

Father Richard A. Reina marks 55th year of happy priesthood



Mary Ann Lauricella and Patrick J. Buechi • June 18, 2025

Father Richard A. Reina celebrated the 55th anniversary of his priesthood at a Mass on June 8 at Christ the King Parish in Snyder, where he has been weekend assistant since his 2015 retirement. Bishop James A. McNulty ordained him on May 23, 1970, at St. Joseph's New Cathedral.

He currently celebrates Mass and administers sacraments throughout the diocese's Amherst Family of Parishes. Close to the Sisters of St. Joseph since attending Mount St. Joseph Elementary School, he also celebrates Mass at their Clarence Residence and Wellness Center.

He recalled serving Mass with the Sisters of St. Joseph and Jesuit priests at Mount St. Joseph's, where the small chapel would fill with Latin prayers and Gregorian chants. "There was something of a mystery about it," he said. "From an early age, I thought there was more to life than what you can see and touch and taste, that there was something hidden in the center of life. As I grew older, I came to believe that mystery is God."



After graduating from Canisius High School and Canisius College, he pursued a master of divinity degree from St. John Vianney Seminary, then in East Aurora, a master's in Christian Spirituality from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, and a master's in social work from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

He remained close to the sacraments and felt a call to the priesthood.

"After college, I thought I'd give it a shot. I'll go to the seminary and see if this is where I should be. Right from the beginning, it just felt good," he explained.

He served five years in the diocesan Vocation Office and 12 years at Christ the King Seminary over two assignments – as director of Formation and then as director of Spiritual Formation. He served as pastor of St. Lawrence Church from 1991-1998, and pastor of St. John the Baptist in Kenmore from 1998-2010.

Among his brother priests and colleagues in Western New York are those he met while working with seminarians preparing for priesthood. "I am proud of these priests, the work they are doing and their dedication to serve," he said.

Father Reina describes priesthood as "a profound privilege" and "a sacred dynamic with Jesus Christ and the Eucharist at the center." He said, "I am very grateful that people have let me into their lives in joyful and in challenging times, to assure them that God is with them."

Looking back at the past 55 years, he said it was working with the people that made his ministry so special.

"Generally speaking, the memories are all so good because I love being with people, so it was a consistent positive experience," he said of his priesthood. "I'd say the highlights would be celebrating the sacraments, whether it be a baptism or funeral. The good memories are when people are touched by the Gospel, touched by the sacraments. You can see a meaningfulness in their lives. That always brings me happiness."

Today, he draws inspiration from Pope Leo XIV's early comments that the Church should always seek peace, charity and a special closeness to those who suffer. Among Father Reina's favorite quotations from the new pope is: "We must seek together to be a Church that builds bridges, dialogue, always open to receive with open arms everyone who needs our charity, our presence, dialogue and love."

Msgr. Dino J. Lorenzetti, who died in 2023 at age 101, was his longtime mentor and friend. Father Reina served with him as a deacon and as assistant at Holy Cross Parish in Buffalo.

"He taught me to treat everybody the same." As head of the Family Life Department, Msgr. Lorenzetti would attend fancy dinners with cardinals and high-ranking Church officials one day. The next, he'd be having a hot dog at a parishioner's house. "He treated everybody the same. That was a real lesson too; the respect of every person no matter where they're coming from or who they are.

"I remember him saying, 'The joy of the priesthood is being with the people.' That wasn't hard for me to learn because I felt like that. I came from the same mold. He used to talk about if you love people, you'll have the happiest priesthood in the world."