

PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE – *'Priest and People - Sharing Priesthood!'*

19 / 20 June 2010

Dear Friends

Today, we celebrate the First Mass in St James' Parish of Fr Peter Minh-Tan Hoang OSA, ordained by Bishop David Walker, Bishop of Broken Bay, on 4th July in Sydney. As a Parish Community we congratulate Tan and welcome him back among us with great joy and great love because we know what a significant gift the Priesthood is for us.

We reflect on this gift of Priesthood in which we all share. At our Baptism, each of us was anointed on the crown of the head with the Oil of Chrism as the priest said, *'As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life.'* Through Baptism, we become part of a Priestly People and we all share in the Baptismal Priesthood.

At Tan's ordination, Bishop David anointed Tan on the palms of his hands with that same Oil of Chrism and spoke of the duties that the priest undertakes with the help of the Holy Spirit – *'to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously as the Church has handed them down to us for the glory of God and the sanctification of God's people ... to exercise the ministry of the word wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith ... to consecrate your life to God for the salvation of his people, and to unite yourself more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered himself for us to the Father as a perfect sacrifice.'*

The Ordained Priesthood is at the service of the Baptismal Priesthood and so Tan has been ordained to serve and to preside when the Church comes together to celebrate the liturgy. He is called to be the *'living presence of Christ'* and through his ministry to strengthen the bonds among the baptised. In this regard, the Church teaches us in Lumen Gentium 10.:

'Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ordained or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ'

The priest is called, not to set himself apart from people but to closeness. A survey of Augustinian ministries a few years ago highlighted familiarity and friendship as things people treasured in their relationship with Augustinians over the years. Perhaps the pioneering work of the Order in Australia gave rise to this natural bond of close friendship and collaboration. Many would be familiar with the classic stories of prospective parents visiting Villanova College at weekends during the early days, only to find the Rector cleaning the toilets! Though Tan may be spared this task, this story expresses some important truths about the ministry of the priest. Priests minister to people in the everyday, 'on the ground' so to speak. Church happens in the lives of people who struggle to live and love, to raise a family, to earn

a living, to hold relationships together, to heal conflicts and foster harmony – this is where faith is lived, where the priest ministers and God’s Reign becomes real. This is where Tan will discover the ‘hundredfold of the priesthood’!

Fr Dave