

It was a blessing to work with Bishop Franklin

My personal congratulations to Bishop Franklin as he celebrates the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the episcopate! What a blessing he has been to the Diocese of Davenport and to me. I recall the first time I met Bishop Franklin was when I was a student at the North American College in Rome. He was there for *pranzo* one day not long after it was announced that he would become the bishop of Davenport. In my short visit with him at that time, I knew that the Diocese of Davenport was getting a gentle soul as our bishop. He had a very kind way about him that was encouraging in the sense of his approachability. What was revealed was a shepherd's heart.

In finishing my seminary studies shortly after his installation as the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Davenport, I returned home and was one of the first two men he ordained a priest. (The other was Father Joseph Wolf.) At that time, neither Bishop

Franklin nor I would have ever thought that he would eventually be an honorary co-consecrator for my episcopal ordination. It is amazing how the Lord works in the history of our lives!

Over the course of my priesthood in the Diocese of Davenport, I got to know Bishop Franklin more personally when I began working in the Chancery as vocations director and chancellor, and was afforded the long hours in a car driving him to many confirmation Masses and other diocesan functions. It was a privileged time to experience him outside of being my "boss" and bishop, and as a man who loved the Lord and the priesthood. Our friendship has grown out of those privileged times together and has been a great blessing to me, especially as he entered into his retirement years and I spent time working outside of the diocese, and now as a bishop myself. Each step along my path in ministry, I have received the support and



Bishop Robert Gruss, left, then a monsignor in the Diocese of Davenport, sits with Bishop William Franklin outside the Vatican in this file photo.

encouragement of a father, the friendship of a brother priest (and now bishop), and the love of someone who deeply cares about people. What has been revealed is a shepherd's heart.

Over the years Bishop Franklin has spoken many times of his gratefulness for his vocation and what the Lord has allowed him to experience in his priestly

life. Though many of his assignments were not what he envisioned for himself, he graciously accepted God's will in all of them. Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., once wrote, "To be a saint is to be motivated by gratitude. In the end, gratitude is the root of all virtue. It lies at the base of love and charity." Gratitude has been at the heart of Bishop Franklin's

love and charity for the people the Lord has called him to shepherd. He knows deeply of God's love for him and has expressed it so often through homilies that I have heard, through conversations with him, and through his compassion and love for others. What has been revealed is a shepherd's heart.

Because we walk in the ways of Christ, great suffering is sometimes a part of the priesthood and one's role as a bishop. At the heart of all vocations is the cross of Jesus Christ. The last few years of Bishop Franklin's life as a bishop were very demanding, very difficult, very challenging as he and all of us had to come face to face with a sinful side of our Church. In this difficult time he remained faithful in love, carrying the pain and suffering of victims interiorly. What is revealed is a shepherd's heart.

There are those people who come into our lives who show us the heart of the Father. I am grateful that our paths have crossed

in this mystery of life. One of my favorite quotes is from poet laureate Francois Mauriac. "We are all molded and remolded by those who have loved us and, though that love may pass, we remain, none the less, their work. No love, no friendship can ever cross the path of our destiny without leaving some mark upon it forever."

Bishop Franklin, you have certainly left your mark upon my life and the people of the Diocese of Davenport. I celebrate with you what God has done in your life over the past 25 years as his faithful bishop. We all celebrate God's profound love in your call to the priesthood and episcopacy displayed through your gentleness and compassion, your leadership, your friendship, your pastoral care and your retirement. What has been revealed is truly a shepherd's heart. Congratulations and *ad multos annos!*

— **Bishop Robert Gruss, bishop of the Diocese of Rapid City, S.D.**

Msgr. Shafer reflects about Bishop Franklin

I want to congratulate Bishop William Franklin on his 25 years as a bishop. In the time I have known him and during the time I served as his vicar general I saw him as a model priest and loving pastor/bishop.

He faced many challenges in his time as bishop, in particular the sexual abuse crisis and the consequent bankruptcy of the Diocese of Davenport. He responded to all of these with genuine concern for those directly involved as well as seeking the welfare of everyone in the diocese.



