the OP vocation. I learned from Fr. R a profound appreciation for the Word of God.

Gratitude

I am grateful our paths crossed and so I give thanks. On this, your 50th anniversary, I bring to mind the warmth and human kindness you shared with so many, the arms of mothers you have helped to hold, the strength and encouragement you have given to fathers. The wonderful stories you brought to me from the lives of previous generations. The excitement of laughter and the twinkle in the eye with its reminder that life is good. I end with the words of the spiritual writer Howard Thurman: “In thanksgiving I stand recognizing the fruits of generations who lived before us without whom our lives would have no meaning. Our loved ones who saw visions and dreamed dreams.” Thank you for being a prophet who sensed truth and spoke words that could only find fulfilment in the years which they would never see. For all this I make an act of thanks. I am grateful for the wonderful memories your 50th year of priestly ordination has stirred in me. You have helped me to find my preaching voice.

Happy Anniversary!!!

Fr Urban Hudlin O.P.

FR. IRANEUS VINCENT O.P.

HIP HIP HOORAY!!!

Two cheers for two truths! Another cheer for joy!

As Archbishop Robert Rivas OP celebrates his 50th priestly anniversary – not forgetting his 31 years as a bishop – it is fitting, right and just to celebrate with him for one very profound reason. St Paul wonderfully explains this profound reason in Philippians 2:13, by noting, “*For it is God, for His own loving purpose, who puts both the will and the action into you.*” In other words, the first truth to be celebrated is that this 50th anniversary of priesthood is more about God than Archbishop Rivas. For in this anniversary – and other wedding anniversaries, etc – we are actually celebrating God working in us, with us, through us, and for us, with His amazing grace, His abundant mercy and His overflowing love. Without God, we would be absolutely nothing. So, this 50th priestly anniversary reminds us that God is good, all the time, and all the time, God is good. *To God - Hip hip hooray!!!*

Yet though God has worked in, with, through and for Archbishop Rivas, there can be no doubt that Archbishop Rivas cooperated with Him. Archbishop Rivas was always willing to preach in season and out of season, welcomed or unwelcomed. When I spent nine months living with him at Archbishop’s residence in St Lucia – which he loved because I was a fellow Dominican friar – I remember him starting off all his homilies during the Year of Mercy (December 2015 - November 2016) with the words, “Mercy! Mercy! Mercy! God is rich in mercy. Ephesians 2:4.” But even though we have all received God’s mercy, it was clear that Archbishop was also happy to pass it on. Archbishop Rivas showed mercy as a caring shepherd, always looking out for the welfare of all his flock, even when his words were misunderstood and his action misinterpreted. Like a good servant leader, he remained silent. This silence was rooted in the fact that, as far as Archbishop Rivas was concerned, he could not do it without the Word, Eucharist and prayer. I saw it myself first-hand that these three were central to his daily life, even when he had to travel abroad. In short, the second truth to be celebrated is that this 50th anniversary celebration is about

a man who, despite his faults and failings, desired to use all his God-given gifts, talents and abilities to glorify God and to be a light to others. *To Archbishop Rivas – Hip hip hooray!!!*

With God working in Archbishop Rivas and Archbishop cooperating with God, the end result was encountering in Archbishop Rivas a bundle of joy, just like the founder of the Dominican order, St Dominic. The story is told that it was joy that saved St Dominic from death on one occasion because when he was approached by assassins hiding in the fields of Fanjeaux, France, Fr. Dominic was singing. And though the assassins had a specific mission to murder him, they let him live because Fr. Dominic simply seemed too happy to kill! Archbishop Rivas too was also a bundle of joy ready to burst out into song on many occasions. There was joy when he cooked! There was joy when he met others! There was joy when he preached! In other words, Archbishop Rivas was such a happy and grateful recipient of God's love, mercy and grace, that he sought to be a joy to others. I fondly remember in 2005, while working in Barbados, having returned from England as newly ordained priest, Archbishop Rivas went out of his way to be kind and hospitable, to make sure I was settling down well. One third and final cheer therefore is for joy, the joy that many have felt in meeting, knowing, and enjoying the company of Archbishop "the gentle giant" Rivas. *To joy – Hip hip hooray!*

Fr. Irenaeus Vincent, O.P.
Rosary Priory, Roxborough
St. Paul's
Grenada

A GENTLE GIANT WITHOUT A PRICE

Archbishop Robert Rivas, our brother in Christ,
Is a gentle giant without a price.
He is a faithful and fervent servant of prayer,
His being is consumed in his most loving care.

His passion for preaching is dear to his heart,
We Dominicans can always tell him apart.
His love for God is deep and sincere,
The gospel of Jesus, he pronounces so clear.

His love for the poor is special and true,
This message is clear for me and for you.
Compassion and kindness, he gently upholds,
Displaying these values wherever he goes.

Do you know His Grace is a mighty cook?
Not a recipe he takes out of a book!
His hands are so blessed with flavour and taste,
We applaud his great talent that never will waste!

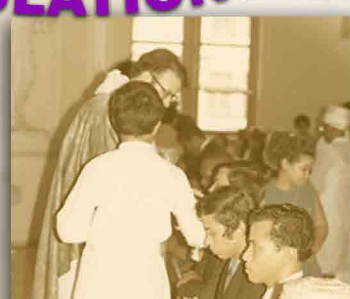
Hospitality he favours with great delight,
Celebration and feasting are done with might!
How can we not love our brother in Christ?
He remains a gentle giant without a price!

Your Golden Jubilee's milestone we proclaim today,
Your tireless service as Shepherd, we honour and pray,
Congratulations to our friar whom we cherish and love,
All were not possible without our God from above!

We extend to Archbishop our love and our thanks,
As he celebrates his fiftieth in song and in dance.
We cherish his friendship now and forever,
His witness to God's Kingdom, we will always remember!

Sr. Susan Gopaul O.P.

My Cup is Overflowing



A TRIBUTE FROM THE RIVAS FAMILY

VOCATION AND CALL

Our brother's journey started in the small, picturesque village of La Pastora, in the Lopinot/ La Pastora valley. This community is associated with the shrine of La Divina Pastora, the Divine Shepherdess, who played a significant role in the faith and culture of the people of the valley. One day as a Bishop, our brother will celebrate La Divina Pastora as the Queen of the valley in his song dedicated to her. This setting gives context to the beginning of our brother's journey to the priesthood. Living in a rural community with neighbours who were considered family, there was an exuberance of celebration when a son of the village decided to dedicate his life to God. The villagers were filled with renewed hope and faith as *"Vocation to the priesthood was a big thing for the community of La Pastora."* It was a blessing from God.

The Spanish men in the village burst into song singing and playing their cuatros and maracas on hearing the good news. Their "Robert", who was fondly called "Roberto", was going to study for the priesthood. The women exclaimed: "A nice young man like him! Praise God."

As we reminisced, the memories came flooding back like the crystal waters of the Lopinot river. Pa Shul and Aunt Meta were overwhelmed with joy as tears streamed down their faces when Robert told them he was joining the priesthood. At our family home in Arouca, they blessed him and were heartbroken because he was leaving them at a young age and going far away to Ireland. However, they knew his calling was a sign from God. A sign that he would *'move mountains'* in the valley and around the world proclaiming the word of God. Finally, the prayers of our mother, mama, had been answered. Day and night she would pray that one of her sons would become a priest. Her heart leapt with joy when her son, Roberto, told her he was joining the priesthood. Her dedication to the rosary and prayers never stopped for Robert. She offered her sons to God at birth and the ultimate answer to those prayers was Robert, the chosen one in our family.

