

Episcopal Ordination

15 February 2003

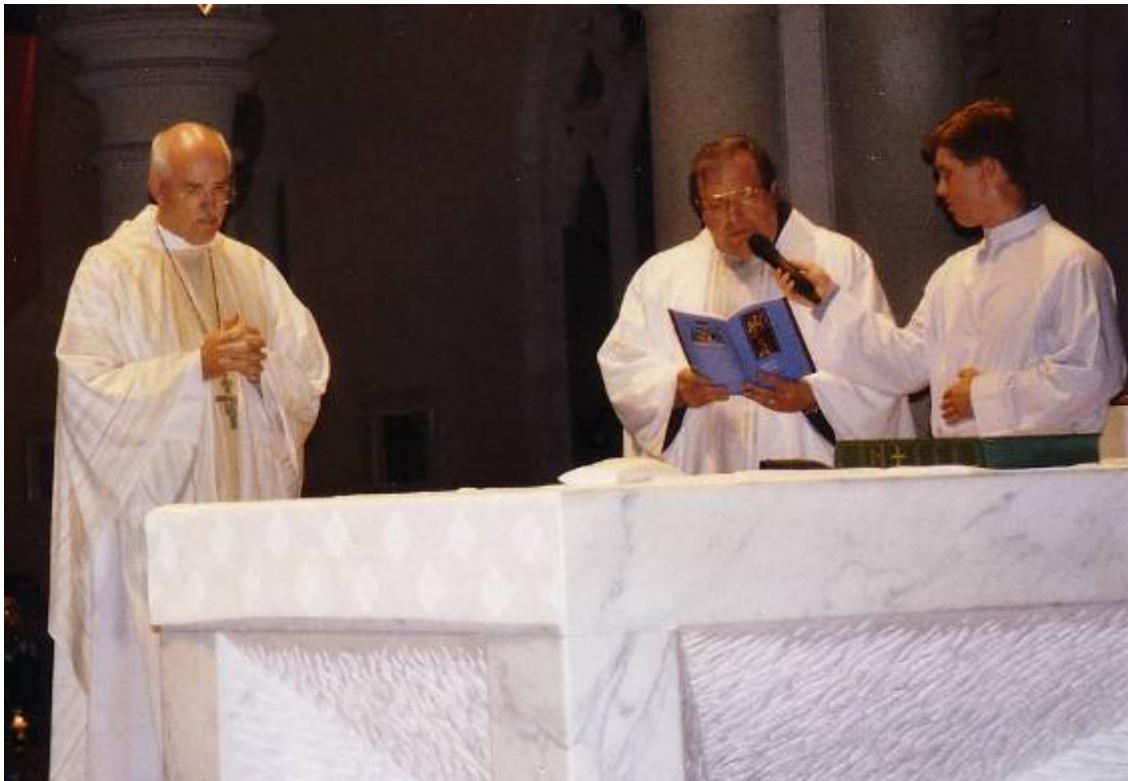


Bishop Joseph Oudeman OFM Cap

- carrying the Crozier of Bishop Torreggiani

The Ordination 11 February 2003

In the presence of about 30 Bishops and a congregation overflowing the doors of St Stephen's Cathedral in Brisbane, Br Julian Messina OFM Cap Provincial Minister of the Capuchins in Australia presented for ordination to the episcopate his confrere Br Joseph Oudeman OFM Cap to the archbishop of Brisbane, John Bathersby, at the beginning of the Mass of Ordination.



Br Julian presents Br Joseph to the Archbishop of Brisbane for episcopal ordination

Family and friends travelled from as far as the Netherlands and many ethnic communities were represented. They were joined by a large group of parishioners from Wynnum, where Bishop Oudeman was an assistant priest until his appointment. He was well known among the Dutch and ethnic communities in Brisbane archdiocese because until recently he was the archdiocese's multicultural dean.

In his homily, Brisbane Archbishop John Bathersby, said the ordination of Bishop Oudeman reflected the multicultural richness of the Australian Church. In the papal bull which was presented during the ceremony, Pope John Paul wrote: *'In presenting you, esteemed son, as auxiliary to the well-loved See of Brisbane and its hard-working pastor, I beseech the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the intercession of St Francis, your order's seraphic father, that you may fulfil well the office entrusted to you, exercising especially patient and gracious charity, the outstanding virtue of Christ's apostles'*.

Br Joseph was born in the medieval town of Breda, the Netherlands, on March 2, 1942. He was the eldest son of five children of Johannes and Johanna Oudeman. The family migrated to Australia in 1956.

