



31st Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

Homily

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

St Patrick's Catholic Church, York Parish
Sunday 3 November 2019

We have two special reasons to gather today and to celebrate the Mass together. The first is to celebrate the presence of the Norbertine Canons in York for sixty years. The second is that we join Fr Stephen Cooney in giving thanks to God for his sixty years of priestly ministry here and in so many parishes of the Archdiocese.

Fr Stephen has such a special place in the hearts of us who have felt his care and friendship. In York, he has been a wonderful part of the community. He was to become the farmer at Kerry Downs, who worked hard to help the dream of a new college at Queens Park to be realised. The income from that farm, a little distance from the town of York, contributed to the beginnings of St Norbert's College

Fr Stephen mentioned to me as we entered the church just now that he was surprised on many occasions by the goodness of God. So often, things were achieved that seemed to be beyond the means of Norbertines and the parish. These were experiences of providence.

The gospel story of Zacchaeus emphasised how short he was. Because of his smallness, he had to climb high in the sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus as he passed. Jesus stopped and called Zacchaeus down, so that the Saviour could visit his home and bring him the chance to be saved. Zacchaeus changed and he responded generously to the great love and mercy of God.

The smallness of Zacchaeus was made up for by the power of Christ. It is our hope to be able to experience the power of Christ, to be freed of all that is small about us so that the Spirit of God can help us reach our potential: to become what God hopes us to become.

Fr Stephen has been able to recognise those moments of awe, when God has worked with the little we have to make great things happen. Perhaps the greatest thing that he and his brother Norbertines have shown us has been their trust in God and his mysterious providence.

The providence of God has been felt in their personal lives following the call of Christ in the Religious life, and the providence of God at work in the parishes and the inspired projects they have undertaken.

The Archdiocese has been enriched by their presence, ministry and labour for the Kingdom of God.