

When I was asked to speak about Fr Gerry this week-end I wondered what I could say to do him justice, I contacted Fr Gobezeayehu and asked him if he had a memory of Fr Gerry he would like to share with us . This is his reply which I will read to you now because I think it describes Father to a tee.

*I am deeply grateful for the gift of Fr. Gerry. I stayed and worked with him for six years and I thank the Lord for having such a wonderful person in my life. He has always been a brother, a mentor, and extremely kind and generous person. I want to thank him for the wonderful support he has given me during those years. He always welcomed me in his house, he listened to my stories from Ethiopia, he encouraged me, shared and supported all the plans and ambition I had in my studies, he accepted me as friend and brother regardless of our difference in culture, family background, and nationality.*

*Fr. Gerry's welcoming and charming personality have always been mentioned in the feedback I got from his parishioners, especially from those who have made Ireland their second home. Africans, Indians, the Pilipino community and other nationalities have always felt it easy to talk to Fr. Gerry. He took his time to listen to them, their stories, their challenges in Ireland, their dreams, their disappointments and celebrations. He took part in every joyful and sad situations of their journey and accompanied them as a brother and a priest.*

*Fr. Gerry, you are truly a missionary priest to the strangers, the poor, the weak and those who made Ireland their home. You always inspired me with your worldview, your inclusiveness, your understandings of other cultures, your charming personality, and your humility I will remember and treasure for the rest of my life.*

*You are not an angel, you are a person who feels pain and joy, who gets tired, who struggles to fight imperfection. You helped many to deal with their pain and celebrate their joy and prayed for them when they struggle against their imperfections. When you prayed people prayed with you. You baptized their kids, you celebrated mass everyday for them, you anointed them with Holy Oil and you buried their dead. This responsibility was special because you are an instrument to God's work on earth.*

*I know that many people in the parish especially the elderly and the sick will miss you very much. You were extremely very kind and available to these people who need our attention most. I know that they will all come*

*to appreciate you even more when the parish tries to fill the void that you leave behind. Children in the Loreto School have benefited a lot from your spiritual guidance. You have a talent to talk to kids easily and grab their attention. The years you have worked in both parishes have been marked by unsurpassed efficiency and excellence. You have been an inspiration to all of us.*

*The only issue you and I have is that you promised to teach me an Irish dance and it took you six years but it did not happen. You owe me that. Gerry.*

*Gerry, my good friend, on the occasion of your retirement, I want to thank you for your many years of great service to the people of God in Dolphins Barn and Rialto Parishes. I take this opportunity to congratulate you on a job well done and my very best wishes for a happy retirement.*

*You are at retirement but it does not mean you are old. Once, if you remember, we went to a cinema together the lady gave us two tickets, one for young man (me) and one for an elderly. You did not like that and you said to the lady “why did you give a senior citizen ticket and how did you know?” And the lady replied to you saying: “I see a wisdom in your eyes so I don’t have to ask your ID”.*

*Dear wise man and a friend, may the good Lord be with you and accompany you for the rest of your happy your happy retirement.*

*With love,*

*Abba Gobezayehu.*

Thank you Father Gerry.