He completed his education at St Patrick's College, Ballarat and then entered the Capuchin seminary in Plumpton, Sydney in 1957. He was ordained a priest by Bishop Patrick Lyons of Sale, in the family's parish of St Joseph's, Iona in Victoria, on June 29, 1966. Joseph then went for two years of postgraduate studies at the Gregorian University in Rome.

In 1969 he started teaching at the Catholic Theological Union at Hunter's Hill, Sydney, and also became involved in the formation program of the Order in Australia. From 1987-96 he was Provincial Minister of the Capuchins in Australia.

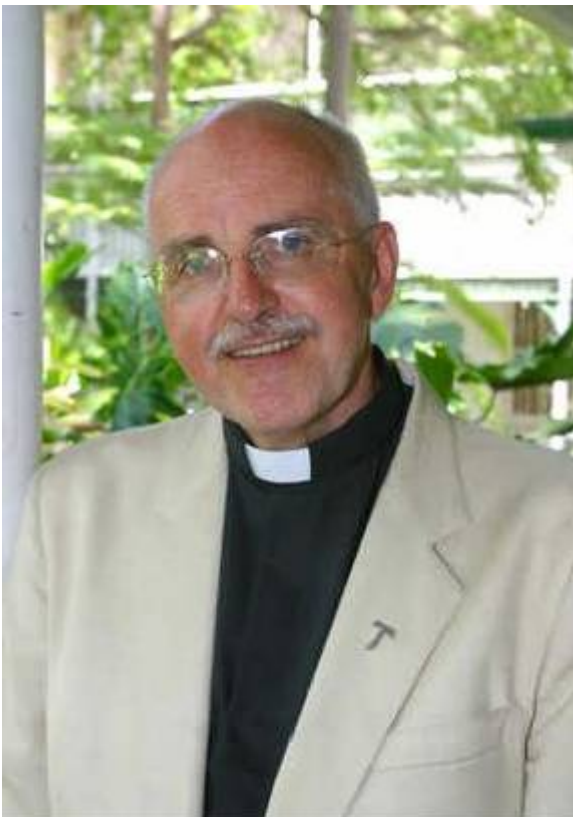
In 1996 Joseph asked to be allowed to move north to Brisbane to be closer to his dying mother. In 1997 he was appointed assistant pastor at Guardian Angel's Parish, Wynnum, as well as chaplain to the elderly Dutch migrants in Brisbane archdiocese and became dean of ethnic chaplains for the archdiocese of Brisbane

Inspired by a bike-riding friar

Catholics of Brisbane can be truly grateful to a rather corpulent friar riding a bicycle through the sleet and rain to visit the gypsies outside a small Dutch village many years ago because that Capuchin Friar caught the eye and the imagination of a 10 year-old boy, and started an amazing journey that has led that boy, now aged 60, to become Brisbane's new auxiliary bishop.

Bishop Joseph Oudeman, recalls looking out the window of his house and seeing the big friar, braving the elements on his cycle. "I saw him going along in a brown habit, sandals and big beard flowing against the wind," Bishop Oudeman says, recalling the wonder he felt as a child.

"Dad explained he was a Capuchin Friar and that he was off to the gypsies' camp." Young Joseph was intrigued and, soon after, offered himself as an altar server for the Capuchins. That is how he got to know the men and became interested in the life they lived.



"When we came to Australia I was almost 14 years old and I wanted to be, not just a priest, but a Capuchin, because it's what I had grown up with," he said. "I'll never forget that friar on his bike, going off to help the gypsies. "And you must remember, the gypsies are the most rejected people in the world today going from country to country looking for a home. "That's why I feel so much for the refugees in Australia today - who are turned back in a most un-Christian way." The friar on the pushbike is just one character in the story of Bishop Oudeman's journey to priesthood. "It's not just one thing (that leads one to become a priest)," he said. "I think it's a drawing, not so much a calling. God draws you through different experiences in life. "I have to go back to my parents (both deceased), who never mentioned the idea of priesthood but their whole example of faith and prayer in life gives the idea there's more to life than going to school or work.

"My mother told me how I came home one day with a bird with a broken wing. I wanted to look after it and later I was heartbroken when the bird died." Bishop Oudeman's mother mentioned this story to him as an early indication of his sense of compassion. "But it's a drawing -you have other experiences in life," he said. "Basically it's your love for people and feeling for people, wanting to help them, wanting to be there for them, when they get hurt." This is all part of the relationships - the

connecting – that Bishop Oudeman says is so important to him as a person and so much a part of what makes him happy.

