



Congratulations Fr Peter!

On Sunday, 7th February 2021, the community of St Theodore's Parish celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Ordination of our much-loved Honorary Assistant-Priest, Fr Peter Anson. We asked Peter to tell us about his fifty years as a priest . . .

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I don't really know when it occurred to me that I might become a priest. My family was not religious, so in the early days religion wasn't a part of my life. But, that all changed when we moved house and I changed schools. My sister and I always went to the nearest school and the nearest school happened to be the Sisters of Mercy school, just a block away from our new home in Broken Hill.

I was eight years old. And almost the first thing that happened was the Mass – in the Sacred Heart Cathedral next to the school ? to open the year. I was astounded by it all and loved what I saw and I thought the theatrics were magnificent – the Bishop in his vestments, altar boys, the incense but I had no idea what it was all about.

I asked my mother if I had a church and could I go. I suppose I wanted to be like the other children at school. Mum said I was Church of England and, yes, I could go if I wanted to. So, my sister and I

went. The Service seemed to be exactly what I had seen at the Cathedral, including the incense. The parishioners must have been surprised at these two children turning up out of nowhere, but nonetheless we were accepted and nurtured.

After a short while I asked if I could be an altar boy and Fr White, our Rector, passed me on to Mr John Witham, a gentle and pious old man, to train me. Well I thought he was old but he might not have been! I was confirmed when I was nine. I have stayed with the Church ever since but my sister stopped going after a while.

Perhaps the first inkling I had that I might consider becoming a priest was at Boarding School at Rostrevor College, when the Brothers, from time to time, asked the boys to consider if they might be called to join the Brotherhood. I recall thinking "Why would they do that when they could become priests"? It did not occur to me at the time that what they were saying could apply to me as well. After all I was an Anglican.

But the seed was sown and rested in my unconscious mind, just emerging occasionally ? until, when I was about seventeen, the notion hardened into a real desire to become a priest. When I told the Rector at the time he said I was too young and that I should wait a while. And so I did, but in that time I became involved in many other things . . . to the point of marriage. It seemed that the opportunity had passed me by.

After a year in England in 1961, we returned to Australia to find that my sister had started a factory manufacturing kitchen hardware and wanted help. So we moved to Adelaide and I worked with her for a few years.

Then in the middle-1960's Bishop Reid (who had been the Rector at St Theodore's from 1944-1954) rebuilt and reopened St Barnabas' College at Belair. This time I was not to let the opportunity pass so I applied and was accepted by the Bishop's Examining Chaplain as a candidate for Ordination.

I loved it at College – the atmosphere (somewhat monastic), the studies and the life with other students. And to my astonishment, I enjoyed Greek – the *bête noire* of many students. I was there for three years and achieved a ThL. The Bishop now accepted me for ordination. February 2nd 1970 was ordination day, the Feast of the Presentation, and I was ordained Deacon along with three or four others.

I had been appointed as Assistant Curate at St David's Burnside but there was no Rector there at that time. The elderly Fr Frank Weston had been put in charge of the parish in the interim and we both muddled through for three months until the new Rector arrived. It was a delight to work with Fr Frank he was a kindly and patient man which made it a gentle start for my ministry.

Fr John Roderick and his family then arrived. Fr Frank and I had waited nervously as the time drew near but we need not have worried because Fr John was an excellent person to work with. I could not have had a better person to teach me during my Curacy.

The next year on the same date, 2nd February, fifty years ago, I was ordained priest by Bishop Reid.

After three years at St David's, the Bishop appointed me as Priest-in-Charge at St Athanasius' Church Kidman Park with a satellite church at Flinders Park.

It came as a great shock to me because their evangelical churchmanship was the exact opposite to mine and I didn't know how I was going to cope. I had no choice but to go. Of course I had my difficulties, but God works in very strange ways and I had a very happy time there. We were a very poor parish but the people were supportive, loyal and receptive and we got on very well together.

From there we went to Loxton with its three satellite congregations, where I was Rector. It was good for us to be part of a country parish and the children really enjoyed it. We had some lovely experiences. With the satellite churches, all about twenty miles from the main church, it was physically demanding.

When we left there my next appointment was to be the Anglican Chaplain at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. That was a very different experience. I had to work and cooperate with Clergy, Religious and Laity of different denominations and there were occasions when I had to look after people of different faiths.

Hospital is a place where there is high emotion ranging from elation to deep, deep sadness, almost daily. To deal with this I took a diploma in counselling at Uni SA to help me deal with these situations appropriately. I witnessed miracles so frequently that they almost became commonplace and often seen by the staff as such.

After seven years as Chaplain came the time for me to retire.

I did this and took no official work in the Church for some years. It was a time to recollect and rethink my position but that is something for another time.

In 2013, Fr Grant came to St Theodore's and I attended his Induction. At that service I felt strongly that it was time I resumed my ministry and that this was the person I should do it with. I have been with you ever since and I will stay with you ? God willing ? for the rest of my ministry.

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