TRIBUTES

*Family
and Friends*

As siblings, his sister and brothers, we were exultant and felt happy with this good news. This was also evident as the jubilation continued when our grandfather lifted Robert to the sky in joy. Everything occurred swiftly; before we knew it our dad, Placido, arranged everything for his son to travel to Ireland. Although we were sad, there was joy because we knew that our brother was chosen by God. This was obvious from his childhood as he modelled this behaviour. His choice to be a priest was reaffirmed at the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation. Similarly, it was further endorsed when, as little boys, Robert would bring us together and pretend he was a priest. He used a white sheet as his gown. We enjoyed being his congregation as he practiced preaching. Spirituality was embedded in our family; we prayed at the Chapelle at home, which represented Robert's preparation for the priesthood. He knew his calling and he was obedient to God.

When Robert returned from Ireland, everyone in the Lopinot/ La Pastora valley and his family at Arouca celebrated his return home. On Sunday, June 27, 1971, our brother was ordained. Archbishop Anthony Pantin officiated at the ceremony at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Port of Spain. The church was overflowing with joyful people from everywhere. The choir harmoniously sang praises to God. Our family and the wider Church Community witnessed our brother's Ordination; our hearts were full of joy. Seeing our brother ordained to the priesthood that day, we were delighted. The little boy from La Pastora and Lopinot had commenced his life's journey. After the Ordination, the celebration continued at the Holy Cross Dominican Community with lots of food prepared by our dear big sister – cousin Daisy. The room exuded an abundance of laughter and singing as family and friends welcomed their new priest.

Our brother, now a priest, celebrated his First Mass at his home parish, Holy Trinity, Arouca. José, our youngest brother, was the acolyte. Fr Kieran Lennon O.P., who baptized him, preached at his first Mass. The church was overflowing again with family, friends and many villagers because he made the parish proud. When the line *"I will raise him up"* from the hymn, *I Am the Bread of Life*, was sung, we were bursting with pride because our brother Robert was raised up and chosen by God.

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF PRIESTHOOD

Our brother has made us very proud. As we reflected on his Ordination and his growth as Priest, Bishop and Archbishop, it is clear that Robert listened to God's purpose for his life. He has traversed three (3) valleys where he has touched so many lives. He proclaims God's word humbly and generously gives everything, not only to his family, but also his Church Community. Now that he is retiring, we, his brothers and sister, take this opportunity to continue blessing him as he celebrates yet another milestone in his life with peace, love, and togetherness.

Dear brother, we thank you for keeping us united and faithful to our mother's three words to us: *"Peace, Love and Togetherness."* We are excited to welcome you home and cannot wait to continue the togetherness you always share with us. You have a charitable and loving heart and we know that although you are retiring, your love for family and community will continue.

You are an *'awesome'* brother, and we love you dearly. In a special way, your sister Lenore wishes you lots of love and blessings and is multiplying her Rosaries for you. You are a genuine Shepherd of God's people and we will continue to cherish your faithfulness and love for family, friends and Church. We look forward to your coming home and having the opportunity to take care of you.

We, your nieces and nephews, are also proud of you. You are very special to us. On this very auspicious occasion, we thank you for all that you have given and shared with us. We look to you as our role model. Your words of wisdom and acts of generosity will always be remembered. Your inspirational words and keeping us rooted in our faith will be embedded in our minds forever. We will continue to cherish your talks and your gentle spirit reminding us to live humbly and give abundantly. We will always keep the circle of love in our family, through the symbolic round table where you have celebrated Masses at home. We will not forget the biblical quotes like John 10:10, Matthew 5:3-12 (the Beatitudes) and Ephesians 6:10-20. Most of all, the four last things – death, judgement, hell, heaven – which jolt us to seriously take account of our lives.

Just as Aunty Lenore is the gem of your eyes, you are the gem in ours. We are extremely proud of your accomplishments as Priest, Bishop, Archbishop, preacher, poet, author, composer, calypsonian. We will especially remember your beautiful homage to our dear grandmother and everybody's Mama, in the song "*A Son's Song For Mama*". It evokes all the wonderful memories we shared with her. We ask God, as you celebrate this momentous occasion in your life, that you will continue to be the best Shepherd, brother and Uncle to us, your family, and a kind and loving Shepherd, father, brother and friend to those whom you serve.

As you begin a new chapter in your life, as family, we lift our eyes onto the mountains from where shall come our help and we praise God for giving us such a special person in whom we delight. We pray that whatever God's will is for you, as you did 50 years ago, you will say "yes" to God with new fervour and zeal. We promise to support you wherever you go and in whatever you do. To God be the glory!

Besos y bendiciones.

Tu familia siempre.



Robert



Standing (L-R): José, Francis, Carl, Joseph,
Bruno, Lenore
Seated: Daddy (Plácido) and Mama (Sabina)

“HE’S MY BROTHER”

My dear brother Robert,

As you celebrate your Golden Jubilee of Priesthood, my family and I give thanks to God for you. A priestly vocation is a precious gift from God to a family and the Church. Your call brought joy to our family. I remember the ecstasy of our parents and grandfather. Your Ordination to the Priesthood on June 27, 1971 was, in a sense, a culmination of that joy. At the same time, in another way, the joy continues. Your vocation has been and continues to be a source of blessing and great joy for the entire family.

I love you, my brother. We grew up closely with each other and I am grateful to God for our fraternal bonding and friendship. Time has brought us to new milestones in our lives but it has also strengthened the bonds of brotherly love. I will always love you my brother.

I admire you, respect you and want you to know that you have made not only me but all our family proud of you. We see you as a beacon, a shining light, a gift, a champion of the faith and a builder of the family. Your legacy and all you have come to mean to us will live on. You are an icon of wisdom and grace to our family. We are sorry that Covid-19 has prevented us from being with you in person for your Golden Jubilee but it cannot rob or cheat us of our joy.

Once more we give thanks to God for you on this momentous occasion. Your generous yes to God continues to echo in our midst. May you continue to have the health, strength, and courage to serve God intimately in your retirement. As your ‘big brother’, I encourage you to put your life and future in God's hands and be assured of our prayers.

Once upon a time you used to like the song, “He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother”. Now I want to sing that song for you. I want the world to sing with me and come to know you, my wonderful brother, in whom God delights. CONGRATULATIONS! Felicidades! Happy Priestly Golden Jubilee.

