

# Hessel: Deacon Hyland Fraser modelled a life of service, charity and justice

Through their ordination, permanent deacons are called to service at the altar, service to the Word of God, and service of charity and justice.

And while the first two comprise the most visible aspects of diaconal ministry, it is the third, ministry of charity and justice, that most strongly identifies the deacon (see *Acts 6: 1-6*). Few have been able to balance this “three-legged stool” better than Deacon Hyland Fraser.

Deacon Hyland was ordained on May 31, 2014 and died on February 5, 2021 (the first Friday of the month), at age 74. His death followed a yearlong struggle with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).



Deacon Hyland was a man of intense prayer. Nearly every homily included an exhortation to the congregation to cultivate their prayer life. Holy Trinity Catholic Church

He leaves behind his wife, Harriet, 12 children, 29 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He is also mourned by the members of Holy Trinity Parish in Spruce Grove/Stony Plain, where he served for the past seven years. He is also remembered fondly by the many children that he and Harriet foster-parented over many years.

Born in Heatherton, N.S., he and Harriet moved to Alberta in 2006, after most of their children had moved to Alberta to find work. While in Nova Scotia, he had a dairy farm, he worked in the insurance field, he owned a building supplies store, and he served in municipal politics for 13 years. Upon his arrival in Alberta, he started a home building company with two of his sons.

He and Harriet directed the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program at Holy Trinity, shepherding dozens of adults to the sacraments and continuing to support them following their sacramental initiation.

He was a man of intense prayer. Nearly every homily included an exhortation to the congregation to cultivate their prayer life. Each year on Divine Mercy Sunday, Deacon Hyland and Harriet would lead the congregation in the Divine Mercy Chaplet: his favourite prayer. Harriet and their children were with him, praying the Chaplet when he died.

Deacon Hyland and Harriet served at the Marian Centre. Each Friday they would meet in prayer with the other volunteers, sort clothes, and serve the clientele with hot coffee, clothes, and, most importantly, a kind word.



Deacon Hyland Fraser baptizes Peyton McNallie, a high school student at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic High School in Spruce Grove. Evergreen Catholic School Division

He had liturgies for the young people at the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre once a month. At the beginning of each liturgy, each person received a hug and a big smile from Deacon Hyland. His constant message to them was: "God loves you. There is nothing you could ever do that would make Him stop loving you."

One Sunday, some of the youth wanted to surprise and thank him. They wrote a song and sang it to him after the liturgy. There were tears running down his face. He was there for them on Christmas. How difficult for a young person to

be incarcerated on Christmas, and so, he was there. At the end of every liturgy, the young people were reminded that he and Harriet had spiritually adopted each one of them and they prayed for them every day.

Deacon Hyland was on the Canadian board of Mary's Meals, an international organization dedicated to feeding hungry children in the poorest parts of the world. He promoted fundraising for Mary's Meals in the local schools. He was the spiritual adviser for the Edmonton Zone of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He regularly assisted at masses at local nursing homes.

He assisted Archbishop Richard Smith in his outreach to the various parishes, acting as chauffeur and master of ceremonies. On the day Deacon Hyland died, Archbishop Smith visited him, gave him the Sacrament of the Sick, and imparted the Apostolic Blessing.

Deacon Hyland and Harriet were a model of a couple in ministry. Prior to Deacon Hyland's ordination, Harriet said: "We have been working as a couple for 45 years; nothing will change. We are happy to serve the Lord together."



Deacon Hyland Fraser speaks to students at St. John Paul II Catholic School about Mary's Meals. Evergreen Catholic School Division

There is no doubt that the work of "Team Fraser" will continue to bear fruit long into the future. Yet, we will miss his leadership, his guidance, and his passion for serving the people of God.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying: 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them.'" (*Revelation 14: 13*).

The funeral mass will be held on Feb. 12 at 1 p.m. with Archbishop Smith as the

celebrant. The mass will be livestreamed.

*-Deacon Patrick Hessel was ordained in 2007 and has served at Holy Trinity Catholic Church ever since*