

## **Monsignor James T Rae** **5 December 1926 – 15 October 2015**

Mgr James Tait Rae was born on 5th December 1926.

He was ordained to the priesthood on 3rd June, 1951.

During a long and fruitful ministry, he served in the following parishes:

St. Mary's, Stirling (1951-1961)  
St Peter's, Edinburgh (1961-1969)  
Our Lady's Currie, St. Joseph's Balerno,  
St. Mary's Ratho (1969-1980)  
St. John the Evangelist, Portobello (1980-2013)



### **Some of Monsignor Rae's favourite scripture passages**

#### ***1 John 1:1-4; 3:1-2***

Something which has existed since the beginning,  
That we have heard,  
and we have seen with our own eyes;  
that we have watched  
and touched with our hands:  
the Word, who is life -  
this is our subject.  
That life was made visible:  
we saw it and we are giving our testimony,  
telling you of the eternal life  
which was with the Father  
and has been made visible to us.

Think of the love that the father has lavished on us,  
by letting us be called God's children;  
and that is what we are.  
My dear people, we are already the children of God  
but what we are to be in the future  
has not yet been revealed;  
all we know is, that when it is revealed  
we shall be like him  
because we shall see him as he really is.

#### ***Psalms 16:7-11***

I will bless the Lord,  
who gives me counsel,  
who even at night directs my heart.  
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:  
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand  
firm.

And so my heart rejoices,  
my soul is glad;  
Even my body shall rest in safety.  
For you will not leave my soul  
among the dead,  
Nor let your beloved know decay.

You will show me the path of life,  
the fulness of joy in your presence,  
at your right hand happiness for ever.

#### ***Luke 24: 30-35***

Now while he was with them at the table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognized him at the breaking of bread.

## **Monsignor Rae's thoughts on Priesthood**

As the 64th year of my sharing the ministerial priesthood of Jesus Christ draws to a close I find myself asking what were the outstanding factors that shaped my thinking and activity over these years.

There were of course many, but undoubtedly one of the most significant was my discovery as a third year theology student of the Church's teaching on the Priesthood of Jesus Christ as perceived in the thought and witness of Reverend Bede Griffiths OSB.

He helped me to see that there is only one priest and that is Jesus Christ. He alone, as God made man, can mediate for us effectively, bringing God to humanity and humanity to God.

Over the years of my ministry and particularly through the teachings of the Second Vatican Council I have come to appreciate something of what the universal priesthood of all believers means and to understand that everyone who is baptised into the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ shares in His priesthood, while having different functions and various ways of exercising Christ's priesthood within them.

For this we need to be part of living and vibrant communities in which, formed by the Word of God and our shared life experiences together, we are ever mindful that we have no priestly influence of our own.

Any reconciling success we have is the work of Christ, the unique priest and reconciler for whom, we, as sharers of his priesthood are but free cooperating instruments and agents of Christ THE priest.

*May 2015*



## Monsignor Rae – A Reflection on his life



Monsignor Rae, Canon Rae, Father Rae, James, JR, Jim, Uncle Jim was born on 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1926 and ordained on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1951. Time won't allow me to reflect on the 64 years of his dedicated priestly ministry or to comment on his years of work in the Archdiocesan offices or even his pivotal involvement in the papal visit. I won't attempt to catalogue his achievements in the parish - from the restoration of the church and his personal sponsorship of the bells to his continuing zeal for the implementation of the vision of the Second Vatican Council.

He has baptised, confirmed, reconciled and anointed so many who are here today. He has accompanied us, and our families and friends, along difficult personal journeys in this life and stood near the gates of heaven, as many others travelled into the next.

By vocation he was a priest.

By gift and talent he was also an architect, a designer and a builder.

He was a talented and self-taught artist.

He was a pianist with a discerning love of music.

He was a golfer and a keen armchair cricketer, footballer and tennis player.

He was a connoisseur of fine wines and the Scottish Water of Life.

He loved telling stories and had a bottomless well of anecdotes and jokes.

