



Brotherhood of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 5 March, 2010

For immediate release

Memorial service will recognise a man of courage and faith

Peter Ashley Thomson – 19.3.1936 to 16.1.2010

A memorial service will be held at St Peters Anglican Cathedral in Adelaide on Saturday, 6 March at 1pm to mark the outstanding achievements of former Brotherhood of St Laurence Chaplain, Father Peter Thomson.

Father Jeff O'Hare, General Manager of Chaplaincy and Diocesan Partnerships of the Brotherhood, will conduct the service, with former West Australian Premier, Geoff Gallop and The Master of St Mark's college speaking.

As Chaplain of St Mark's College of the University of Adelaide from 1983-90, Father Thomson enjoyed some of the happiest years of his life in Adelaide. His wife Helen was chair of the Elizabethan Trust during that time.

Peter was Chaplain, assistant and honorary, to the Brotherhood from 2001–2008 and in this time he provided a wonderful presence, giving inspiration to all he met.

He was a long time friend and mentor to Prime Minister Tony Blair; in fact the headline of *The Times* newspaper in London on the day of the general election in 1997 featured a large front page photo of Peter, and the line: 'The man who will make Tony Blair Prime Minister'.

Peter had some wonderful stories about those days. He was also a mentor to former Premier of WA, Geoff Gallop and he enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of many renowned theologians and political leaders.

'He was truly a man without boundaries in the best sense of the word,' Brotherhood chaplain, Father Jeff O'Hare said.

'I had the privilege to have known him as a young student at Timbertop, where his charismatic personality convinced me that priestly ministry was my vocation.

'He loved to throw people in at 'the deep end', and as a 14 year old would often find myself taking chapel services for staff and students at a moment's notice, and once in the presence of the Archbishop of Melbourne, as Peter thought this might be good experience for me.

'Tables turned, and my headmaster/Chaplain became my associate as I came to the Brotherhood in 2006, 30 years later. We got up to an awful lot of mischief, and some good too. His spirit never changed, and his humility and love of God was eternally refreshing.

'Peter was certainly one who could bring the Gospel to life in a real way, without all the obscurity or religious politic that accompanied it at times. He reminded me often to focus on what was really important, and whilst he could rub shoulders with any one, he was always the first to withdraw from anything that even reeked of pretention. He had a great love for the Brotherhood and its diversity, and rejoiced in the many personalities and passionate engagement of the staff as he saw each unfold in our daily work,' Father Jeff O'Hare said.

Father Peter Thomson died peacefully on the evening of the 16th of January. He was in respite care in Mansfield, and his wife Helen and son Damian were at his side.

Senior staff from the Brotherhood of St Laurence will attend the memorial service to pay their respects to their former colleague and his family.

WHAT: Memorial service for former Brotherhood of St Laurence Chaplain, Father Peter Thomson

WHEN: Saturday, 6 March at 1pm

WHERE: St Peters Anglican Cathedral in Adelaide