



**Retired Priests and Clergy Mass & Luncheon
Thursday Week 32 in Ordinary Time**

Speech

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

**Pastoral Centre Chapel, Highgate
Thursday 16 November, 2023**

I was speaking with friends at the Cathedral dining table recently, and we were talking about many things, including the grave that I will be given, when I die. And we were wondering if it will be the grave that was used for Archbishop Foley.

But the clever ones at the table suggested that grave would be far too big for me - and so I might have to look elsewhere for a place. But it came about because we were talking about anniversaries and the fact that I'm coming up to my 22nd anniversary as a Bishop. And next month, I'll be 46 years priest. So, the time seems to be slipping away very, very rapidly. It means that hopefully, in about four years, I'll be able to be seated down there with you and hopefully enjoy a time of rest and a time of prayer as well.

That was one of the aims I think the now deceased Pope Benedict XVI wanted when he retired. He said he wanted to be in a place where he could spend the remaining years of his life in prayer and in reflection. What else can you do with a Pope who retires where he won't be a problem?

But anyway, he was given a disused convent in the grounds of the Vatican and he lived there quietly, prayerfully and in reflection. Many of us though, in our retirement, have had the opportunity to continue to be engaged with the people that we were ordained to serve.

This is a blessing for you to be able to do that for the years that you are able. We give thanks for the ways in which you have helped people across the Archdiocese by providing supplementary ministry on weekends and on other occasions, which has been very, very important and very helpful to the Archdiocese.

So, we're very grateful for that. - that's one of the things that I'll be giving thanks for in this Mass today. Because of your willingness and your generosity, to make yourselves available for that ministry, where you are able.



In the Byzantine liturgy, at a point when people are prepared, so that they might hear the word of God - the word 'Wisdom' is announced. And the response is – 'Let us be Attentive'. I think is a beautiful way of helping people focus on what is about to be proclaimed. And what hopefully will come to us through the gift of the Spirit that will nourish us, where we are at in our lives here and now.

Obviously, in this gospel today, we heard how that wisdom, that is the teaching of Jesus, in the presence of Jesus, His ways of communicating with others, of being there with others. The things that He said to others and the wonderful works that He did for others. These are things that we have learnt through the gospel, and we have tried to imitate and take on board for ourselves throughout our lives and our ministries - we continue to do that.

For that wisdom that we touch, that wisdom that is Jesus, that wisdom that is the spirit among us, as we're told also in this Gospel today that the kingdom of God is among you. The presence of God among us is something that we trust, and we rely on and we reflect upon in our lives. And in that reflection - of what has happened to us each day, especially at the end of the day when we reflect upon the whole day and think of those things that come as a great blessing to us. We think of those things that have challenged us, because we realise that each day is an opportunity for renewal and growth.

And so, as we come to this Mass today, aware that God who is certainly a God beyond us, is a God who is also with us and among us. And we give thanks in this Eucharist for that presence of the Lord who helps us each day to keep growing, growing in faith, growing in trust. And so we bring all of this to the Lord, in this Eucharist and we pray, especially for those who accompany us and help us in those various stages of our lives as priests.

I'm aware of members of Fr Minh-Thuys team here today, who really do wonderful work in accompanying, in supporting us. So we give thanks for their presence with us today, and for the work of so many others who support us along the way.