He was a man who loved the members of his family, unconditionally. He was a private person but it was from this secure base that he discovered his vocation as a priest and a human being. He was at home in this network of relationships where he was accepted, just as himself, and learned to accept others, just as they were. His sister Anne was his safe haven.

He came here to St John's in 1980 and over the 33 years of his ministry here, the people of the parish became an extended family to him.

He was above all a man who centred his life in the love and service of others. He set aside his own needs, inclinations and personal preferences for the sake of the Kingdom.

Retirement was never on the Monsignor's agenda. It was in fact contrary to his nature. It would be an understatement to say that he was reluctant to retire or even to use that term. 'Going on until he dropped at the altar' is a phrase he often used.

There was a clear indication that this way he saw himself, when at the age of 69, he undertook the 3-month residential Renewal course at St Beuno's in Wales. Here he became good friends with St Ignatius Loyola. He undertook the full 30 days of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, in silence. He returned with a new and even deeper insight into the spiritual life and the discernment of the action and presence of God. Since then he accompanied over 50 people as they undertook the 34 weeks of the Spiritual Exercises in daily life.

While he liked to drive rather quickly along the roads of the United Kingdom, he was a reluctant long distance traveller, and could never be persuaded to travel to Tanzania. However for over 30 years he warmly welcomed Monsignor Paul, the people of Legho Small Christian Communities and young people from the Diocese of Moshi into his life.

Perhaps the greatest journey that he made was from being a dutiful pre-Vatican 2 priest to ultimately becoming a wounded healer. In reflecting on his life he wrote: "For myself the Vatican Council came as an enormous

spiritual, intellectual and pastoral relief. It gave the Church the opportunity to release itself from so much spiritual and intellectual bondage and opened the way for an apostolate to the modern world, as we struggled to discern 'the signs of the times'."

He was committed to the renewal of the church and the bringing about of the Kingdom of God. He passionately wanted people to know and experience the infinite love of God, incarnate in Jesus and enlivened by the Holy Spirit. And to pray.

In recent times it has been a privilege to have journeyed with him as he moved to Milton Crescent and then, via Liberton Hospital, to the St Joseph's Home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor and their loving Community of nurses, care assistants and helpers. He has been living there for the last 9 months. Circumstances allowed me to be able to be with him most days, and to become his ageing altar boy and MC, as he celebrated Mass in his room.

It was in celebrating Mass and pondering the Gospel each day that his past life and recent journey came fully into focus. The Word of God was so important to him. And increasingly so. It was his companion and compass in life, and reflecting on it was his inspiration.

At the beginning of this latter stage it caused him great frustration to lose his mobility, to be looked after and not to stand on his own feet. He gradually came to appreciate that through the sisters, nurses and carers that it was Jesus who was ministering to him and with that came thankfulness. The letting go of his independence, and the accepting of his vulnerability in this last year, helped him to become even more comfortable with himself, and with others.

He did however still like to do things very much his own way.

During the last two weeks of his life his energy returned and the pain disappeared. On the Sunday before he died he asked me to get his paints and wondered if there was a small group of people who would like to do the Ignatian Exercises. And why, after asking for it hundreds of times, no one had brought in his heavy overcoat.

He then became tired and by Thursday evening was lying in bed with El Greco's picture of 'Christ as Saviour' in front of him. This picture, which is on the front of your Order of Service, had always fascinated him. It was his image and icon of the Sacred Heart. Then, while listening to some of his favourite music, with his rosary beads in his hands and with his nephew John and myself sitting praying with him - he simply 'went home' and completed his journey into the Heart of God.

All of us gathered here today, from all the different contexts of his life and ministry, have worked, planned, dreamed, discussed, debated, laughed and sometimes cried together with him. God has touched us and blessed us through him. I can honestly say he has been one of the biggest and moderating influences in my life. And the number of you present today, and those with us in Spirit, is testimony to that same gift he has been to you.

May he rest in peace in the Sacred Heart of the Love of God.

*Mike Knox*

