

## Fr James Lyons – A reflection on priesthood



*To give and not to count the cost! St Francis of Assisi put these words as part of his beautiful prayer and I have pondered this as I've reflected on my own situation. St Francis quite literally stripped himself of everything to let his dream of following Christ become a reality. Has my dream cost me as much?*

Yes, I said goodbye to my family when I entered the seminary and I put aside the possibility of marrying and becoming a parent. I denied myself a career that likely would bring financial security and the independence of adulthood to make my own decisions and mostly please myself.

The cost of all that did not register at first. The dream of priesthood was very appealing. I didn't look back. What I had left behind struck me one day not long before my ordination. I started to reconsider my choice.

But the wonderful example of the priests who had served in my home town – their presence and their love of the people, their availability and friendliness – told me they were happy and that the road they had taken was worthwhile.

That example alone is what spurred me on and I'm deeply grateful for it.

After more than 50 years as a priest, I readily admit my giving has cost me very little. I bought a great bargain! I remain close to my blood-family, yet enjoy the love, confidence and support of a much bigger family through lives grafted to mine through the people I have lived amongst. Joy and contentment far outweigh any sense of loss or disappointment.

My ability to love has not been compromised through lack of a family of my own; it has been expanded and enhanced. My mistakes have taught me and personal failures, while troubling, remind me that, no less than those I serve, I need understanding, compassion and forgiveness.

As a way through life, priesthood and the pastoral ministry that defines it, has fulfilled every need.

So, if you're thinking of being a priest, just give yourself. Don't worry about the cost. It's minimal. In fact, as St Francis of Assisi discovered, it gets refunded over and over!