

Reflections

by the
Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy



Thank You!

I am flattered and honored that the celebrations on the occasion of my 25th anniversary of priesthood ordination are taking place this week in Great Falls and Billings. At the same time, I am somewhat embarrassed by the attention focused on myself. Yet, I know that these events are celebrations of faith and ministry, especially the ministry of priesthood. Thus, they are not my celebrations, but rather the celebrations of the Church of Eastern Montana.

Priesthood has been and is an exciting experience for me of faith and life. It has been and continues to be a privilege to be a priest, to preach the Word of God, to celebrate the Eucharist and the other sacraments, and to gather together and lead the Christian community. I recognize full well my own humanity and limitations prevent me from being the priest I should or could be. Yet, I keep on trying to respond to God's grace.

What is essential to priesthood and the Church is the Eucharist, the celebration of the sacrifice and the sacrament of Christ's presence among us. Eucharist for me has been and is the central act of faith and worship for people with a Roman Catholic faith tradition. As Pope John Paul II said recently, there is no Eucharist without priests.

Eucharist is a reflection of life for the disciples of Jesus. In Eucharist we take simple gifts of bread and wine, and they become the presence of the Lord. We are asked to offer ourselves and to share the Lord's presence with others.

Since priesthood is essential for Eucharist, I pray that young people today might consider priesthood as a vocation, as a way of using their gifts in service to God and the Roman Catholic faith community. Again, I ask the prayers of our people for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. I ask young people to consider priesthood and religious life as definite possibilities.

As I celebrate this 25th Anniversary of priesthood ordination, I give thanks to God, to family and friends, and in a special way to the laity, religious and priests of Eastern Montana. Thank you for helping me to be a priest.