



Priests celebrate Jubilarians

Friday, May. 18, 2012



Photo 1 of 5

Intermountain Catholic

Priests from throughout the diocese gathered May 9 at the bishop's residence for a celebration of the five of their number who celebrated significant anniversaries this year. IC photos/Marie Mischel

By Marie Mischel

Intermountain Catholic

SALT LAKE CITY — Five priests of the Diocese of Salt Lake City who celebrate significant anniversaries of their priestly ordinations this year were feted at a gathering May 9 at the bishop's residence.

Together they have served 200 years as priests. Celebrating their golden anniversary are Monsignor J. Terrence Fitzgerald, vicar general emeritus and administrative assistant for the bishop; Monsignor George F. Davich and Monsignor Matthew O. Wixted, both retired. Msgr. Fitzgerald and Msgr. Davich both were ordained May 12, 1962 at the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City by Bishop J. Lennox Federal. Msgr. Wixted was ordained Sept. 1, 1962 in

the Cathedral of Assumption in Thurles, Ireland, by Bishop Thomas Morris.

This year marks the silver anniversary for Father Lourduraj G. Gally, pastor of Saint Patrick Parish in Salt Lake City and Father Clarence J. Sandoval, pastor of Saint Rose of Lima Parish in Layton.

Fr. Gally was ordained April 22, 1987 in Manambathi-Kandigai in Tamil Nadu, India by Archbishop Casimir Gnanadickam, S.J. He spent 17 years as a parish priest in the Archdiocese of Madras, Mylapore before coming to Salt Lake City, where his first assignment was as parochial vicar of Saint Ambrose Parish.

Fr. Sandoval was ordained Aug. 21, 1987 in the Cathedral of the Madeleine by Bishop William K. Weigand.

Father Donald Hope acted as master of ceremonies for the evening. He is president of the diocese's Presbyteral Council, pastor of Notre Dame de Lourdes Parish in Price, and administrator of San Rafael, Good Shepherd and Saint Anthony of Padua parishes.

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After the dinner, Father Robert Moriarty, pastor of Saint Francis Xavier Parish, gave a PowerPoint presentation that included fictional quotes about the Jubilarians by famous people ranging from Pope Benedict XVI to Sarah Palin.

Each Jubilarian was honored separately by a fellow priest.

Noting that it has been less than a year since Msgr. Fitzgerald was "roasted and toasted" for his retirement, Monsignor Colin F. Bircumshaw, diocesan vicar general, joked that Msgr. Fitzgerald now could partner with film critic Roger Ebert to review movies for a new television show. Ebert and his former partner, the late Gene Siskel, were famous for their thumbs up or thumbs down rating system. At the dinner, Msgr. Bircumshaw said, "We're here tonight, Terry, to simply say to you, 'Thumbs up.'"

Msgr. Wixted "has been a wonderful friend," said Monsignor Terence Moore, pastor of Saint John the Baptist Parish in Draper and also a native of Ireland. "In every ministry that every bishop has assigned Matthew to, he has just excelled.... I think that is the one characteristic that people will say about Matty – he really cares for the people, and that comes through in everything he does."

Fr. Sandoval "really accomplished marvelous things" during his first assignment as pastor in central Utah, said Msgr. Fitzgerald, who was pastor in Tooele, where Fr. Sandoval grew up. As a new pastor, Fr. Sandoval built a church in Richfield; then, when he moved to Logan, undertook construction of a new church for Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish. He also mobilized the parish to care for the families of those deported in the immigration raid in 2006.

"Clarence is really an example of pastoral care for poor people, for minorities, especially for the Hispanics," Msgr. Fitzgerald said.

Both Msgr. Davich and Fr. Gally were unable to attend the event; Msgr. Davich lives in California and Fr. Gally was in India, but their fellow priests toasted them regardless.

"George had tremendous charity," said Monsignor Michael J. Winterer, retired, adding that Msgr. Davich was committed to feeding the homeless in Salt Lake City. "On Sunday after Mass he'd be down there under the bridge, feeding hundreds and hundreds. Anybody down there, he'd feed." Also, "He was way ahead of us in stewardship," Msgr. Winterer said, adding that, as pastor of Saint James Parish in Vernal in the 1970s, Msgr. Davich encouraged his parishioners to be totally committed to their parish.

Father Andrzej Skrzypiec, pastor of Saint Ambrose Parish, said Fr. Gally is "a man of deep prayer and peace ... and he does his duties very, very, very diligently."

Pointing out that in 2008 Fr. Gally completed the Clinical Pastoral Education program for hospital chaplains, Fr. Skrzypiec said his fellow priest is "very dedicated to the care of the sick ... He is a wonderful example of bringing foreign-born priests to the diocese."

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In the evening's closing remarks, the Most Rev. John C. Wester, Bishop of Salt Lake City, said he and the other priests are deeply grateful to the Jubilarians not only for "all that you do in our diocese but as you can plainly see, for all that you are to all of us. Your presence in our presbyterate is very, very important and you mean the world to us, and we pray for you always."

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