Shafer

Whether it was in a parish visit or in the hallways of the chancery, he always had an encouraging word and true interest in each person he met. In the chancery he would walk around asking the staff — whether it was the vicar general or housekeeper — what they were working on and whether they had what they needed to do their job. In particular, his humility and gentleness touched the hearts of his people — they sensed his pastoral care for them.

Bishop Franklin listened more than he talked. He encouraged both ordained and lay ministers and exercised the Catholic social doctrine principle of "subsidiarity" whenever he could. He ministered to ministers and encouraged ministry in the di-

ocese. We recently heard the Gospel story of the raising of Lazarus. We heard the concern of Jesus not only for Lazarus, but for Mary and Martha as well. In the Gospels we know that Jesus was to Martha, Mary and Lazarus both a friend and shepherd.

Bill Franklin would reject being compared to Christ, but as I think back on his ministry as bishop of Davenport I see many Christ-like ways. A gentle, loving pastor who sought to lift us up.

May God bless you always, Bishop Bill.

— **Msgr. Drake Shafer who served as a vicar general to Bishop Franklin**



Father William Franklin talks with Sisters while serving in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

Bishop Franklin has a positive outlook

This is a special opportunity to especially thank God for the gift of Bishop Franklin's 25 years as a bishop and 60-plus years as a priest. We in the Diocese of Davenport are so blessed to be among the countless lives he has touched, and I am personally blessed to have had the opportunity to work for him most of his years as bishop of the diocese and to now consider him a very special friend in his retirement.

The bishop is a prayerful man of deep faith who is truly committed to his vocation as a priest. He loved his work as an educator and pastor. He invites people to grow in their faith and is open-minded to the diversity that we all have in our personal journeys.

He is truly a servant leader: one who serves others and allows others to serve him. He was known for using subsidiarity in his style of leadership. He was continually open to input and to learning from the expertise and talents of others and then brought wisdom and compassion to his decisions.

He is always a true gentleman and genuinely enjoys, respects and appreciates people from all areas of life. He is a man of joy and laughter and can find humor in the simplest ways. His door was always open, and it was heartwarming to watch how he showed genuine interest in the staff and visitors.

He is a humble man and lives simply. He did not aspire to be a bishop; and the more he was recognized, the more he was in awe of the role he was called upon to play in people's lives and in God's divine plan for him. His character and fortitude were especially evident in how he took the high road by exercising compassion and accepting responsibility with the priests' abuse issues facing the Church.

He is a positive man. Even when things seemed pretty down and out, he would say, "The sun will come up tomorrow." He was faced with serious health issues and loss of some eyesight, and yet it was amazing how he continued to focus on the normal affairs of diocesan life and remained personally available to the clergy and lay members of the Church. He leaves a legacy of mutual respect.

Bishop Franklin is so very gracious in retirement and so appreciative in knowing that the diocese has excellent leadership with Bishop Martin Amos. He is a blessing to us and may the years to come bring him many blessings.

— **Mary Frick, who was executive secretary to Bishop Franklin**



Frick



Bishop William Franklin, kneeling, during his ordination as auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

Bishop Franklin's spirituality was evident

To Sister Bernadine Curoe, SVM, Bishop Emeritus William Franklin will always be "Ben," as in Ben Franklin. That was his nickname when she worked with him as a guidance counselor at Wahlert High School in Dubuque in the 1970s. They've been friends ever since.

"He started the guidance program. He had the most outstanding guidance program in the United States." Everyone on the guidance staff knew what was expected and worked without complaint because Father Franklin was working right alongside them. "He was very competent, and students came first," Sr. Curoe said.

"But he played well, too. He worked hard and enjoyed life. He lived with a group of priests — probably 14 to 15 priests — and they had their own community. He really enjoyed his fellow priests and working with me and the others in the counseling center."

His spirituality also was evident. "Basically, his motto was love God and love your neighbor and be kind to other people. And integrity plus."

— **Sr. Bernadine Curoe, SVM, licensed mental health counselor at Loras College, Dubuque**



Sr. Curoe

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Moved by bishop's thankfulness

"Since I have known him, I have been moved by Bishop Franklin's deep sense of thankfulness and gratitude. He expresses that frequently and so sincerely. It is a measure of his humility and appreciation of other people."

— **Msgr. Mike Morrissey, who served as a vicar general to Bishop Franklin**



Msgr. Morrissey