

**Fr Doug's Silver Jubilee**  
**25 years of service as a Priest**  
**by**  
**Deacon Alan Boxall**  
**30 November 2007**

We are blessed to have such a talented and wonderful priest to lead us here in Rainham from 1997. His cheerful presence and caring nature is always very evident. No matter what the occasion he is always prepared and organised. He has removed our debt and up dated both our churches, The presbytery, Parish office and meeting rooms. His visits and support to our Primary School are always enjoyed by both staff and the children.

In a period of change over the last ten years, we have been enabled to enjoy the many ministries created to enhance the smooth running of our parish. At his first Parish AGM he introduced our 20/20 vision for the parish. From this emerged the Parish leadership team and a huge body of volunteers. Many of you I can see are here to-night. Due to his influence and encouragement we have now established Catechetical teams that range from RCIA, Children's Liturgy, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Baptism. His infectious energy has moved us to support The Ghana project, which you heard about in that wonderful tribute paid to him at the end of Mass.

Father Doug went to St Johns Seminary in 1975. In 1976 he went to Manchester University, obtaining an Honours degree, after which in 1979 he returned to the Seminary and was subsequently ordained priest on 27th November 1982.

He served in Wallington Parish between 1983 and 1986 and during this time he developed a natural rapport with young people which has continued in this parish. He recognised a need for them to have a place to question and discover the experience of God in their own lives and it was from Wallington that he was appointed to run the Diocesan Youth Service from 1986 to 1992. He found a lively but stubborn team of 3 young youth workers, who he managed and motivated with a vision and mission. They visited, and supported parishes and as a result became a top class Youth service, and the envy of many Dioceses! One of his strengths was the ability to bring out the best in others and in doing so many successful events resulted. He was even brave enough to run a weekend youth camp for 250 teenagers called ' Would you Adam and Eve it! ' Yes, you guessed.. The focus was on personal relationships and sexuality. All delivered within the teaching of the Catholic Church and yet relevant to the real challenges that young people face growing up in to-day's society! The youth work team members remember just how well he carried his professionalism.

Once during a meeting Archbishop Michael Bowen rang him. The conversation was going on for rather a long time for young people and they began to get frustrated. A conveniently placed first aid kit sparked a thought and before long Fr Doug had been completely bandaged from head to foot with the telephone against his ear! He didn't flinch one bit, but maintained calm, seemingly unrestricted responses throughout - the Archbishop would never have guessed!

From 1992 to 1997 he was appointed to the 6th Form College of Christ the King. His love of mountains and skiing down difficult slopes is well known. Whilst at the top he is closer to God! And therefore considers these times as official retreats.

Just after he came to us I asked him if he would like to crew in a racing dinghy in his spare time. He was very please to do so and we had some exciting times on the river not quite capsizing but had a few near misses. At the end of the season he thanked me for the experience and disclosed that he had overcome a dreadful fear of water! This quite startled me because he never ever showed it. I am pleased to say that I am still able to ask him out on the river.

Most of you know that he has a casual interest in football, not to mention a certain well-known team but he also has a passion for Golf. We also know that he is somewhat frugal. When out on the course it is possible to drive into the rough at times and that is when Father Doug's saving nature comes to the fore (excuse the pun) After locating his ball he will search and repatriate others that might be missing.

For myself I am honoured to serve him, as I know we all are. It is exciting to know that we are always moving forward. We look forward to our new Parish Centre, also as we enter a new phase of mission within our parish our Youth Leaders are working hard to bring our young people together in many projected areas of the community. Watch this space. So we look forward to even bigger and better things thanks to Father Doug's management and vision.

Congratulations on your 25th Anniversary. We pray that you will always be able to minister with such gentleness and fun still retaining your great talent for enabling others to take responsibility and example in our growing community.