

**Mass for Msgr. Ragsdale's 75th Birthday
April 6, 2018**

Dear Msgr. Pat, I don't know how to take the scriptures today. We are here to celebrate your 75th year of life on God's good earth. That's 75 years! That's a pretty big number! And the first reading we hear is about the miraculous healing of a man with a *broken down body* 😊. I'm not sure what the Lord is trying to tell us here, brother! Okay, sorry, I couldn't help myself. But in all seriousness, we do give thanks give thanks to God for you today. We give thanks to God for bringing you to this great milestone in your life, and for the gift that you are to the Church. We give thanks to God for your priesthood as well. It has brought the Lord to so many in Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, through the word and all the sacraments, and through your pastoral care of the people the Lord has entrusted to you over the years. As Pope Francis as said: "We are always priests with all our soul and with all our heart. Being an ambassador of Christ ... is a mission that penetrates our entire being" (March 11, 2011).

Every priest is different in their ministry. We know that you have your own style and your own gifts. You've been using them to enrich the Church now for decades. So, even though you have probably experienced almost everything you could have imagined experiencing as a priest, and probably a whole lot more, we know that you are still a priest, loving the people of God. Msgr. Pat, we are enriched by your priesthood whenever you show the compassion and love of Christ. We are enriched by your priesthood when you bring light in the darkness and healing of hurts. My brother, it is a joy

to be here with you and to offer you our congratulations. We need you to continue to be an ambassador of Christ. People must be able to always recognize Jesus in you. So, on this celebration, I ask you to reflect on the life you have lived, accept all those wonderful lessons and all of those challenging lessons, and recommit yourself to missionary discipleship – whatever the future will hold.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, you too are part of this celebration. You are here to celebrate a brother in Christ, and to celebrate the gift of priesthood. I ask you to take a lesson from the Apostles today. After all the amazing things they had experienced in Christ Jesus, in his passion, death, and resurrection. They got to a point of not knowing what to do. They were left to their own choices, so they went about doing the work they knew how to do. They just went about their regular business. This is not surprising. We have to go about our business, too. But the real lesson is that they recognized the Lord when he came. It took them a little while, but they got there. They recognized that it was the Lord. Peter dove after him, and the other Apostles dragged to shore the great abundance that the Lord had given them. My friends, recognize Christ in the priesthood of Msgr. Pat, our brother. I urge you to recognize Christ in your daily experience as you go about the business of life.

Our God has given us this great day to celebrate and to once again share a meal, with him and in him. May we not take the blessing for granted. Happy Birthday, Msgr. Pat! Thank you for all you do and all you are. We pray for you, and we love you. May we be united in prayer and charity, and may we always recognize the Lord, serving him with everything we do and with every breath we take.