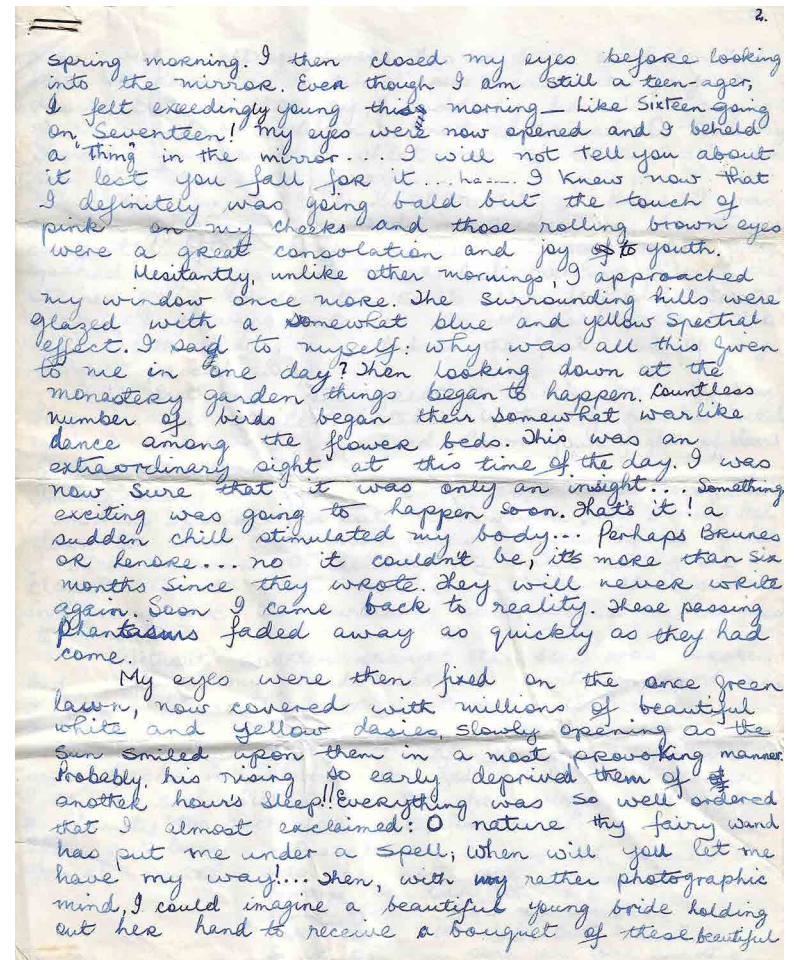
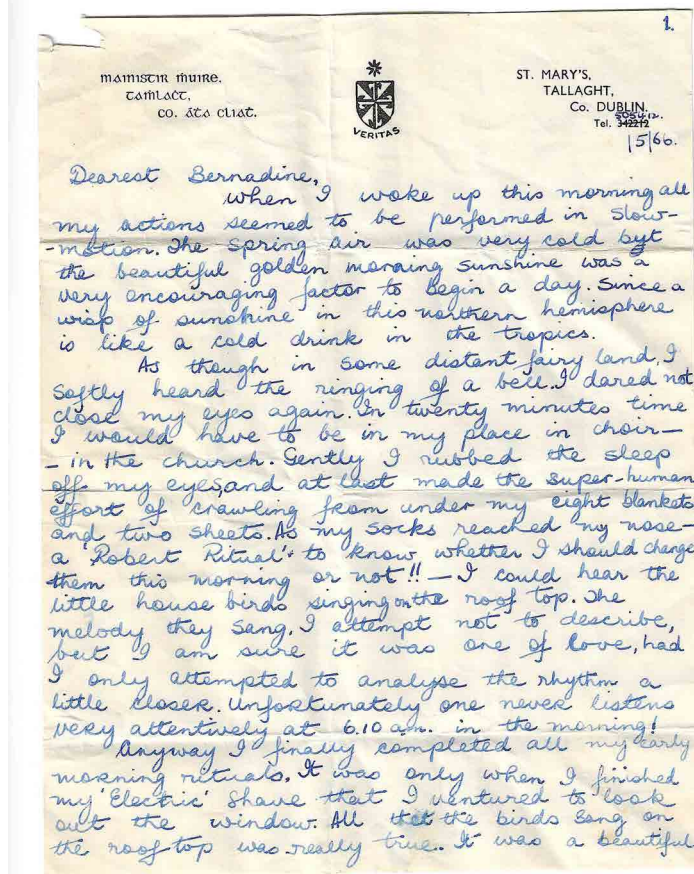
With affection,

Bruno, Joyce, Elizabeth-Ann and Brittany.

THE GIFT OF LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

This letter to my dear cousin Bernardine, also known as Oylan and fondly called by her siblings "Sarge", which means 'always in control!', was written in the days when letters were hand written. We are a closely knit family and enjoy each other's company tremendously. She is just about two weeks older than me and we were close while growing up.

When she showed me this letter two years ago, after keeping it for over fifty years, I blushed. It is now being introduced into my Golden Jubilee celebration as an illustration of my early formative years for the priesthood. I loved truth, silence and contemplation and these gifts prepared me to be a good listener, observer and lover of nature. It is uncensored and I have titled it "The Gift of Love and Friendship".



and sweet-smelling flowers. Then as if in a whirlwind she began to dance in satin slippers across the fragrant daisies. But in this joy, I suddenly heard the ringing of a second bell. Again I almost exclaimed: O time, why should you always cheat me of these spells when ere they come my way!...

Now in the realm of reality I knew I was a man of God... and in prayer, my heart was comforted. After half an hour on my knees, I gently opened my eyes once more. And peering through the stained glass window, the sun's rays formed a spectral beam of glowing fantasies on the golden candlesticks. Life's ~~was~~ living!... And so the first part of my morning passed away.

But now the greatest shock was waiting for me on the letter table. With my books tucked under my arm, I hurried down four flights of stairs to see if there was any mail for me today. Immediately I saw the letter, I could recognise something special about it. However, as I walked down to class, with only a few minutes before the bell, I tried in vain to identify the handwriting. The closest to it was Braines, but he always writes in green ink! So curiosity overpowered my eagerness to know.

Without another thought, the seal was broken. And there in my hands was an invitation card. Then I began to read "... to witness ... to Bernadine ... I almost died! I literally could not concentrate in class for the rest of the day. My mind was back in Olad - no. 1 red road to be precise. I could see Olad in all her virginal beauty - a "beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!"...

After a brief introspection I whispered beneath a cynical smile: was she not my cousin, always so dear to me, I am afraid Ellis you would have been too late; But so be it, So be it. I am sure you love each other!

Now my dear Olad, I am quite certain that your name passed through my mind more than two million times within the past two years. And I won't be exaggerating to say a million times seven during the past week. But, alas! were you not taking this big step in life - one which I had to examine so many times before making my decision two years ago - I do not know what would have prompted me to write. Unfortunately I am not going to explain this for a good reason. It is part of the Mystery of the Mole, and you will soon, ^{who} if you do not already, get the hang of it, by the Society of an individual who within a few days ... Until Death ... will say "I do ...", is nevertheless male. I am of a sex that very seldom takes real trouble, that forgets the little necessities of time, that is by nature lazy!...

I dare not lecture you on Love and Marriage, since I am incapable. Probably some day you will gladly tell me what it's like to be in Love... Love, Love, Love, everywhere you go there are people in love... I wonder if they really know what's love! Any way if the world continues to be so much in Love... I can envisage nieces and nephews and cousins - ~~Undoubtedly~~ ^{probably} an entirely new generation ^{when} I return to Olad in five years time.

I am not going to wish you happiness since wherever there is love, there will, inevitably, be happiness. Moreover, I am sure that Ellis - under all the different lover's names you have bestowed on him by now - can take good care of that. Surely you would not be angry if I gave Ellis a short warning, would you? Lovers have such a great stimulation for reaction... However, this is very pleasant: are you listening Ellis? Doh! Ti! La! So take good care of her, take good care of her... continue the song.

5

Now for some thanks giving not after Mass but before marriage. Your invitation was most warmly received. Unfortunately, it would be almost impossible for me to attend, however I will be there in spirit. The entire family gathering will be a symbol of my lasting presence. I leave it in Daisy's hands to drink a toast to an absent friend, as soon as you have read the letter. Finally I cannot stop thanking Daisy and Auntie Nicks for all their kindness towards my folks.

So my dear Oiland with my heart full of joy I would like to say God bless. Hope everyone enjoys himself to the full and moreover may the graces you receive at the altar strengthen you throughout your married life. Ooo, May that love, which you both now so overflowing share, mature and increase even more as the years go by. And when you do begin to, probably, discover any little faults etc, never despair. It's always easier to see the faults of others than to realize our own frailties. Therefore I would now like to wish you all future success as Mrs. Lum. This little phrase seems most appropriate: "What's in a name, that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet..." Marriage involves three people God, husband and wife. This I would like you to bear in mind.

Now I would like you to do me one favour. Keep your religion alive. Never forget those who have earned for you in the past viz. Daisy, Henry and others. Never stop loving Ellis and I am sure he will do his best to love you more and more each day. The first few months will be a paradise but soon things may change or at least seem to change. It is here that true love stands the test. But once there is truth, sincerity and real understanding, there will be harmony and there will no longer be the 'I' but 'We' in everything.

6

I almost feel like saying 'Amen' but instead I will say rejoice — rejoice on this most happy day. For when food and drink begin to mix on Sunday night, many will say, indeed, there is nothing like a wedding in May. How many will say on that day, how beautiful she looks! Such a gorgeous this and a Supreme that and what not. Surely you can have them saying so always. At least to begin with, you have one person in Ireland to back that up.

