

Dear fellow believers in Jesus Christ and friends of other faiths,

Little did I know, when I was ordained a priest 50 years ago, on August 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, what was in store for me, where my life's journey would lead me.

But I knew – in faith and hope – that I was carried in God's loving heart, and that the Father wanted me to be transfigured, through the power of his Spirit, into the image and likeness of Jesus, his Son. A priest forever, the festive banners read; a priest for others, a missionary sent for the spread of the Gospel.

When, 6 years earlier, the Director of the seminary had asked me why I wanted to be a priest, I had answered: *Because I believe that this is what God wills for me, and I want to be a good instrument in God's hand.*

All I knew was that the Lord had called me graciously, to live his life and go his way. Believing in His love I wanted to follow him, without reserve, all the way. I knew I was called to serve.

The rest is history, and you will find it described, through pictures and anecdotes, in the souvenir booklet you will receive at the end of the Mass.

As any jubilee, this is a great occasion for joy and thanksgiving. Looking back at the various assignments over the last 50 years, I'm happy to say that I have been blessed with many

opportunities for priestly and missionary ministry, thanks be to God and to the people whom I was privileged to serve and who, in turn have touched my life as well. Trying to do and to be “my” best – not “the” best – in the situation in which I find myself.

This is also a time for confidently asking and humbly extending forgiveness. For, with my patron Saint Paul, I must say that I have nothing really to boast about, except the Lord’s faithfulness throughout all my weakness. God has never abandoned me even when I moved away from Him. Therefore, what we celebrate here together today is NOT my assumed accomplishments but, rather, what the Lord has never failed to accomplish through me, his unworthy instrument.

That is why I am so happy and privileged to celebrate this Golden Jubilee with you, for this is not “my feast” but, in the deepest sense of the word, OUR feast. It is a feast of gratitude for what we have come to mean for each other. One of the important things I have learnt in life is that we all mean so much more to others than we realize – for good as well as for bad. And so, I’m happy that we are united here tonight to celebrate this Eucharist together; together also with all others with whom I have walked together on our life’s journey, starting with my parents and siblings and countless others in so many places and under a variety of circumstances.

In conclusion: the other day someone asked me: *If you could start all over again, would you again choose to become a priest.*

My answer is quite simple: it's all a matter of faith. If I believe that the Lord is calling me, how could I this time prefer to go my own way and refuse to serve. I agree, for many of the things I have done in these 50 years, it may look like there really was no need to have an ordained priest. But who am I to judge? It was the Lord who called me to serve, and whatever I did, I did it as a priest, a man of God, a man for others, in union with Christ.

My deepest wish today – and I mean it – is that someone here present tonight might hear the voice of the Lord and say:

Lord you call me graciously,

to live your life and go your way.

Believing in your love I will follow you,

without reserve, all the way.

God bless us all.