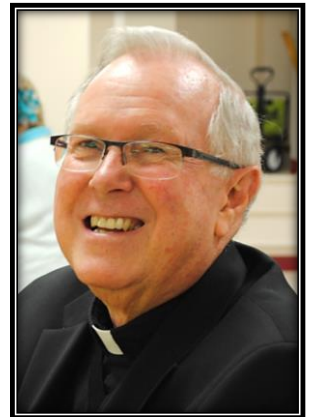




Last Saturday, the Church in Freeport celebrated the centenary of the Blessed Virgin Mary's first apparition in Fatima, Portugal. Torrential rains couldn't dampen the Spirit that led our Parish *V Encuentro* team to the Our Holy Redeemer School gymnasium for prayer, lectures, music, food, and a visit from the Most Reverend Nelson J. Perez, Auxiliary Bishop/Diocese of Rockville Centre who afterwards, waded across Pine Street to our absolutely beautiful church and offered the 5:00 P.M. Mass. At that Mass, the Bishop acknowledged the Faith-based labours of the *V Encuentro* team that helped produce such beautiful fruit in the gymnasium and in the church. Those labours he said, could only bear that God-pleasing fruit because they were carried out by people who stayed connected to Christ, Who Himself said: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in Me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without Me you can do nothing." (Saint John XV:5)

Before the Mass ended, the Bishop gave thanks for the offering of music and song that raised us up to the Sacred, and acknowledge a Priest in our midst who will be celebrating fifty years of bringing the Sacred to earth as a Priest: the Rev. Monsignor Donald T. Bennett.

Monsignor Bennett was Ordained a Roman Catholic Priest on 27 May 1967 by The Most Reverend Walter P. Kellenberg at Saint Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre. He has served the Church on Long Island in the parishes of Saint Joseph in Garden City (where as a newly Ordained Priest he also served as Bishop Vincent Baldwin's secretary), Saint Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre, Saint Anthony of Padua in East Northport, and Saint Ignatius Loyola in Hicksville. Monsignor Bennett also served on the Faculty of Saint Pius X Preparatory Seminary in Uniondale before it closed its doors in 1984.



My first encounter with Monsignor came in 1995, when I was sent to serve Saint Joseph's Parish as a Pastoral Year Seminarian. The lived experience of Parish Life under his supervision inspired me to request (and receive) permission to offer my First Mass of Thanksgiving as a Priest on 14 June 1998; just over sixth months after he and Monsignor John A. Alesandro vested me for my Ordination to the Diaconate. That lived experience coupled with my time in service with him as one of his two Associate Pastor's at Saint Ignatius Loyola in Hicksville (2003-2008), moved me to invite him to "come home" to Our Holy Redeemer where he has been in residence since September 2016.

Since coming home, Monsignor Bennett has not only found his way (with help from the Pastor) into the Village of Freeport for a good meal at *Raimo's Pizzeria, Pier 95*, and *The Imperial Diner*, or something to take home from *Glendale Bakery* and *Two Cousins*: but he has also been feeding those who have found their way to Our Holy Redeemer. Rectory-visitors are fed with hospitality, Confession-goers are fed with Divine Mercy, and Mass-goers are fed with the Bread of Life.

Please come home on Saturday, 27 May for the 5:00 P.M. Mass, and together with Monsignor Bennett who will offer that Mass, let us give thanks for his fifty-year share in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ and pray that God will raise up more men to become Priests. And in praying, consider these words taken from Monsignor Bennett's Ordination Card:

"The Priest is not an angel sent from Heaven, he is a man chosen from among men, a member of the Church, a Christian. Remaining man and Christian, he begins to speak to you the Word of God. This word is not his own. No, he comes to you because God has told him to proclaim God's word. Perhaps he has not entirely understood it himself. Perhaps he adulterates it, but he believes, and despite his fears he knows that he must communicate God's word to you. For must not some one of us say something about God, about Eternal Life, about the majesty of Grace in our sanctified being; must not some one of us speak of sin, the judgement and mercy of God? So my dear friends, pray for him, carry him so that he might be able to sustain others by bringing to them the mystery of God's love revealed in Christ Jesus." (Karl Rahner)