At the moment, I am so excited over here in Ireland that I would love to give you the whole world. However with Ellis at your side at this time, nothing really matters. Moreover with my vow of poverty, I have no material gifts to offer but this letter was my contribution — minutes of exams which are more or less on. And should that be the smallest place in your heart at this time you can share some of my love. And since the material cannot stand by itself without some spiritual help, your remembrance at Mass more than ever these days can be assured.

Once more I say embrace with hope and confidence the future that lies ahead. Make sure that you get some of the most beautiful photographs taken on your wedding day — a few in colour if possible. Then as soon as you have settled down don't hesitate to drop me a few lines so that I can share in your joy. Would you mind sending me a few photographs as well. So before saying Adios I would like to press on my love to Daisy, Auntie Nicks, and greeting from a heart full of joy to the entire family circle. And to Monica a special piece of my heart if some boyfriend has not won her loving tenderness already. Daisy will you give Oiland a big KISS for me on her wedding day. Now dearest Oiland I must get used to losing you no matter what I say or do... Just in case Ellis has grown curious by now would

Fifty five years later Oylan responded to my letter on the occasion of my Golden Jubilee and I have entitled it "The Gift Of Family Love".

THE GIFT OF FAMILY LOVE

Dear Rob,

I am happy to be able to join with you in thanking God for your fifty years of service to Him as a priest.

In 1971 when the family gathered at the Cathedral to witness your ordination, we were filled with excitement and joy... that after seven years absence abroad, praying, studying and working towards this day, God was about to fulfil your heartfelt desire to be allowed to serve Him in His vineyard.

I have memories of you and your younger brothers coming to our home in Belmont around Carnival time to "see the mas in town" and recall that you enjoyed listening to the latest Sparrow Calypsoes. I also recall the moment in Zed Road when you told me that you were heeding God's call to be a priest. Spending time with Lenore during her frequent visits were also joyous occasions.

On our visits to your family home in La Pastora, I reminisce fondly looking at the water being brought up from the river to the house, climbing up a mountain through fields of mango "round" and "doux douce" to the top of the hill in Socorro, where we were able to see Piarco. Afterwards we had Mama's delicious pot bakes made on the fireside with "fire on top and fire below" together with creole chocolate.

Although I knew you would not be able to be physically present, I sent you an invitation to allow you to share my wedding day in spirit. To my surprise, you replied with the longest letter I have ever received. I have always cherished this letter, as it marks the point in our lives when we were each embarking on a life choice.

6.7.
please let him know that I am your cousin and moreover, I am preparing for the Priesthood. Liz is probably very grown up now. I am dying to return to Idled to see once more all these faces I knew so well. Of course, when I do return home I will be completely changed but so will everyone at home be. I will still be Robert - or any name you wish to call me - to all. There will be no distinctions. Moreover I am looking forward to half a fry chicken - this is something we miss very much in Ireland - and a great chat over a glass of Whisky with Henry. Please Daisy, see that Joe and others call him Henry from now on. Simply because he is part of the family and it is ridiculous to call someone Mr., who has become a cousin by marriage. Don't you think it would be more homely etc. Loving regards to Liz, Philip and Laurine.
If a super-human effort is not made, the letter will never come to an end. But the joy I am sharing is so great that I can literally go on writing for the next week. However it's never advisable to seal an unfinished letter. Therefore Oylan, you may not be in the mood for reading this letter now. However I would like you to preserve it and, when your mind is cool after the marriage excitement and probably Honeymoon, to read it again and enjoy all the nonsense I can write.
Once more keep well and have a great time. God bless.
always
Robert

Rereading this letter, written while you were still a teenage student, I see glimpses of your later life as a poet. There is a similarity between your appreciation of the natural beauty of the monastery garden in Dublin with your poetic descriptions of nature found in the valleys you describe in your book *“How Beautiful the Valley”*. Some things never change but just get better with time, like fine wine.

It is a great pity that, despite all your sage advice and blessings, my marriage to Ellis didn't last longer than the Red House fire. Were it not for our separation, however, I would not have met my true soulmate, Keith, who whisked us all away to Canada to restart our lives in the land of the free and the home of the brave. We have been happily married for over forty five years.

I will always have fond memories of the unforgettable time we had in Italy, when we went to see you receive your pallium from Pope Benedict, the day after Mee Mee and Nick's wedding. It was truly a pleasurable time bonding with you, family members and dear friends who went for that special occasion. The audience with His Holiness was an awesome experience, accentuated by the memory of your big sister refusing to use a wheelchair and then lamenting that if she had done so she would have been wheeled on stage to meet the Pope personally. Visiting all those historical sites, being entertained by your confreres and, above all, being steeped in prayer will always remain with me.

Our family, with our four children and six grandchildren have brought us immeasurable joy. They are our true treasures. Nothing is greater than family love — that love that is evident when we gather, be it in St Vincent, St Lucia, Canada, T&T or any other part of the world. We are praying that this pandemic is brought under control soon, so that we can join you in T&T to celebrate your Golden Jubilee, retirement and, above all, family love. We thank God for the joy you have brought us and continue to bring us.

*Your favourite Cuz in Canada,
Bernardine Oylan “Sarge” Johnston
17th May, 2021*

MAY THE GOOD LORD BLESS AND KEEP YOU

May the good Lord bless and keep you
On your Golden Jubilee.
May you find that long awaited
Golden day today...

Though we long to be there with you
Covid-19 squashed our plan
But we know that we'll be with you
As soon as we can

As you say farewell to Castries,
And you fly back home again
We'll be waiting anxiously here
To sing this sweet refrain

Fill your dreams with sweet tomorrows
In the Lopinot Valley.
May the good Lord bless and keep you,
'Till we meet again...

May the good Lord bless and keep you,
'Till we meet...
Home in T&T...

*From your favourite cousins in La Estancia, T&T
Adapted from the song composed by Meredith Wilson*

A TRUE FRIEND

On June 7, 1946 a little baby boy was born into the world. He was given the name “Robert” by his parents but would later in life become known by many (including my wife) as the “gentle giant”.

That gentle giant is loved by all who have the pleasure of knowing him and I am one of the fortunate ones who has been blessed with an enriching friendship with Robert, even though I am anything but a giant in stature. Despite being over six feet tall Robert is humble and gentle. His power comes not from force or physical strength but from the working of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Even though I am merely five weeks younger than Robert, he continues to remind me that I must respect my elders. His dry sense of humour is evident to those who listen keenly to what he has to say and he does have a lot to say! Robert has a lot of wisdom and he is always willing to share his knowledge with others. Robert is well aware of his God-given talents and he has used them well.

I first met Robert back in 1965. I clearly remember our exciting trip to Israel together, and will never let him forget the “incident” he had while in Piazza Navona with the carabinieri (Italian Police). This goes to show that even a good, innocent person can be falsely accused on occasion.

Though he wasn't a blood relative, I do consider him a brother to me. Even my own mother was drawn to my friend, the gentle giant, and considered him her “adopted” son. Our paths in life eventually went in different directions over the 56 years since we first met. Somehow God found a way for us to maintain contact and even strengthen our friendship.

After Robert was chosen to be the first Bishop of Kingstown, he invited my wife Kathy, myself and our two daughters to spend some vacation time with him in St. Vincent. As a host Robert is second to none. He is generous and makes his guests feel comfortable and

welcome, like a member of his family. His hospitality is definitely evidence of his love for his friends. He gives very freely to others.

In 2008 Robert became Archbishop of Castries, St. Lucia, once again he invited Kathy and me to his Installation as Archbishop. This shows how Robert never forgets his friends, even the lowly ones! I always felt from our early years together that Robert would be destined for great things and here I was with my wife present for his Installation as Archbishop of Castries. We were so very proud of our friend.