He says he is " basically a happy man", and it is little wonder why, as he talks of how easily he finds relationships, or connection with God, others and creation..

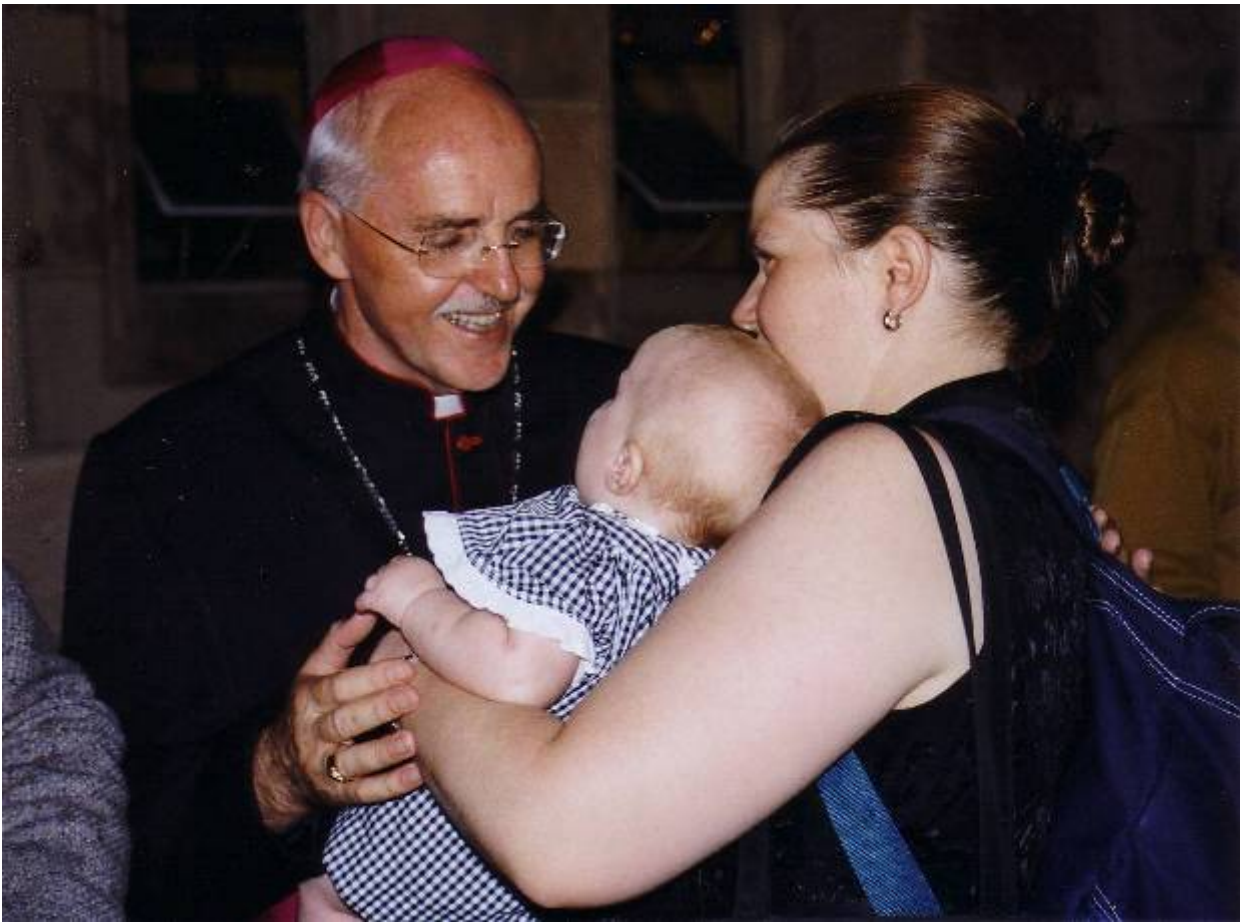


"I have felt closest to God when I have experienced being loved. That happens sometimes in prayer, and it happens in friendship, and it happens when people tell you how much they appreciate you.

"These are all gifts – gifts of love."

"And another time when it happens is when you are surrounded by beautiful things in creation. So you feel loved all the time because you're surrounded by God's love and beauty."

When Bishop Oudeman talks about what makes him happy and what matters to him, these are the things he talks about – God and relationships and connecting. He said he comes from a very loving family and he approaches life from a family perspective – from a perspective of relationships. More than anything else, it's relationships that make us who we are, and give us a sense of where we belong and a sense of fulfilment.



