

Golden Jubilee thoughts

When a person or couple reach a significant milestone in their lives, like age related or vocation or job related; there is always a certain question asked. “Now that you have reached this special milestone; looking back, would you do it all again? Is there anything you would change or do differently?”

The question is couched as such to generate some gem of wisdom or insight that may be profound or may help inspire others on their journey.

As I celebrate my golden anniversary as a priest, I, too, ponder such a question, not so much to find a soundbite for some curious questioner, but, rather to use the question to journey within and ponder more meditatively my golden anniversary as a priest.

Being retired has allowed me the time and space to be more reflective, more open, more cognisant of powers beyond, within and above that have spun and continues to spin the tapestry of my life.

So what have I learned and continue to learn?

I have learned that I belong to a church that can often be authoritarian, cruel, pompous, indifferent while, at the same time, serving with flaws, educating with discipline, challenging with potential.

I have learned that respect cannot be demanded because of one’s position or status; that it must be earned through service, caring and loving.

I have learned that a vocation is not a finished product and one size does not fit all; that personalities differ and gifts are as diverse as the opportunities that present themselves.

I have learned that while, scripturally speaking, one may put one’s hand to the plough but a stronger and mostly invisible hand plows the furrow.

I have learned that the most lasting and effective exercise is the one where life’s situations dethrone one’s comfort zones and, instead, leads one’s into uncharted but necessary paths.

I have learned that answers may be easy to give but are less important than a listening ear which is more difficult to embrace.

I have learned that one may map out and chart one’s hopeful course in life but it crumbles like a fallen leaf. Instead, a more poignant sat nav, charted by an invisible hand, often takes one to unexplored byways and detours that are enriching, challenging, stretching and necessary.

I have learned that trust and openness become foundational building blocks in any vocation, relationship, and faith journey.

I have learned that life, no matter what its vocation, is not a dress rehearsal, but the real thing with its bumps and bruises; its stops and starts; its blind alleys and night visions.

I have learned that, no matter how much we invent new technologies or expressions of the faith, life is always about maximizing relationships and potential rather than necessarily being current and more progressive.

I have learned that the best support network is invisible and intangible; that having all the answers is no answer and that divestiture needs to be replaced by a higher investiture.

I have learned that I am not a problem solver, but, rather, a curious prober into life’s mysteries, seen only in this life through the prism of a fogged mirror.

I have learned that I am a storyteller, gifted and trusted with the stories of others as they weave a rich and often mysterious tapestry of blended threads of encounters, experiences and growth filled opportunities.

I have learned that I am still learning and will continue to do so until the earthly journey ends.

So, the answer to the question: would I do it all over again, is obvious. I am older, wiser, more conscious of greater powers at work in me. I am at peace.