

## *On the 42nd Anniversary of my Ordination to the Priesthood*

April 23rd of this year marks the 42nd anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. I am thankful to God for His constant love and protection.

It was the year 1979. I was a member of an international missionary religious community, the Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (C.I.C.M). Both myself and two other candidates received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. As a missionary priest, I was sent to the Dominican Republic.

With so much gratitude, I reflect on those 21 years of missionary work. It moves me to wonder who God is for His people on that island of Hispaniola; in the eastern portion, live the Spanish speaking Dominicans; the French-creole speaking Haitians inhabit the western part of the island.

How does one proclaim and lead people to believe in God, who is a loving and just God, in situations which are so very similar in our world today? Situations that are marked by a violent past; the constant struggle for food and necessities to live decent human life. That was the challenge then and is the challenge today. St. Paul says, "in good times and in difficult times, the Gospel has to be preached."

The year 2001 marked a new chapter in my life and faith journey. I came to the United States to be closer to my siblings and their families; some of them had been here for several years. I am blessed to having been given the opportunity to work in the Diocese of Dallas. In September of 2005, I got incardinated as an official member of the clergy in the Diocese of Dallas. I have met and worked with wonderful people at Mary Immaculate Catholic Parish in Dallas, at Good Shepherd Catholic Parish in Garland and at Immaculate Conception Catholic Parish in Corsicana, Texas. Currently, I am in my second term as Pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Parish in Rowlett.

A life nourished by prayer and the Sacraments keeps a priest faithful to his vocation to minister to God's people. Praying for a listening heart to the Spirit and to people helps me speak the words a person needs to hear at a given moment in his or her life; learning to recognize, appreciate and encourage parishioners to share their gifts and talents is vital to church ministry.

This is a never-ending task, yet a very rewarding experience. A respectful collaborative church ministry between clergy and lay people is the direction to pursue to have vibrant, amazing, evangelizing parishes. As you are aware, a parish is not a place to go to but a faith family we belong to. Everyone, every family should feel welcome and appreciated here at Sacred Heart. We should pursue life-giving moments that promote unity and service to others.

"FOR ALL THAT HAS BEEN, THANK YOU LORD. FOR ALL THAT IS STILL TO COME, WHY NOT OH LORD".