

On the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of St. Martin de Porres Parish, Orlando West.

Congratulations to the people of St. Martin de Porres Parish on the occasion of your seventy-fifth anniversary!

A quarter century has passed since Bishop Daniel Verstraete OMI spoke at your Golden Jubilee Mass. Now almost 97 years old, he was the parish priest who oversaw the building of the original church and parish hall. The priests have come and gone – I think Father Norbert is your sixteenth pastor – but the parish community remains. It is the people who make up the parish, and it is their hopes and struggles, pains and joys which mark the passing years and which form the real history of the place.

Father Kevin McElhatton SJ loved to quote 1 Peter 2:5 which says: “you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house...” The people of Orlando West are those living stones, and their history mirrors the history of our country. Settled at a time African people were being forced out of town; coming of age as the youth rose up against the apartheid regime; and now, at 75, looking more established and yet more vibey than ever; Orlando West has proven to be brave and faithful. At the same time, however, social problems are never far away, and much work is still needed before the people of St. Martin’s can truly say that past injustices have been rectified. May the Lord continue to bless us all as we build a better future, with the “living stones” of the past 75 years as our strong foundation.

On behalf of all the Jesuits working in South Africa, I send my best wishes, love and prayers to you all.

(Rev.) Thomas Plastow, S.J.

Father Provincial’s delegate for South Africa