As fate would have it, Robert was actually the celebrant at my wedding to Kathy, and he also officiated at the First Communion of our daughter, Jennifer. I am proud to say that I was present to witness Robert's first ride on a jet ski when he came to Clearwater, Florida to visit me and my family. What a joy to see him ride slowly past a dolphin and observe a stingray fly up out of the water right in front of his jet ski. Let me tell you, my Archbishop got some real speed on that jet ski that day.

Our friends at our condominium were so touched and still talk to this day of the evening Robert joined them down at the poolside for dinner. That day they asked him to say a prayer before the meal and our dear Robert gently sang such a beautiful prayer that each person at that table was deeply moved. His gentle soft voice obviously has the power to soothe people. It left a huge effect on a table full of people that had never known him before and who now will never forget him.

My brother, Robert, has many talents. He has written songs, calypsos, a book, Pastoral letters and poems. We all know that our friends inspire us. Robert has inspired me to try my own hand at poetry, So Robert here is my poem for you:

*“I have the greatest friend here on earth
We are brothers by God and not by birth
He inspires me to be a better me
Without you in my life, Robert, I am not sure where I would be
True friends are far and few
Robert, I am so very thankful for you”*

We are advised to write the bad things that happen to us In sand and to write the good things that happen to us In marble. Meeting my brother Robert as a teenager and travelling with him along the road of life for the past 56 years is definitely worthy of being written on marble.

Brian De Freitas
Clearwater, Florida, USA



L-R: Fr Gregory Carroll O.P., Brian de Freitas, Fr. Matthew Ahye O.P.

CONGRATULATIONS FROM FR. PAUL

I am happy to write this note of congratulations for my friend Archbishop Robert Rivas.

We became acquainted more than thirty years ago when he visited friends in our parish – St. Bartholomew in Miramar, Florida. We began a relationship of mutual cooperation and support that has blessed many people. I appreciate that Bishop Rivas from St. Vincent would visit our parish on the second Sunday of Lent every year to give us the opportunity to support the work of the Church there.

Over the years I visited him in St. Vincent, Barbados and St. Lucia. One year we organized a mission trip from our parish. My father organized a group of people in Florida to help pay the salaries of the priests in St. Vincent.

He came to our parents' 50th wedding anniversary and to my father's funeral. My father had spent a day teaching him how to make pasta from scratch. My brothers, nieces and nephews are very fond of him; some have visited him in St. Lucia.

Beyond just the personal relationship, I am grateful that he gave my parish in Florida the opportunity to support the mission of the wider Church. This was not only a blessing for people in the Caribbean but also for us in South Florida.

My dear Archbishop, brother and friend, be assured of my prayers and friendship always. **HAPPY PRIESTLY GOLDEN JUBILEE!**

Paul

(Fr Paul Vuturo is the Parish Priest at the Church of St Louis in Pinecrest, Florida, USA. His Dad made the best cannelloni I have ever eaten and he taught me how to make it. This will be one of my retirement goals in memory of my friend Vincent Vuturo – Ab R.)

A Priest's Prayer of Gratitude

O God, thank you,
for the gift of seventy five years.
Thank you for my priestly vocation
and for the grace of reaching
the milestone of fifty years:
the Golden Jubilee of my Priesthood.
Thank you for those who share
this grace with me.
Thank you for my priestly life and ministry
and for leading me
to fresh and green pastures,
where my soul has found delight.
Great are the wonders you have done for me
in choosing and calling me.
Anoint me afresh with the oil of gladness
and let my soul rejoice in doing your will.
Grant me a tender and caring heart;
a humble and gentle heart,
a heart like your heart: a Shepherd's heart.
Fill my heart with GRATITUDE,
for your gifts and blessings are boundless.
Make me generous and joyful in serving you
every day of my life in your presence.
Give me the faith to recognize you
in the breaking of bread and to become bread for others.
Let your Spirit guide me
and your Word instruct and enlighten me.
Grant that my life may be a daily offering to you
in priestly joy, gratitude and praise. AMEN.

MARY, Mother of the Church and Mother of Priests, Pray for Us.

Memories

*When I was a little boy
The priest was for all a joy
The priest was called father
He served as father for all*

*When I was still a little boy
I longed to share in that priestly joy
I built my little altar
And played the role of father for all*

*I conducted the choir
Dressed in my white attire
I preached from my decorated altar
Words that caused awe and wonder*

*Who is that little boy?
So devoted and kind
May God bless and guide him
His vocation to find*

*As I grew and became a teenager
My desire for God became greater
On my knees I asked God for an answer
Inspired by my daily Eucharistic Encounter*

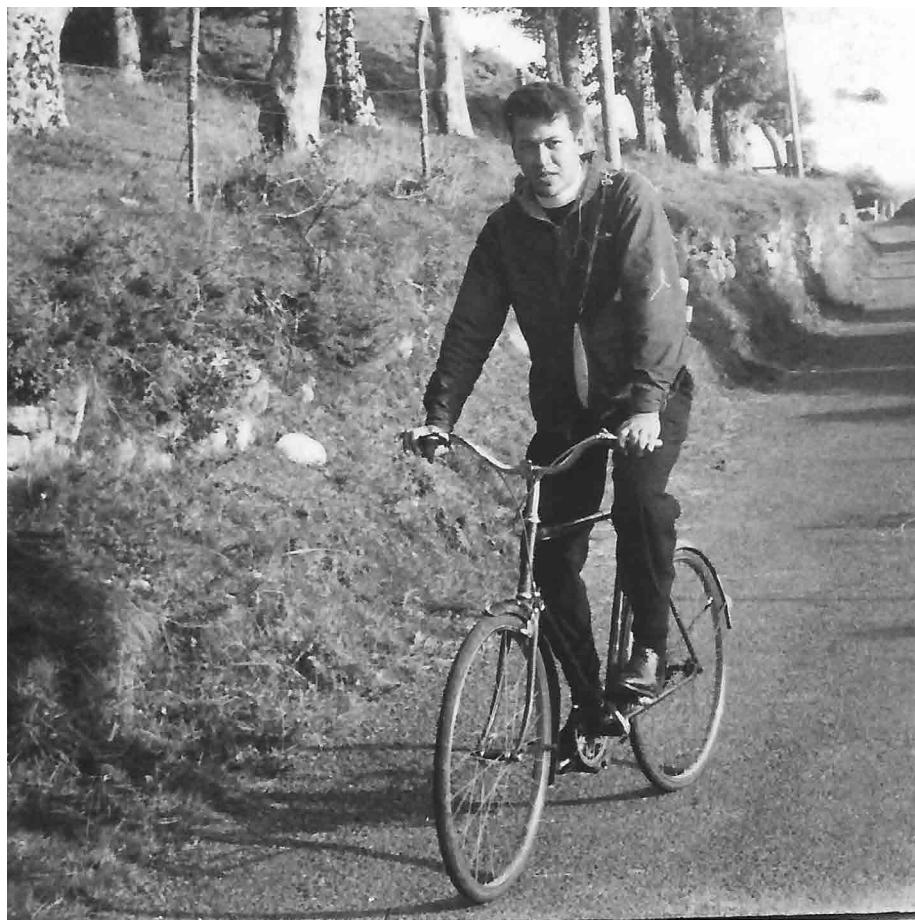
*Time has now passed
And humbly I walk
In the footsteps of Jesus
As Shepherd of his great flock*

*O joy of my life and joy of my day
In heartfelt surrender I bow and I pray
As now at God's altar with joy I can say
This is my life broken and given away*

*Hoc est enim Corpus meum
This is my Body
Hic est enim calix Sanguinis mei
This is the chalice of my Blood*

*This is my joy
This is my life in Christ given for all
Non sum dignus
I am not worthy!*

+Robert Rivas O.P., October 19, 2014



My Cup is Overflowing

Fifty years ago,
God stood at my side,
the All-powerful, All-knowing,
and the Champion of my soul.
God was strong and I was adventurous.
God's smile was all-encompassing; irresistible
and I surrendered in total trust and availability.
I heard the call to serve and I answered:
'Here I am', holding back on nothing.
It was the season of total giving;
I was young and wanted to give my all.
God was with me and I longed for nothing more.
God was my ALL; the designer,
shaping my life and dreams
and I surrendered to the ALL.

