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In only my third year of Diaconal ministry I'm a bit new to the game of being reflective about my ministry. But I'm going to be so anyway!

On ordination our Bishop appointed me to the parishes in partnership of Drouin and Warragul and to chaplaincy of the local Catholic college. Hilary and I moved (with our two small dogs) into the parish house beside our beautiful new church site in Drouin. Mid fifties and with gammy knees, my role is particularly bridging between youth and their Catholic parishes. What better time to take up such a ministry with World Youth Day in the offing!

We are very much involved in the life of the community, especially the church community, in the region. Marist-Sion College where I spend much of my week is a splendid school. I find it, and more importantly the students and families find it, warm, welcoming and encouraging in the Marist tradition which I know and love. The parishes are comfortable (with the positive and negative dimensions of that) with strong pastoral councils and developed programs in many areas and I also have some involvement in the neighboring parishes as well as ecumenically with the two Ministers Associations and various initiatives flowing from them. At a diocesan level, creation of a dynamic Youth Ministry structure and appointing personnel to further the WYD legacy has been a primary responsibility of mine.

My youth ministry over several years has been focused on World Youth Day in Sydney where I was to be one of seven Chaplains among the five hundred pilgrims from Sale diocese. As it happened Hilary was desperately ill in the week leading up to WYD. Of course I didn't go to Sydney and, to be honest, that was a long way back in my priorities at the time. By the time the Pope was there, Hilary was out of danger and sitting up in bed. Whilst, I do regret missing the experience, I had a salutary lesson in what and who is really important to me. In any case, my job was mostly done in getting our young pilgrims to Sydney. The fruits are already obvious in many ways in our communities and parishes. During the WYD week a teenage boy rang me to ask about becoming a Catholic and I now have two 16 year olds and a young teacher in RCIA formation.



Our own four boys are spread to the four winds – one is drilling in outback WA while the youngest is a Naval officer. I had the rare privilege (for a Catholic clergyman) of presiding at another son's wedding during the year. None of the boys is what we might call "regular" in their faith practice though they would fight you if you suggested they weren't Catholics. I hope I don't get drummed out of the core of deacons but I'm less stressed about that than I would once have been. I burst with pride in each of them. They are all fine citizens of firm integrity and holding good core values.

I have a similar approach to the young people in my pastoral care. One of the joys of the WYD experience is to find young people discovering their Catholic identity but by the same token, I celebrate young people who may never darken the doorstep of the church but find themselves working Vinnies soup vans of an evening or becoming passionate about social

justice or participating meaningfully in spiritual reflection. And on all the “once a year” Catholics who still want something of Catholic values for themselves and their children. Ours is not to be judgmental or condemnatory but to make sure our doors and our arms are wide open to them, simply articulating the Word in our actions and leaving the rest between them and their Creator.

So where does the Reverend Deacon fit into all this? Well he tries to be wherever people are in need of him – liturgically to be sure, but particularly in walking with people as they engage their spirituality, hearing their story with empathy, rolling sleeves up around the fundraising barbeque, joining with them in trying to make sense out of the world around us and helping them to act accordingly.