

Last month I celebrated my 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my Ordination to the priesthood. I was ordained on Nov.16<sup>th</sup>, 1974 as a priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, in Sri Lanka at St. Anne's church in Vankalai, Mannar district, North-west of Sri Lanka. It was an outdoor ceremony in the evening at 4.30 p.m., overlooking the warm Indian Ocean. (When I was growing up in Vankalai, in the Mannar district, as a youngster I had seen the United States Navy fleet stationed for months 2 miles off the coast and wondered why? I am now told that we were monitoring the Russians with a high-tech rear-view mirror.) Over five thousand people attended the Ordination ceremony including many priest and nuns. (It must be told that in those days I was a young and handsome priest.) After serving for 3 years as a priest at St. Theresa's in Colombo, at the invitation of the late Bishop Trienen of Boise, Idaho, I came to Boise. I have worked in parishes in Boise, Idaho, Los Angeles, Oakland, Hayward and now in Sonoma County. From the Heavenly Sonoma County, my next stop would be a desire to get to heaven via cemetery/or dissolve my ashes in the Indian Ocean.

On the Gift of Priesthood: Eminent scholar and a contemporary theologian the late **Fr.Karl Rahner SJ**, (a contemporary of our current Pope Benedict) said, **"the first duty of the priest is to lead the people to their own experience of God and entrust themselves to Him unconditionally..."**

2. **"In this world all the symphonies are un-finished symphonies..."**
3. **"The struggle doesn't go away; the victory is in the struggle."**

These quotes sum up my thinking too. In addition, I might add from Confessions of St. Augustine: **"I want many things in life....I do want this...But, I want you more Lord."**

Knowing how imperfect I am, God had called me in **Baptism** to this ministry. This humbles me. Four years ago when I went to Sri Lanka, I saw the tiny 18 inch marble baptismal font where I was baptized. Scripture words: "Depart from me O Lord, because I am a very sinful man". Peter talking to our Lord after the miraculous catch of fish becomes my daily Mantra. Although the priesthood gets a bad rap these days in the sensational media, some facts do have truth in it,

because of all the sexual and financial scandals, but, for me, **I am Happy as a priest and have no regrets**, even if the current or future Popes allow Marriage as an optional celibacy. (“Celibacy is better than no sex at all,” as some of my Irish friends who were married have said in conversations.)

**As a priest**, my role is defined by the Vatican II documents and the Document from Our Holy Father venerable John Paul II Pastores dabo vobis.:

1. **Preaching**, 2.**sanctifying**: through sacraments, and particularly through Liturgy, 3.**Governing**, in consultation with the people.

When public television interviewed His Eminence last year, William Cardinal Levada, expressing his frustrations on dealing with scandals his Eminence said, “I did not sign up to this cruise”. With due respect for His Eminence’ sentiments, looking back I have to admit that I did sign up for this cruise knowing that there would be, at times, storms and stormy winds in our lives as priests. As the prayer on my final profession of Vows says, “May the Lord who has begun this in you, bring it to completion.”

**My Gratitude:** to my late parents, Grandparents, and currently living siblings: my two sisters and four brothers. My seminary teachers, Redemptorist priests from Ireland (Finbar Connolly, Sean Kelleher, Sean O’Reordan), other professors from Rome, the late Fr. Raymond Brown, Fr. Fitzmayer SJ, Fr. Leonardo Boff, Fr. John Donahue sj, Sr. Thea Bowman and Mother Theresa; to people who taught me Music: Piano and Veena, Filmmaking, Palm-reading, Enneagram. (I broke some grounds) I also look up to friends like Fr. Nihal Abeyasingha C.S.S.R., S.J Emmanuel, and Fr. Carlyle Blake C.S.S.R., and Grateful mentors in my youth, Fr. H.S. David and Fr. Nallur Gnanapragasar, both also Tamil Scholars.

His Eminence Simon Cardinal Lourdusamy ordained me as transitional deacon in Bangalore India and I was Ordained to priesthood by Most Rev. Bastiampillai Deogupillai in Sri Lanka.  
“VIVA IN AETERNUM, IN AETERNUM VIVAT...”