

## **Homily by Bishop Eugene Hurley for the golden jubilee of the episcopal ordination of Emeritus Archbishop Leonard Faulkner.**

It is particularly apt and appropriate that we should be celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the Episcopacy of Archbishop Len Faulkner on the feast of All Saints.

I say this because it is a word that St. Paul is particularly fond of.

In most of his letters, Paul greets his readers as 'saints'.

He means by this term that they are the true believers, they are the holy ones, the holy people of God: they are in fact the church.

This is eminently applicable to the family of Archbishop Faulkner.

Archbishop Len began life in Murray Town which is an outer suburb of Booleroo Centre, which is in turn a suburb of the city of Carrieton.

In fact these places had much in common. The people who lived there were people of the earth who treasured the important things in life. The Faulkner family epitomised this fidelity of life.

When the depression struck and Len's father found himself out of work with a family to support. Len, at age 10, remembers his Dad praying the 90 day prayer and then calling the family together.

He remembers, until this day, the words of his father.

Having outlined the drastic state they were facing his father said,

"God will look after us."

It was obvious to the family that he meant it, and so the family then went about life with a sense of hope and security.

As Len says, "God did look after us in answer to prayer and the faith of my father".

Family was the cradle of faith for Len, and it was the place where the love of God was experienced through the faith and love of his parents and siblings.

This experience proved pivotal and defining in the life of Len as both priest and Bishop.

The practise of the faith was simple, and a natural part of life for the family.

There was Mass once a month in Murray Town and so the family walked the three kilometres to Mass and back as a family. There was the Rosary and plenty of prayer in the home.

One of blessings that came to the family, was a bursary for Len to attend and board at Sacred Heart College, here in Adelaide. This made an enormous difference to Len and he regards that part of his life as a real grace from God.

It was probably there that the gentle call of God came to him to consider the priesthood.

The role model of priesthood that Len knew was that of men committed to serving the people, often at great cost to themselves.

Len was either the first, or certainly one of the first students, at the St Francis Xavier's Seminary.

Shortly after his ordination in 1950 he was exposed to the YCW, the Young Christian Workers - a wonderful way of life developed by a Belgian priest Fr. Cardijn. It put Len in touch with the lives, the struggles and the wonderful faith of young women and men.

This was the burgeoning of Len's enormous commitment to, and support of, the lay people as a critical part of the life of the church.

Len saw the lay people with whom he worked, as St Paul saw them....as saints; the true believers, the holy ones, the holy people of God; as the church in action in the world.

This conviction was strengthened by the Second Vatican Council and Len was enthusiastic in implementing the recommendations of the Council, particularly enhancing the role of the laity.

In 1967 the then Fr Faulkner was appointed as Bishop of Townsville diocese. This appointment to Townsville pretty much coincided with the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council and he worked hard to implement the recommendations of the Council in his new diocese. This was a very new

experience in a very new environment. He set about implementing the Council's recommendations.

He visited the large diocese regularly and set up parish pastoral councils and supported, in a practical way, the people living in the more remote parts of the diocese.

This appointment also gave Len the opportunity to experience the life and spirituality of Aboriginal Catholic people, especially on Palm Island.

As Bishop of Townsville he was well served by Shiela Hill as his secretary. This relationship became very important to Len as his life as Bishop and Archbishop unfolded. Shiela became secretary, chef and even carer.

In 1983 he was appointed as Coadjutor Bishop to Archbishop Gleeson.

Len tells the story of ringing his mother to tell her of his appointment.

She replied, "Oh I think you would be better off staying in Townsville, Len." Sensing her lack of enthusiasm Len started name dropping, pointing out that the Pope had appointed him. Len's mother reluctantly accepted that that probably made it OK, but added, "You make sure you do a good job for Archbishop Gleeson."

In 1985 Len succeeded Archbishop James Gleeson as the Archbishop of Adelaide.

In April 1986, Archbishop Len introduced a novel model of governance which reflected his conviction that the Church was truly made up of laity, religious and clergy. The first Diocesan Pastoral Team consisted of the Vicar General, Fr Jim O'Loughlin, Mrs Madge McGuire, Sr Patricia Fox and himself.

Under his leadership, this Archdiocese saw great involvement of the laity, at a time when there were great changes in the world and in the Church.

In 1999 I was privileged to have Archbishop Len Faulkner as the principal consecrator at my ordination as the Bishop of the diocese of Port Pirie. I have always been grateful for the inspiration he has been to me as a model of pastoral care, and especially for his support and wise advice in my early years as a bishop.

Now here we are celebrating his golden jubilee as a bishop.

That should guarantee him automatic entry into heaven.

What a wonderful and extraordinary achievement. What a testament to God's unfailing love and Len's commitment and fidelity.

This Archdiocese and the Diocese of Townsville and the Church in Australia are indebted to you Archbishop and we pray today in thanksgiving for the graces you have received and for your enduring, and joyful fidelity.

Your life is a testament to your family and especially your parents.

Archbishop Len has shared with me an intimate letter from his mother Frances shortly before her death, it reads,

*A farewell letter to you all. I hope you like it.*

*Looking back over all those years - good and bad- I am seeing all the love and affection that has always been with you all and with Dad and I.*

*I see something of such beauty and deep thought and love for us and for each other it fills my heart with delight and I feel now as my life is drawing to a close that it will still be something wonderful to look back on in your mature years. We had very little of this world's riches or the things that go with it but somehow it doesn't matter much.*

*We were never short of love.*

*I want to say a fond and sincere thank you to you all, firstly for being what you are and for being so good to Dad and I over the rough years and the smooth. I feel my time is running out. Like the poet I am drifting down the stream.*

*When I reach the final Good,*

*When my spirit hears your call*

*I will bid an angel answer back*

*How much I love you all.*

*May God bless you and keep you, everyone. Goodbye, Mother.*

This is a man who has been nurtured in the bosom of a loving family, educated by the Marist Brothers and the seminary, formed and moulded by the YCW and the Second Vatican Council, and has spent his life recognising and living in the midst of the saints wherever he has been.

Len Faulkner, a man among men, a priest for people and a bishop for the church.

In the language of St Paul, we recognise you today as a saint, a saint among the saints, for whom you have given your life.

Leonard Anthony Faulkner,

We salute you.