

BISHOP BARRY JONES

Barry Philip Jones has been the Catholic Bishop of Christchurch for over nine years. He will be remembered by us as a man of integrity, who filled the episcopal office with honour, who in demanding times gave sound leadership to the Catholic community, who was a respected representative of the Catholic Church in Canterbury and Westland and who has left a worthy heritage of faith, of priestly zeal and of Christian life.

Back in the 3rd century AD, Hippolytus who was a theologian and a bishop wrote about what it means to be a bishop: He said “We are the successors of the apostles to whom it has been given to participate in their self same grace of priesthood and teaching and to be the guardians of the Church.” With Christ, the Lord, the apostles had been the founders of the Church. Aidan Nichols, an English Dominican theologian much appreciated by Bishop Jones once wrote: “The successors of the apostles, the Pope and the bishops do not ‘replace’ the apostles; they ‘stand in’ for them. They ensure the presence of the apostles in the same ministry received from Christ.”

A bishop has a threefold office which is essential for the Catholic Church. He is ordained for the office of sanctifying the faithful through the Mass and the sacraments, he is ordained for the office of teaching, handing on the faith revealed by Christ, he is ordained for the office of governing that part of the Church entrusted to him and with all the bishops under the Pope, he shares responsibility for the whole Church.

All of that tells us it is a demanding office. That is why today we are celebrating this Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Bishop Barry. He died at what these days is the early age of 74, literally worn out because of the wholehearted and untiring manner in which he gave himself to the episcopal office.

Barry Jones was born in 1941 in Rangiora a place to which he was deeply attached. Until the last couple of years, his idea of a day off was to bike around back roads of North Canterbury, and as he did so he would look appreciatively at the growing number of vineyards; he was something of a

connoisseur of their produce. His parents, Harry and Ella, were faithful members of the Rangiora parish and Barry was baptised in the parish church. Along with his brothers, Father Alan, Ray his twin and his sister Pauline, he went to the parish school and then later to St Bede's College which continued to have a place in his affection. When he discerned a vocation to the priesthood he went to Holy Name Seminary in Christchurch and then to Holy Cross College, Mosgiel. On 4th July 1966 he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Brian Ashby

Father Barry Jones was essentially a pastor. You 've only to see the list of his assignments to realise that; significantly, a number that he accepted were places where, at the time, the life and unity of that parish community needed some renewal or consolidation. His first appointment was to Timaru North as assistant priest; next to the Cathedral, and then to Greymouth; In 1975 he became parish priest of Kumara, then of Akaroa where he remained until, in 1982, he accepted to become Chaplain to the Catholic Maori People in the diocese, ministering at Te Rangi Marie, the Catholic Maori Centre. He was there for ten year and gave himself heart and soul to that work. He, became fluent in the Maori language, able to preach and celebrate the liturgy in it and to take full part in many cultural events.

When Pope St John Paul II published an important apostolic exhortation on formation for the priesthood the time seemed right to offer pre- seminary formation in the diocese. In 1993 Father Barry accepted responsibility for Good Shepherd House and the pre-seminary program where he did a fine job. That was recognised when in 1994 he was made a Prelate of honour of the Holy Father with the title of Monsignor. Then in 1998 back to parish life; he took over Riccarton parish, Bryndwr, then the Cathedral and in 2006 Greymouth. He was one of the bishop's consultors and carried a considerable number of diocesan responsibilities, too many to list now. With all that pastoral experience the next step in his life was a logical one.

On the feast of St Francis, 4th October, 2006, Father Barry Jones was consecrated as Coadjutor to Bishop John Cunneen; on 4th May, 2007 he was

installed as the 9th Bishop of Christchurch. Typical of the man and the priest, he did not come with his own agenda ; he simply accepted, as he always had, that this was one more thing the Church was asking of him. When first named bishop he said the greatest challenge facing the Church is that we live in a culture not friendly to Christian faith; to be a Christian one has now to be counter-cultural

The first task the Church sets for a bishop is the sanctification and salvation of souls.. So Bishop Barry is known to us his priests and people as our high priest standing at the altar and in the pulpit of the Cathedral and in our parish churches. He celebrated the liturgy, the Mass and the sacraments, with evident devotion, always faithful to the Church's directives, an example to his priests; we priests can be grateful for the friendly reminders he used give us in his regular clergy letters about liturgical matters needing attention. He was able to introduce the new translation of the 3rd typical edition of the Roman Missal in a manner that won the cooperation of priests and people and has borne good fruit. For many of us, priests and people, an abiding memory will be of participating in the Mass with him at the great gathering for the Faithfest in 2013 , the Year of Faith, an occasion that brought our diocese together with a deepened sense of unity and an occasion of joy to Bishop Barry

