

## Funeral Homily for Monsignor Terence D'Souza

May 5, 2018

Mary D'Souza read today's second reading. I baptized her 38 years ago. I made her a Christian. I was a deacon then. She will tell you that she made me a priest. One year later I was ordained to the priesthood.

I first met Monsignor D'Souza shortly after he arrived in Canada in 1975. Back then he was Father D'Souza, or known as "Terry" among priests. He had already had an illustrious ministry before coming here.

There are some things that Brian Finamore didn't tell you about Monsignor D'Souza. Those things need to be acknowledged today. As a newly ordained priest Terry taught religion at St. Joseph's Girls College in Karachi. He was secretary to the Archbishop in Karachi from 1960-1968. From 1968 to 1970 he was secretary to the Papal Nuncio. Then he became the editor of the Christian Voice. At the invitation of Bishop Thomas Fulton he joined the Archdiocese of Toronto in 1975 and was appointed Associate Pastor at Our Lady of the Airways. This was followed by his appointment as Pastor to John XXIII Parish. In 1987 he became the founding Pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish where he remained until his retirement in 2008. Since his retirement 10 years ago, he was able and very grateful to exercise publicly his priestly ministry, which he did at St. Josephine Bakhita and Savior of the World Chinese Catholic parish up until Easter Sunday, when at the end of his last public Mass he laid his priestly vestments on the altar.

Terry was most diligent in all things related to his priestly ministry. "The priesthood was always my love," he said. For some 58 years he was a good shepherd and tireless servant of the Lord. The reading from the Book of Wisdom speaks about a life pleasing to God. Living a life pleasing to God was always Terry's deepest desire. He challenged himself to be the best he could be. He valued competence. Hilary D'Souza was his office administrator for many years. Terry told me that he taught her Canon Law. Terry had his own private collection of Canon Law books. Maybe the Bishop did not know that. Anyway, Hilary was one of his greatest supporters. And she was certainly competent.

Terry had the heart of an apostle. He was inspired by the great St. Francis Xavier. He was unafraid to try new things to draw people to Christ. He would never let an opportunity pass where he could stimulate the faith of people and invite them to get into some ministry in the Church. He thought that once people get involved they will start taking ownership for their faith. He had at one time eleven different choirs, four of them youth choirs, here at St. Francis Xavier Church.

He was, as Brian said, much devoted to Catholic education and served as a school trustee for two terms from 1988 to 1994. He had a great love and affection for young people. He was very open with them and interested in their lives. He was as much a student, as he was a teacher. And they loved him for it. He loved to celebrate Mass for them on weekdays at St. Francis Secondary School and other parish schools. "The Mass has always been my spiritual strength," he wrote, "constantly providing me the possibility for deepening in personal spirituality."

He loved preaching, had a passion for it. His focus was always on the Lord. He never sought personal glory. He not only sought truth diligently. He wanted to share his insights with others. In 1964 his bishop had sent him to various dioceses in the US on mission appeals. He was well equipped for it. He told me one day that his bishop sent him on those mission appeals because "he knew I had the gift of the gab." He was certainly right about that! He had a good sense of humour too. He once told me that in going to one parish in California he told people, "Many centuries ago, my ancestors came from the East bringing, gold, frankincense and myrrh. I have come here to collect... not the gold, but the interest on the gold!"

I am most grateful for his friendship and for the gift of his priestly ministry at St. Mary Star of the Sea Church through his retirement years. I always found him very personable, very engaging. He could talk to anyone with ease. He could be firm, but he was always kind. He was a good listener, a wonderful confessor too. He was always very giving of himself.

Monsignor D'Souza's priesthood was marked by great generosity in ways that few of us here today would know of. In his own words: "For the past thirty years, I have used my stipends to educate about twenty children in Karachi, Pakistan. I support them through school and university. Their parents are field labourers and speak no English. This is the third generation I have been involved with. Last year, on my visit, I met many of them; two of them had just finished their first year in university and were very excited. They are studying commerce. It is so encouraging to see them as nurses, midwives, teachers and computer "geeks." This has been a very satisfying experience to see hope in the eyes of the young, and well worth the personal sacrifice I had to make over the years of not being able to take an annual vacation or to travel, which I truly enjoy. I feel very blessed.... It is only education that will lift the downtrodden and depressed out of poverty..... I feel privileged to have been a small part of that movement."

Monsignor D'Souza made an enormous contribution, not only in parishes he served in here, but also in the Goan community and in the Church in his native Pakistan. He touched the lives of so many people. This presence of so many of you is testimony to that.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> day of February he learned that his cancer had returned and is spreading. His Oncologist told him that he had six months to live..... "Whatever the future outcome, I am very

comfortable with it.... I have had many miracles in my life. I don't pray for a cure.... After all I have come through five death experiences through the years. I will list merely a few.

At age 7, during the summer school break in 1940, I was drowned for over half an hour and brought back by a Dutch Franciscan priest. On 18 January 2007, I had an extremely severe attack of pancreatitis and the emergency doctor in Trillium gave me three hours to live. On 28 April 2017, the surgeon told me that I would not survive the major surgery for the removal of the cancer cells, a surgery that he did not recommend at my age, but would do because of my insistence. To his surprise I healed in three days and was released in five days! But, throughout that surgery I kept hearing a voice say to me: 'I am sending you back. I am sending you back.' I am still trying to understand its purpose and meaning."

Monsignor D'Souza, you now understand why he sent you back. I believe we all know why too. This past year since April 28<sup>th</sup> 2017 was like a year-long libation to a long loving life of priestly service, topping it all off. Today we thank you and entrust you with our prayers to the God who is love. Included in our prayers today is your dear brother John who died just mere weeks ago. Monsignor D'Souza we all love you. You poured out your life in the service of the Lord Jesus. May the peace of the Christ you so dearly loved be yours eternally.

Father Neil