"What matters to me most is that people regain that sense of belonging in relationships.

"Unless we learn to relate to people – most importantly, the people we live with and work with – in a caring, human way, unless we do that, we're just going to go from gimmick to gimmick, looking for some sort of meaning in life.

"The emphasis today is not on personal relationships. It's away from that, on money or career or whatever. So you lose the whole sense of community. It's everyone for themselves. "There is nothing more fulfilling than being with someone and having a good time, good conversation – time to appreciate who we are and what we have."

Bishop Oudemans said the media tended to "worry" people and create angst. "We become a bit more distrustful. And this is not making us happy people. We begin to protect what we have and worry about all sorts of insecurities."

He said that, coming from a Franciscan background in spirituality, his focus was about fraternity. "If we're going to make a success of life, we're going to have to regard each other as family – brothers and sisters in one God. "We've got to really focus on that and see how it's going to work – build bridges, rather than lock ourselves up. Rather than becoming afraid, suspicious or judgmental, we need to open up." Bishop Oudemans said he was most happy when he connected with God.

"When I talk about relationships, I'm talking in the first place about God. Religion is a relationship with God." There were moments of "connecting" in life every day." He said. My walk along the river this morning (for example) It was magnificent.

"You have the sense of being part of a wonderful Creation. There were people walking, running, rowing along the river, nature's coming alive, the sun's rising, the birds are out. "You know you're part of it. You're connecting. That fills the empty spaces."

For Bishop Oudemans, every day is full of opportunities. "You've got to make the best of them. If you give yourself to a situation, to people, to a project, you will receive ever more than what you put in."

"Happiness is not in taking of things, it's in the giving away."

Bishop Oudeman lives by a simple philosophy: "Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is mystery. Today is the gift that's why it's called the present". "I can honestly say I live by that philosophy."

Part of the history of this man, born in the town of Breda in Holland to Johannes and Johanna Oudeman (both deceased), the eldest of five children, is that he yearned to be part of the Capuchins' work in Australia. The bishops of Australia had asked the friars to care for the spiritual needs of post-war migrants in the capital cities Italians, Polish, Maltese, Spanish, Dutch and several other nationalities.

"I desired to be part of that and here I am," Bishop Oudeman said. "Dutch born but an Aussie - with post-war migrant and refugee experience. I'm bringing this to my ministry today."

He has been a teacher, director of students, novice master, provincial minister of the Capuchins in Australia from 1987-96; and since then, assistant pastor at Guardian Angels' Parish in Wynnum, chaplain to the elderly Dutch migrants in Brisbane archdiocese and dean of ethnic chaplains and their communities in the archdiocese.

He said that, after initial apprehension on hearing the news in December of being chosen, he now had "a deep peace that God wants me to continue my priestly ministry in this very special way".



The Bishop's Coat of Arms

Bishop Joseph Oudeman's coat of arms follows the normal convention of the bishop's ecclesiastical hat (galero) and six tassels (fiocchi) in green. Three knots have been added to the cord on either side recalling the cincture of the Franciscan habit.

The motto "Pax et Bonum" is traditionally a Franciscan greeting offered at the beginning of a personal encounter. It invokes the peace of spirit that will enable the person to discover the presence and the goodness of God in their lives.

Above the shield stands the wooden T-shaped (Tau) cross. St Francis of Assisi, heeding the message of personal conversion from Pope Innocent III at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, adopted this cross both personally and as a symbol for his

fledgling order.

The upper half of the shield (escutcheon) depicts the entwined arms of our Lord and St Francis (habit), between which are placed the stars (rowells) of the Southern Cross on a blue field. This signifies Bishop Joseph's life, for the past 40 years, as a friar of the Capuchin Province of the Assumption within Australia.

The lower half (left) of the shield depicts a shepherd's horn similar to the crest of his mother's home town of Hoorn in the Netherlands. The use of the horn here symbolises the heralding of the Gospel and expresses the joyful song of St Francis: "I am the herald of the Great King!" The orange field identifies both the national colour of the Netherlands and the festive nature of proclaiming the Good News.

The lower half (right) of the shield depicts the crossing of the seas, from shore to shore, as in the Gospel stories. It also recognises the history of Dutch seafarers, the period of colonisation of

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Bishop Oudeman OFM Cap

Australia, the post-war flow of countless migrants and more recently of the plight of the refugee, in search of welcome and a home. The boat bears the symbol of the Dutch tulip on its sail, and a cross supports the mast. The sea and sky of night are dark blue.

