

Deep Impressions

Our faith is imprinted, as this priest shares:

When I started serving Mass at the age of nine he was there. When I was ordained a deacon at the age of 25 he was there. When I celebrated my first Mass as a priest he was there. In fact, for as long as I can remember, Mr Hanna was a faithful, ever-supportive member of the parish in which I grew up.

I remember him as a good man, the salt of the earth, a man who loved God, was deeply committed to his family and his parish community. He was a man of prayer. I would see him praying before Mass, then praying after Mass. He was one of those solid blokes who gave generously to anyone who needed help. It was Mr Hanna who recruited me as a reader when I was a teenager and was kind to me on my first attempt when I messed up the responsorial psalm. Each memory is brief in itself. But they accumulate to make Mr Hanna a powerful male role model in my growing up years as a Catholic.

In the days before our new parish church was built there was a symbol of Mr Hanna's lifetime of faithfulness. It was the imprint of his hands in the fifth pew. All those years of weekday Masses, Sunday Masses and special celebrations had left their mark - literally! You knew it was his imprint because Mr Hanna had lost a thumb in an industrial accident and the imprint of his left hand bore the mark. The

hand-print symbolized a deeper impression: God's word imprinted on his heart.

Mr Hanna passed away some years ago. But he is still visibly part of my life. You see, today I have the privilege of being parish priest to some of his grandchildren. Like their grandfather, these young people exude down-to-earth goodness, generosity and fidelity. Families like this really bring 'the Church' alive for me. (VRC). •



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