On my Ordination Day,
my Deacon's stole was replaced
with a green priestly stole and Chasuble.
I was nervous
but the robes covered my nervousness
and the Eucharist
transported me to higher realms.
My vocation had matured and blossomed
and I was filled with joy and zeal.
Ordination and my first Mass
were the honey in the comb;
the joyful release of the soul
ascending to God.
The enchanting music and singing
were uplifting and awe-inspiring.
Those were days
when others shared my joy;
Their good wishes propelling me
to a life of commitment

and priestly ministry.
It was a time of grace and blessing:
the unknown, in God's hand
and still to unfold.
It was the time
of celebration and rejoicing.
It was the time
for family and friendships.
It was a providential time,
to be young
and full of dreams.

On my Ordination Day,
my hands were anointed
and consecrated for blessing,
sanctifying, healing and serving.
How awesome it was to take
the consecrated host in my hands;
to have a share
in the Eternal Priesthood of Christ;
to become bread for others.
What a powerful grace
flooded my soul
when I took the cup,
the chalice of salvation,
lifted it up in thanksgiving
and drank from it;
my soul in heaven
and my heart beating on earth
with joyful hope.
This is the cup of my life,
my strength and eternal salvation.
I shall never let it go.

I remember fifty years ago.
The day was bright
and I was filled with gladness.

I was serene and introspective.
I was looking inward,
others were looking outward.
My charism to preach
was stirring within me,
like John the Baptist
in the womb of Elizabeth;
ready to leap forth,
so great was my longing
for that day.
On every face,
there was a smile.
God also smiled.
Everybody around me,
was smiling
and full of expectation.
God was happy.
My blind mother was happy
perceptive and awe-inspired
in her Cathedral pew;
her head covered with a mantilla,
gently she bowed her head in gratitude,
closed her eyes
and prayed a mother's prayer
for her son on his ordination day.
She had waited for this day;
her soul leaping like a doe
in high places.
Her presence was my joy.
I missed my deceased father
who was my storyteller
and filled me with imagination
that today I deeply treasure.

My siblings
were all young and happy.
My godmother and godfather;

all my aunts, uncles, cousins,
 friends and well-wishers were happy.
 My Dominican brothers and sisters were happy.
 We were a big preaching family
 and I wanted to be a preacher
 with a passion for the word;
 my Vows, the foundation for my witness.
 The Archbishop, all the Clergy, Religious
 and Faithful of the Archdiocese were happy.
 It was a happy day.
 The Church in Trinidad and Tobago
 was happy
 for two sons of the soil:
 Henry Charles and I;
 we too were happy.
 It was a great day to be happy.
 The priestly vocation
 is full of grace,
 anointing, joy and happiness.
 With anointed and consecrated hands,
 I began my ministry
 of blessing and comforting.
My cup was overflowing.

*T*he years have passed
 with many ups and downs,
 curves and crossroads,
 imperfections, self-discoveries,
 surprises, spiritual growth,
 amazing graces, divine comforts,
 humbling truths, trials
 and moments of victory.
 All these times
 I would live again, readily,
 learning from my mistakes
 and trusting God unreservedly:
 how many times have I not said,

‘there go I but for the grace of God.’
 God’s grace, sufficient for me!

*E*very day God was there,
 the Shepherd of my soul.
 The God of my Ordination Day
 Is the God with me today;
 always present;
 always gracious;
 the God of my life.
 All my life God has never left me.
 God has been abundantly merciful,
 gentle, caring and kind to me.
 I know suffering, pain, rejection,
 disillusionment, grief and sorrow,
 from physical illness, coping with loss
 as well as in the challenges of ministry
 and servant leadership in the Church.

*M*y sins, God has thrown
 to the bottom of the sea;
 My life, God has filled with grace.
 I, the littlest and weakest,
 God chose, called
 and empowered with many gifts
 especially *simplicity*.
 God loves me and I love God.
 Looking back I am very GRATEFUL.
 Humbled by the awesomeness of God
 I have allowed myself to be clay
 in the potter’s hand.

I have enjoyed my fifty years
 of priestly life and ministry:
 in imitation of Christ the High Priest;
 loving and serving the Church
 in total fidelity;

experiencing the kenosis
of self-giving and self-emptying.
My desire has always been
to do God's will.
This has made me place my priesthood
under Mary's care as her priest,
daily trying to imitate
her big "Yes" to God
with my little, feeble, trusting 'yes'.

I have prayed for the grace
to be simple, humble
and compassionate;
always thanking God
at all times for others.
My life is for others.
My motto is truth.
My charism is to preach.
My vocation is to contemplate
and to give to others the fruits
of my contemplation.
My call is to empty my heart
in loving-kindness
and service to all.
I am complete and fulfilled
when I am giving,
sharing, serving,
silent, praying
and preaching by word and witness.
The poor and vagrants
have opened my eyes to see.
They have taught me
to be loving,
kind, transparent,
generous and real.
Whatever I have
is not mine to keep

but only mine
to give and share.
I prefer to have little or nothing,
to be free to preach the Gospel
and to be at the service of others.
Covid-19 helped strengthen
family bonds and friendships,
in a way unimaginable,
through daily virtual Eucharistic encounters.
Our God is an amazing God.
My family is as dear to me
as the Church is dear to me.
For both, I will sacrifice everything
in self-gift and giving.
In reaching the milestone
of my Golden Jubilee,
I am seeing my dreams come true:
to be a priest forever
and a servant of all:
'Omnia omnibus'
'all things to all people'.

All those who call me *'father'*
have enriched my life and ministry;
from them I have received so much;
for them I must spend my lifetime
in self-giving.
Priestly joy is found
in communion with others,
in self-emptying, fruitful ministry
and a committed life
of prayer and gratitude.
Daily I am striving
to be a good Shepherd;
a father, brother and friend to all.
The life of a priest
is a joyful mystery of love,

lived in conformity
with Christ's priesthood,
of sacrificial love
and selfless giving.
My greatest joy would be:
that many others would share
my priestly glee;
that what I have received,
experienced and lived,
would be bequeathed
to those who are seeking,
desiring and discerning
a priestly call.
When we say 'yes' to God,
the echo fills the universe!

*T*oday, *my cup is overflowing*
and I am happy.
God still smiles.
Mary is my guiding star
and loving Mother;
a true companion on the journey.
I am Mary's priest
for she is the Mother of all priests
and knows the heart of her Son,
the Supreme High Priest
and model of my priesthood.
Friendships have enriched my priesthood.
In solitude I have found the well
from which I drink.
With Jesus as my Shepherd,
I want for nothing
and my cup is full.
He has prepared a banquet for me.
My head he has anointed with oil
and in my soul
is the breath of his Spirit.

My cup is overflowing.

*L*ooking back
from my Golden Milestone:
I thank God
for bringing me to where I am;
I thank the Dominican Order,
for my charism of preaching;
all the local Churches
where I have served,
as a priest and Bishop
and learnt to be a servant leader
and a Shepherd.
I thank my family,
my friends and all those
my ministry embraced;
I thank the priests
with whom I worked;
the priests and deacons,
who worked with me as a Bishop
and the priests and deacons
who became my friends
and companions on the journey.
They are scattered in many places.
I thank all the Religious
and Consecrated women
who were my companions on the journey,
who befriended, supported,
worked with me
and are still today
companions on the journey.
I thank my brother Bishops of the Antilles;
my friends Roger Schweitz OMI,
Emeritus Archbishop of Anchorage,
and Kelvin Cardinal Felix of Castries
for being my strong arms
in my early years as a founding Bishop.

