

## Reflection

What a comforting thing to know that Jesus chose someone to help us walk as His disciples. He is the Good Shepherd, and He cares about His sheep. And just as Jesus gave His life to serve the human family, so too, He calls certain men to stand in His place today and continue to give their lives in service to us. A priest is a priest twenty-four hours a day. During the day, he must celebrate Mass, visit the sick, and counsel people who need his help. He must stay close to his young people and the parish school; he must watch over and guide the many groups that are part of his parish family. He must prepare his sermons so that they help his people understand and live out the word of God. He must pray daily for God's help – for himself and for his people. He must stay in touch with families to encourage them as followers of Jesus. At night, he must be ready to get out of bed and be there when someone is sick or dying or in an accident and in need of the sacraments. A priest's heart is an open door that many people knock on at all hours. The priesthood is not a job. It is a calling from Jesus, to bring Jesus to His people, and to bring the people to Jesus.

We are so glad Fr. Michael said "Yes" when Jesus called him. When we get to heaven, we will understand more fully what a great gift our priests are. We will understand that it was our priests who gave us new life with the Risen Jesus through Baptism. It was our priests who fed us with the word of God and the Holy Eucharist each Sunday to give us the strength to live as followers of Jesus. It was our priests who forgave us our sins; it was our priests who made it possible for our parents to come together in the sacrament of Holy Matrimony to raise us as followers of Jesus. Many of our relatives were made ready to go to heaven by our priests, who anointed them and forgave their sins in their dying moments.

So today, we give God our praise and thanksgiving. We have so much to be thankful for. ONLY the hands of the priest can bring us the Body and Blood of Jesus; ONLY the priest is given God's power to forgive sins. And so, we say Thank You to God for our Parish priest, Fr. Michael, who said "Yes" to Jesus, who for 40 years has brought Jesus to His people, and His people to Jesus. May God bless Fr. Michael with abundant blessings in return for his "Yes" every day, 24 hours a day, for 40 years. May he be blessed with many more years, and be carried by the joy of Jesus, who sees the happy souls Fr. Michael has brought close to Him.

## PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

### **Let us present our petitions to the Lord:**

1. Let us pray for the Church. That all who follow Jesus will have the courage to say “Yes” to the call of Jesus every day, with generous, self-giving love. **Lord hear us.**
2. Let us pray for the world. That all God’s children will come to love one another as Jesus has loved us, and to love Jesus in one another. **Lord hear us.**
3. Let us pray in thanksgiving for Fr. Michael’s family, for the Christian values and nurturing they gave him as his first teachers in faith, for his teachers, for the priests who taught and helped him along the way, and for the families who became his friends and supported him over the years: they God may richly reward them for helping Fr Michael say “Yes” to Jesus’ call. **Lord hear us.**
4. We pray that the Lord continues to pour out his blessings upon Fr Michael as he strives to serve the body of Christ, His Church. **Lord hear us.**
5. Let us pray for our priests in this diocese. That they might find encouragement and joy as they celebrate with one another and with their parish families the beautiful gift of their priesthood. **Lord hear us.**
6. Let us pray for ourselves and our families – that each of us might have hearts open and ready to say “Yes” to Jesus call to carry the light of His Good News to others as priests, sisters, deacons, mothers and fathers and single people in the world. Lord hear us.
7. We pray for all the faithful departed of our parish and we remember the deceased who supported Michael in his ministry. **Lord hear us.**

**We make these and all of our prayers through Christ our Lord.**