He was fully aware that, as well as the liturgy, the life of faith depends on a devotional life of prayer and spiritual exercises; very close to his heart and surely the source of great blessings for the diocese and for those who take part in it has been the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which he established and which goes on every day and night in the church at Bishopdale. He encouraged too observance of Divine Mercy Sunday, the charismatic movement, and always devotion to Mary, as he led the annual Marian procession, and in his frequent public use of the prayer that had become part of his life when a schoolboy at St Bede's, the Sub Tuum: "We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God". He gave active support to the Carmelite Sisters in their contemplative life and in their recent celebration of the 500th anniversary of their foundress, St Teresa of Avila; fittingly his body was taken to the Carmelite monastery so that the Sisters might farewell him at a Requiem Mass on Wednesday.. He gave support most recently to all the

religious of the diocese in promoting observance of the Year of Consecrated Life.. He had shown practical sympathy too for the desire of a number of religious and the lay faithful to have a diocesan retreat house, an initiative already in the hands of the Sisters of the Beatitudes and the Secular Carmelites. He had welcomed to the diocese, the priests of the Community of St John who do good work in the Tertiary Chaplaincy and St Teresa's Parish. Then there are the Sons of the Redeemer whom, after necessary adjustments, he authorised to provide the Extraordinary Form of the Mass in the diocese and to ensure that it has its place in the worship of the Church. Further he has brought a number of priests from India and the Philippines to staff parishes which they are doing generously and they are now valued members of our presbyterate. Then he has obtained from Vietnam a number of young men to train for the priesthood in Holy Cross seminary, in Auckland. The first three of them were ordained as priests of this diocese before Christmas; they are a gift to the diocese.

In the Catholic Church the Bishop is the teacher of the faith. Looking back one can see that Bishop Barry had unknowingly prepared for this in the study and reflection he had done in the years when he was responsible for the preparation of students for the seminary at Good Shepherd House. So he has consistently provided ongoing formation for the priests with regular study days and with reliable visiting scholars. He has been close to the Catholic Education Office and to the Catholic schools of the diocese which he has visited regularly and he has taken a full part in national education events. Then there have been the initiatives such as the Catholic Youth Team Mission which has had his support, as have initiatives to ensure that pupils of Catholic schools receive sacramental initiation.

For Bishop Barry the pro-life movement has been of major importance for understanding and practicing the faith. So he has been close to the Pope John Paul II Centre for life in Idris Road and helped ensure the full independence and functioning of that centre. Quite recently he has promoted submissions to the Health Select committee of Parliament on euthanasia.

He has taken a full part both nationally and locally in ecumenism being moderator of the Bishops Committee on Ecumenism, moderator of the New Zealand Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue and in Christchurch he has

regularly taken part in joint prayer with representatives of the Anglican Church.. Here too he has continued to be a teacher, recently noting the need to be realistic and to recognise that other Christian communities are as yet only partly in communion with the Catholic Church; the goal has yet to be achieved.

Back in the ferment of the 1960s Bishop Barry as a young priest had developed a strong concern for justice and peace, with all the enthusiasm of those days. As his appreciation of the social teaching of the Church matured, he made the work of the diocesan Commission for Justice and Peace an integral part of his ministry. As a bishop more than ever he saw the need to keep alive in our country a respect for the human person and for the rights which flow from it and which are demanded by the moral teaching of the Church; political and social action can be fully adequate only when they are rooted in faith and in the worship of God.

In view of his devoted ministry as pastor of the diocesan Catholic Maori Centre, Te Rangi Marie, it made sense that he should again for a number of years serve the Catholic Maori People as the episcopal deputy for Te Runanga of New Zealand; and it was fitting that on Wednesday his body was taken to Te Rangi Marie for a last farewell.

Inevitably a large amount of a bishop's ministry is taken up by the governance of the diocese. Bishop Barry had a strong sense of the need for good order if the Church is to care for the spiritual needs of her members and to engage in her mission to spread the faith. He was motivated by the conviction that all Catholics including the bishop are subject to the law of the Church; he saw himself as the servant or the steward of God's Church never her owner; he knew he had to be an obedient man himself if he were to require obedience from others. In applying the law he was fair, reasonable and equitable. The great bishop of North Africa in the 5th century AD, St Augustine, once said a bishop has to be aware that certain situations can be resolved by teaching rather than by commands, by admonition rather than threats. Bishop Barry had this awareness and it enabled him to harmonise a ministry of mercy with the authority of governance, meekness with strength, pardon with justice.

Bishop Barry's administration faced two massive challenges. First, in face of diminishing numbers of practical Catholics and of resources, there was the need to consolidate. This meant closing some parishes and combining others. Yet with his careful planning, with the help of diocesan staff and volunteers, with good consultation, acting with transparency and patience, he brought it off without causing division in the diocese or notable dissatisfaction.

Then closely following that, he was faced with the major disruption of the whole city and part of the province by the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 and their aftermath. His quiet confidence and his constant presence in the diocese meant a great deal for people's morale at a most difficult and trying time. He had to face the destruction of the Cathedral and other churches and much diocesan property. It has been an enormous burden not least because assessing damage and possibilities of reconstruction could happen only slowly because the whole city was paralysed.. However he moved carefully and with the help of priests and people and parish and diocesan structures. A big step was taken when he issued directives on church building and furnishing for the use of priests, parish councils and architects. Then with the help of the Cathedral Management Board and staff of the diocesan office a plan was proposed for rescuing the nave of the Cathedral as part of a possible wider restoration of the whole building. Bishop Barry's decision to undertake this investigation has been generally reassuring to Catholic people and indeed to the citizens of Christchurch.

Bishop Barry Philip Jones was a good man, a good priest and a faithful and diligent shepherd of Christ's flock; we shall cherish his memory, not least because he has bequeathed to us a peaceful and orderly diocese with justified hopes for the future. As we commend his dear soul to the mercy of God, we give heartfelt thanks for his life, for his ministry and for his friends

The Most Revd Basil Meeking

Bishop Emeritus of Christchurch.