I thank all the laity,
 in all the local Churches,
 where I served as Priest and Bishop.
 I really want to thank
 all the little people in my life
 and all the special people
 God sent into my life
 who were the greatest gifts of all;
 with two people I call 'Mom and Dad'
 who gave me confidence,
 when I needed it;
 unconditional love
 and encouragement
 at a favourable time.

My cup runneth over
 with praise and thanksgiving
 but there must be room for healing
 mercy and forgiveness.
 Time heals
 but we too must be healers.
 Grace will flow like a river
 where there is mercy and forgiveness.
 In fifty years of priesthood,
 I am sure
 I have made many blunders,
 mistakes and poor judgments;
 missed many opportunities for kindness;
 been blind and caused others grief,
 disappointment and disenchantment.
 For these I am deeply sorry.
 An unhealed soul is like a dry,
 weary land without water.
 I have reached the milestone
 of thanksgiving and healing
 and now my soul craves
 to be at peace with everyone.

I have given my all, tried my best
 and I have tasted
 the sweetness of the Lord:
'Gustate et videte
quoniam suavis est Dominus' (Ps 33:8).
 My joy is complete;
 My life has become a joyful offering
 and oblation to God.
 God is the joy of my life;
 my rock, my fortress,
 my strength;
 the God in whom I trust
 and have my being;
 who gives me hope;
 loves me unconditionally
 and is always faithful
 to God's promises.
My cup is overflowing
 (Psalm 23:5)

+Robert Rivas O.P.
 Feast of St Thomas Aquinas
 January 28, 2021

This poem is dedicated to my parents, Sabina and Placido Rivas, who loved and nurtured me; my grandfather Saturnino Thomas who planted the seeds of a priestly vocation in me and lifted me up to heaven the day he heard of my decision to become a priest; my godparents, Angela Thomas and Andrew Thomas, whose faith inspired me in my priestly vocation and two Dominicans, for whose influence, love for preaching and example, I am forever grateful: Fr Vincent de Couesnongle O.P., Master of the Order of Preachers (1974–1983) and Fr Damian Byrne O.P., my friend, mentor and Master of the Order of Preachers (1983–1992); with them I include Fr Kieran Lennon O.P., who baptised me and preached at my first Mass on Monday, June 28, 1971. I was ordained on June 27, 1971.

APPENDIX

LIST OF NAMES FOR PAPAL AWARDS AND PAPAL BLESSINGS

At our Synod and again at our Virtual Assembly 2020, appeals were made for greater appreciation to be shown to those who have served the Church well and have put their Time, Talent and Treasure at the service of others and the Church. The event on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul is a landmark for the Archdiocese and is to be understood and referred to as APPRECIATION DAY in the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese wishes to express its appreciation and thanks to all those whose names appear on the List. The parishes made recommendations and the Archbishop, in consultation with a small Committee selected on behalf of the Religious Communities and the Archdiocese.

The names that appear represent only a fraction of all those worthy of recognition but there was a limit to the representation. The List of names presented for Papal Awards had to be drastically reduced since the criteria for Papal Awards are very strict and limited. Only a limited number of persons who meet the criteria are awarded *Benemerenti* or *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* medals within the tenure of any Bishop. The ideal would be to apply for two or possibly three at a time every few years. As we go to print we have received Papal Blessings but are not sure who will be receiving the Papal Awards. Whatever happens, if the Awards are late in coming, everyone on the List of Awardees will receive a Papal Blessing.

I wish to thank all the parishes that cooperated in this gesture of showing appreciation for workers in the vineyard. In a special way I wish to thank Fr Joseph Raj, ably assisted by Miss Raymond Joseph, for all the time and hard work he put into it over a period of almost two years. He worked relentlessly and did not give up. We are grateful to God for bringing this important aspect of my Retirement and Golden Jubilee celebration to a fruitful conclusion.

This is a time for GRATITUDE; a time to say THANK YOU: a time of GRACE and BLESSING; a PROVIDENTIAL TIME for the Archdiocese. I wish to thank all the awardees for their generosity and commitment to service at different levels and in different ways in the Archdiocese. In this Year of Saint Joseph, we ask him to watch over the Church and all those involved in ministry in the Church in Saint Lucia. It is all God's work.

"Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all" (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Mr. Roger Labadie
Mr. Gordon Florent
Mr. John D'Auvergne
Mrs. Magdalen Jervais
Miss. Vernet Longville
Mr. Nathy Thornelle
Mr. Sextus Anceltus
Mrs. Bibiana Auguste
Mrs. Maurella Cheddy
Mr. Marcellus Verne Simon
Mr. Dale Louis
Miss. Pearl Haynes
Miss. Georgiana Straughn
Miss. Lucy Felicien
Mr. Urban Glace
Ms. Catherine Francis
Miss. Allison George
Miss. Alexandrine Lucien
Mrs. Eileen St. Catherine
Mrs. Laurentia Canai
Miss. Joan Smith
Mr. Gilbert Dolcy
Msgr. Justin Barthelemy
Rev. Fr. Konrad Mair
Rev. Fr. Gabriel Arockiyasamy, MSFS

Rev. Fr. Kenneth Haakyav, VC
Rev. Deacon Thomas and Winnie Alexander
Rev. Deacon Gerard and Veronica Glace
Rev. Deacon Arnold and Anselma Clouden
Miss. Felicia McFarlane
Mrs. Charmaine Gardner
Mrs. Marcia Haywood
Mr. Silvius "Tilo" Jn. Baptiste
Sr. Kripa Roshan, MC
Sr. Frances Nosbish OSF
Sr. Antonia David, O.P.
Sr. Velorna Gervais, SSM
Sr. Paula Andrew, SJC
Miss. Thecla Eva Louisy
Mrs. Elise Clauzel
Mrs. Bertillia Jn. Baptiste
Miss. Alcese Louisien
Mrs. Alifa Calderon
Mr. Ronald Norville
Mr. David Hippolyte
Mr. Hollis & Mrs. Veda Bristol
Mr. John Cherubim

Mrs. Louise Vité
 Mr. Mervin Jn. Jacques
 Sr. Scholastica Felician OSB
 Miss. Marylyn Hyacinth
 Sr. Ella Gustave O.P.
 Mrs. Dahlia Francois
 Mrs. Jane Jacob-Jean
 Mrs. Theodora Simon
 Ms. Marcellina Laurencin
 Mrs. Telita Samuel
 Ms. Nadia Joseph
 Ms. Lintha Smith
 Deacon Gabriel Geoffrey
 Deacon Peter Fevrier
 Mrs. Mary Jagroop
 Sr. Mary Philip Weekes O. Carm
 Mr. Arthur Gaetan
 Mr. Brian Modeste
 Mrs. Daphne Larcher
 Miss. Rose Marie Cooper
 Miss. Felicity Labadie
 Mrs. Emelda Augustin
 Mother Rosaria Joseph OSB
 Miss. Patsy Lucy St. Cyr
 Sr. Rufina Donat SJC
 Ms. Debra Bushell
 Ms. Mary Clara
 Mrs. Allison Niles

Mrs. Marie Francis née Joseph
 Mr. Clement St. Edward
 Deacon David & Mrs. Mary Popo
 Sr. Annie Reneau O. Carm.
 Mr. Andre Mathurin
 Mrs. Rosemarie Husbands-Mathurin
 Mr. Lucas Felix
 Mr. Timothy Lionel
 Mr. Gregor Biscette
 Miss. Veronica Magloire
 Mrs. Agatha Jn. Panel
 Mr. Robert Alexander
 Mr. Gilbert Isaac
 Mr. Mathurin Jean & Mrs. Elma Jean
 Mr. Geoffrey & Mrs. Loyola Devaux
 Rev. Fr. Ignatius Cetoute
 Rev. Fr. Michel Francis
 Living Water Community
 Dame Pearlette Louisy
 Mrs. Josephine Aubertin
 Miss. Raymonde Joseph
 Sr. Tresita Maria Iloduba SJS
 Sr. Mercedes Ricketts O. Carm
 Mrs. Virginia Charles
 Mr. Eardley Marulaz
 Mr. Everist Jn. Marie
 Rev. Fr. Joseph Raj Savarimuthu



WITH GRATITUDE

I wish to acknowledge the Official Messages from Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, Antonio Cardinal Tagle, Prefect for the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Kelvin Cardinal Felix, Emeritus Archbishop of Castries, Most Rev. Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Apostolic Nuncio, Most Rev. Gabriel Malzaire, Bishop of Roseau, Dominica & President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, and Fr Gregory Carroll O.P., Prior Provincial of the Province of Ireland.