Crozier with special Significance

The crozier used by Bishop Joseph Ouderman on the night of his episcopal ordination had special significance not only for him as a Capuchin, but also for a small group of Ursuline Sisters working in Brisbane archdiocese. The crozier was the same one used by Bishop Elzear Torreggiani a Capuchin who was Bishop of Armidale NSW from 1879-1904.

Bishop Torreggiani was responsible for the Ursuline Sisters coming to Australia, because while he was still a priest, he met a group of Ursuline Sisters in London in 1877 who were living in exile from Germany. After he became bishop he was searching for religious to teach in schools in Armidale diocese and he remembered his meeting with the sisters and invited them to come and work in his diocese. They accepted the challenge, and 12 Ursulines arrived in Armidale in 1882.

"That's our interest in the crozier," said Ursuline Sister Kari Hatherell, who is pastoral associate at St Stephen's Cathedral. "He was the bishop who invited us to Australia, otherwise we might never have come." Sr Hatherell, and other Ursulines, director of the archdiocese's Office for Lay Pastoral Ministry, Sr Anne Surtees; Sr Gay Williams, who works in the office of Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations; and Sr Maree Byron, who is pastoral associate in Stella Maris Parish, Maroochydore, attended Bishop Ouderman's ordination and had a chance to hold the crozier.

The crozier, normally kept in the archives of Armidale diocese, was being restored by the Capuchins for the 100th anniversary of Bishop Torreggiani's death next year. The friars are planning a conference in Armidale to mark this celebration.



Historic Link: Ursuline Sisters (from left) Kari Hatherell, Anne Surtees, Maree Byron and Gay Williams, with the Bishop Torreggiani's crozier that has special significance to them.

Gratitude & Thanksgiving

In reviewing a person's life you look for that one moment that stands out above all the rest. It is often a moment of sacrifice and very often touched by divine irony that is not always recognisable at the time.

On the 11th of February 2003 our brother Joseph Oudemans knelt in the sanctuary of St Stephen's Cathedral Brisbane while up to thirty bishops Archbishops and at least one Cardinal silently laid their hands on him and consecrated him a bishop.

Because he had been Dean of Ethnic Communities for the Archdiocese many people came in national costume. There was a horde of priests on either side of the altar, the music was excellent and the cathedral was packed. Many people at the back were really only able to see what was going on by looking at huge TV Screens set up down the Cathedral. Relatives and friends came from New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Holland. Some of the laity said they were deeply touched by the power of the ceremony and it seemed that to them the liturgy of Ordination is always far above all other liturgical celebrations of the Church.

Was this then the moment to choose that stands out above all the rest? However, perhaps the moment that Mother Teresa became a saint was when, completely unknown and having left her previous convent, she stooped to help a dying person in the streets of Calcutta. In that moment she could have died and would never have become the famous person she later became. We know now that she had a great crisis of faith a real dark night of the soul. Was this not the real moment of greatness on which all the rest were built.

In 1968, Joseph was a young priest who had just finished his studies in Rome and was preparing to continue his studies in Holland or Belgium for a PhD, when his superiors in Australia asked him to change his plans and come home. They wanted him to run the Postulancy program the following year. Was this the moment of greatness? The Church was boiling with the ramifications of Vatican II. There was perhaps nothing more exciting than being at the cutting edge of where the Church was going at that time, but Joseph came home.

In 1969 eleven men entered the Postulancy Programme at Plumpton. They were certainly not an easy group to deal with. They ranged from 18 to 50 years old. The Latin breviary had just been replaced by a interim "blue" translation in English. At one time the Postulants refused to go to Mass because the Crucifix had been taken off the altar. Little things were a great concern and everything seemed to be changing.

In the years of formation that followed, it was Joseph as Postulant Master and Guardian at Plumpton and teacher at Toongabbie and then Hunter's Hill, who steered us through the shoals and reefs of post-Vatican II changes. Of course he was not alone, but he was the one mainly responsible for the post novitiate programme. We were extremely fortunate also to have had the best that the Marist Fathers had to offer – men who were truly gifted teachers.

So if we are looking for moment to choose that says something special about this man Joseph would we choose his Episcopal Ordination or would we choose the moment when he let go of the opportunity of further serious study and the possibilities that would have opened up to him. Having been a postulant of 1969 my gratitude and thanks giving is for when he came home from Rome.

John Cooper