



Bishop James Hickey ordains Fr. Jerry.

FR. JERRY: Oh I think so, that's part of the search. Those were the years – Vatican II was held while I was in college and I'll always be grateful for the teachers that we had at St. Charles College. They were ahead of their time – one of them was Jim Kraus. He was a big influence on me in college. At St. Charles we were ahead of the game because the teachers saw what was coming and prepared us. So the changes were something that we were excited about. Whereas so many other people were confused and afraid.

The Council had just ended the previous year when I went to Rome, and most of our teachers had been involved in the Council – they were Jesuits - at the Gregorian University. The North American College is a residency and we took our classes at the Gregorian University. Our class was the first class that had no Latin in the Mass. I've never had a Latin Mass.

CONNECTIONS: Did you always plan on returning to Columbus after Ordination?

FR. JERRY: Oh yes, I was sponsored by the diocese, by Bishop Carberry, who went on to become the Cardinal and Archbishop of St. Louis. When I returned from Rome Bishop Elwell

then assigned me to St. Augustine, in the Linden area.

CONNECTIONS: So how were those early days as a young priest?

FR. JERRY: I was the associate pastor and teaching 2 classes at DeSales High School, and that did not go well. I had no training to be a teacher and this was during those tumultuous times, when we didn't even call it Religion Class, it was called Social Ethics and the kids were very anti-authority. They reflected the society of the 70's . You know (laughing) Pat Tuttle was one of my students, but he was a good kid. You know they were all good kids, but with my lack of experience – I didn't know how to discipline a class at all - I asked out at the end of the year, which in my life was providential. I then got involved (the Bishop asked me to fill in) as the director of the Family Life Office for the diocese, which at that time was primarily pre-Cana. I then got involved in Marriage Encounter and Divorced Ministry. That was a great time in my life.

CONNECTIONS: All of this was taking place while you were at St. Augustine?

FR. JERRY: Yes, but then, while I was at the Family Life Office, I was assigned to a residency at St. Aloysius, on the west side. From there I went to the SPES House, which was like a fraternity house for guys who were thinking about going to the seminary. It was a 21 room house in Victorian Village, on Neil Ave. As vocation director; I recruited priests and sisters and brothers, and also was Director of Seminarians for the diocese.

CONNECTIONS: That takes us to 1982. What was next?

FR. JERRY: After 5 years in the Vocations Office, I was named pastor of Holy Spirit, in Whitehall. I was there for 7 years. The parish

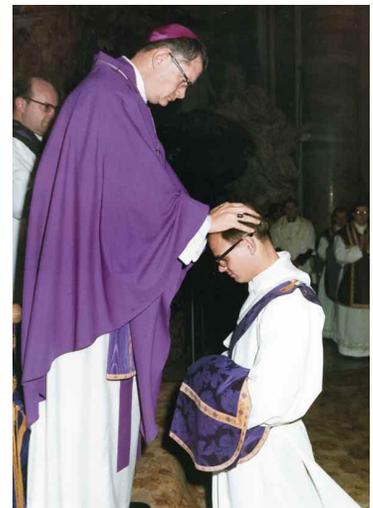
had about a thousand families, and while there we added on to the school, a very good school, which is still there. That was a big part of the life of the parish – the life of the school.

That was an exciting time. It was an opportunity for me to do what I had been preparing for, and talking about, and looking forward to - being a pastor. We had a wonderful teen ministry and started the RCIA program. I was there from 1982-1989, then went to St. Mary's in Lancaster for 6 years. It was a larger parish and I was the associate pastor and didn't have any administrative responsibilities. I worked with the people, which is what I love.

Those years in Lancaster, I really focused on visitation to the sick, the home bound, and the hospitalized. I also taught at the school and was involved with RCIA and had many weddings. It was a very full and vibrant experience.

CONNECTIONS: Now we're looking at your next assignment, which was?

FR. JERRY: In 1995 went to St. Christopher Church, in Grandview. I was in residence there, and was full time chaplain at the OSU Medical Center. Then I came to Holy Cross in 2000.



Bishop James Hickey lays hands on Fr. J.

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CONNECTIONS: That was your big break, right?

FR. JERRY: Well I would say that I don't really know if I've ever articulated this before, but I think that hospital ministry really put me in touch, in a very personal way, with the Cross. Patients and families taught me what the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is all about.

CONNECTIONS: How so?

FR. JERRY: Well the mystery of suffering and life coming out of death – healing out of sickness – the relationships with God and with family. I think all that's part of the Mystery of the Cross – the corner stone of our faith. It was a very humbling experience to see the heroic faith of patients and family – in dying and in healing. I think that was a big part in preparing me for coming here.

CONNECTIONS: How exactly did you come to be assigned to Holy Cross?

FR. JERRY: Well, with the shortage of priests, I went to Bishop Griffin, in the Sacristy, at the Cathedral. This was right before the funeral Mass for Msgr. Applegate, who spent his life in hospital work and was a real influence in my life, and I said, "Bishop with the priest shortage, in addition to the hospital, I could take a small parish." He said "Why don't you apply for Holy Cross, it's open." I said "Oh, everybody wants to go there. They're lined up from here to Portsmouth to go to Holy Cross. That's a plum of a parish." and he said "Well you have seniority," and I said, "I do?" I never thought of myself as having seniority, so that's what happened. I offered to continue at OSU and take Holy

Cross on a part time basis.

Then providentially Grant Hospital opened up and I asked if I could switch from OSU to Grant and it all worked out. So I've been here for 9 years and plan on another 5 years until I retire.

CONNECTIONS: Now, as we focus on your 40 years as a priest and all of this leading up to being at Holy Cross; how do you see yourself – right here and right now?

FR. JERRY: I think the strongest word to describe what I feel is gratitude. I'm thankful for the faith that's here – the way people live their faith. There are a lot of heroic people of faith in this parish. That has inspired me. As I mentioned in my homily last Sunday – I feel spoiled – I enjoy something that very few people enjoy. In a way, my job description is to love God's people. How many people can claim that as a job description? And everywhere I look, I see the face of Christ.



Fr. Jerry pictured with his family, from left sister-in-law, Carol, sister Rosalie, Fr. Jerry, brother Gene, mother Mildred and father Emil.

CONNECTIONS: That's pretty intense, so how or what do you do to pace yourself and relax and not get burned out?

FR. JERRY: That's something that I struggle with all of the time, but I try to keep prayer at the center of my life, the daily Eucharist. Another thing that really sustains me is the hospital ministry, because I think that ministry is where the rubber meets the road. You get to know people deeply in a short time.

Also I think that two of the things here that have been particularly challenging and have pulled me to and beyond my limits are the folks at the door - the homeless folks who are down and out – I still feel like I've got a ways to go in how to handle that in a more effective way. It's hard for me to always see the face of Christ in people that you're not always sure that they're telling you the true story. It's very difficult, and I feel that's been an area that's been the toughest for me.

Second has been all of the building that we've had to undertake. I never dreamed that I would be involved in spending over a million dollars on capital improvements. Thankfully I've had a very fine administrative assistant and pastoral associate that have made that doable. They've shared the load. I can't speak highly enough about Sr. Pat and Mike Agriesti. They are exceptional people and have made these challenges a lighter burden.

CONNECTIONS: OK Father, as we wrap this up – one final question – after 40 years, would you do it again?

FR. JERRY: Oh yes! Without hesitation.