I also wish to acknowledge Letters and Messages from Clergy, Religious, Laity and Youth of the Archdiocese of Castries. I am very grateful for the contributions from my Dominican brethren including Sr Susan Gopaul O.P., as well as my family, relatives and friends. No one turned down my request for a message for my Golden Jubilee Pastoral Letter. I am overwhelmingly grateful to everyone for taking time to write. Some of you have made me blush. All of you have been very encouraging and many of you seem to know me better than I know myself. I will treasure all you have said and strive, in my retirement, to aspire to what you have called me to be in the mirror of family, friendship and Church. To God be the glory.

I wish to thank my artists. First of all Sarah Joseph-Dasent, who now resides in London and did a magnificent interpretation of my Priestly Golden Jubilee poem, My Cup Is Overflowing, presenting it to me as a Golden Jubilee gift. It's on the front cover of the Pastoral Letter. She has interpreted in art at least a dozen of my poems, most of which adorn our family home in Trinidad. Next I would like to thank Fr Savaria Picchai John Wilson, MSFS, who months ago began producing graphics for my Jubilee celebration. He is amazingly talented. His beautiful and artistic work is to be found in the middle spread, the inside front cover and the back cover. These latter pieces

are his interpretation of my Jubilee poem. My niece Marina Rivas designed the cover, front and back and the middle spread. They are all extremely gifted artists and I thank God for them. The art work took the Pastoral Letter to another level. Their work is a dedication of love and Jubilee gift. My heart is filled with gratitude for each of them.

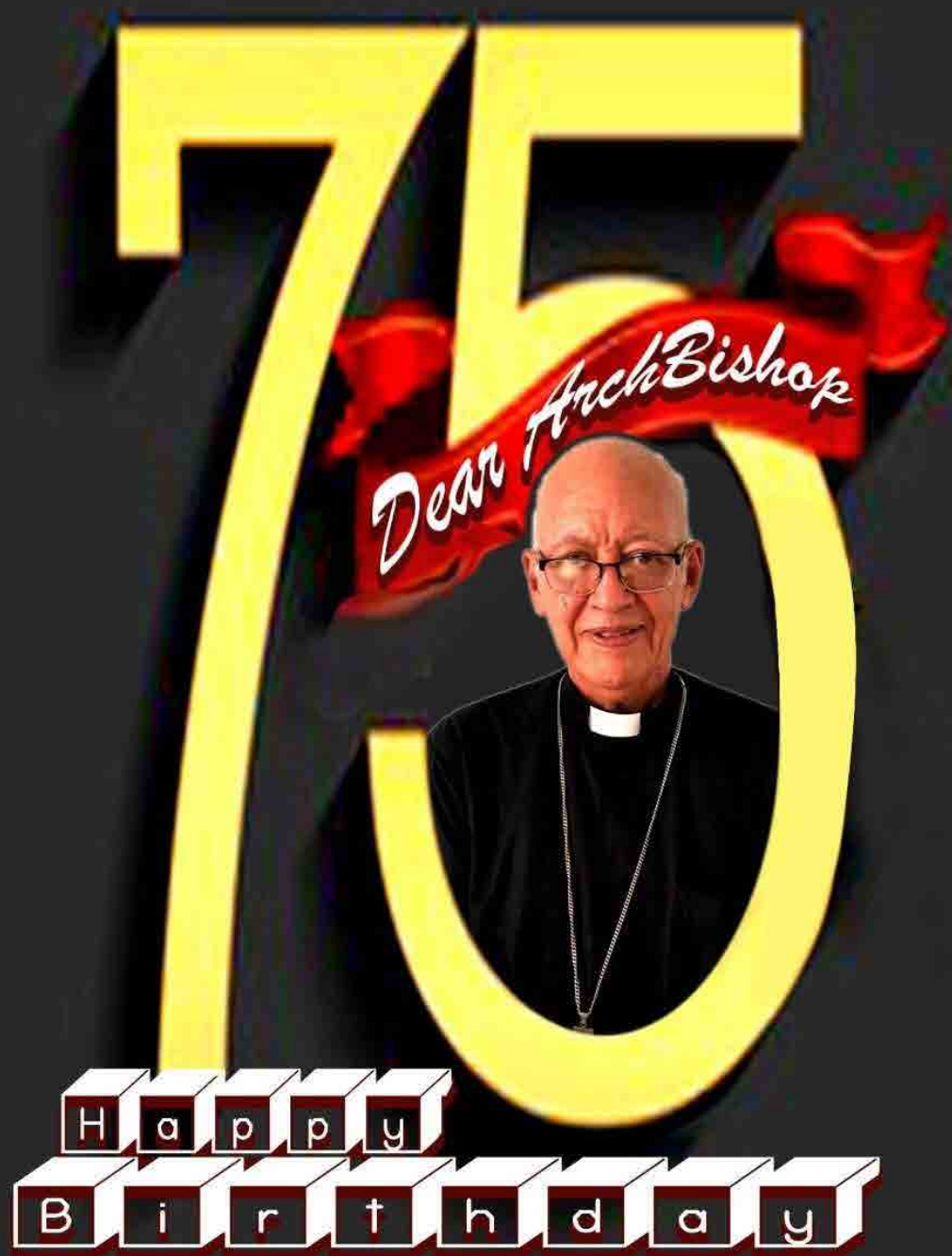
My cousin Ken Chang On took on the responsibility for the layout of the Pastoral Letter and helped with proof reading the various texts. This is the second time he has helped me in this way and he is excellent. He is easy to work with and very creative; indeed, a computer artist in his own right. With Ken I could communicate at midnight and find him wide awake. I wish to thank Jennifer Bak at the Document Centre, J. E. Bergasse and Co. Ltd, for the personal interest she takes in doing our jobs. This Pastoral Letter is no exception.

This Pastoral Letter is the third in a series of Pastoral Letters born out of our gathering as Church for Assembly 2020. Unity, Fidelity and Gratitude formed the theme of the Assembly. This Pastoral Letter focuses on GRATITUDE which links up with my seventy fifth birthday, my time for retirement and the Golden Jubilee of my priesthood. I wish to thank the Golden Jubilee Committee for all its efforts in making this occasion special in spite of all the challenges of Covid-19. I wish to thank all the parishes, families and individuals for their generous response and support. My heart is filled with gratitude for so much goodness everywhere.

I wish to thank the clergy, staff, those involved in various Ministries and those who volunteer at the Cathedral parish for their support and care over the past fourteen months. The appointment of an Acting Administrator should guarantee ongoing pastoral care for the parish in a time of transition. When the new Archbishop, who is still to be appointed, is named and takes over, he will make his appointment of an Administrator at the Cathedral.

Once more, thanks to everyone for your help, generosity, cooperation and service. Let's always remember that "dreams are built together" (Fratelli Tutti # 8). THANK YOU.

[Correction: Pastoral Letter Number 2 was not published on January 6, 2020 but 2021]





My Cup is Overflowing

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