

Charles Brandt's 25th Anniversary Celebration in Campbell River

By JOAN BROWN

ON DECEMBER 15, the parish family of St. Patrick's in Campbell River came together in a blissful celebration to honour the 25th anniversary of Father Charles Brandt's ordination to the priesthood.

It was Gaudete Sunday, and the theme of rejoicing echoed through the mass itself and into the luncheon afterwards as the parish paid tribute to the reticent hermit priest who may be the best-known Catholic at the north end of Vancouver Island because of his outspoken support for environmental issues.

Mass was concelebrated by Father Brandt together with St. Patrick's pastor, Father Gary Hartmann and associate priest, Father Wes Ambeau.

THE GOSPEL FOR the day was most appropriate for Father Brandt as a member of the Hermitage of St. John the Baptist. In his homily, Father Gary spoke of John's call for conversion to a life attentive to the poor, where we should not take more than our share and should be content with our circumstances.

"Love leads us to a new way of life, not only in heaven, but here on earth," he said, referring to Father Charles. "In him we see a living example of how the Spirit works and guides our lives if we listen to

a parish priest on Sunday and a hermit during the week.

Describing Father Charles as "an extraordinary person who wants to restore man's contemplative spirit," Roberts saw no contradiction in his being a priest and a paper conservator. "We are happy to share this day with you."



ESTEEMED — Father Charles Brandt with Brent Lister at the presentation in Burnaby of the prestigious HAIG-BROWN CONSERVATION TROPHY, one of a number of awards recently bestowed on the hermit priest. Conservationists Ann and Roderick Haig-Brown were donors of the original land for St. Patrick's Parish in Campbell River.

Oyster River, much of which was covered in the last issue of the ICN.

He went on to note with satisfaction the Church's evolving attitude to environmental issues. Recalling that a request he made for funding to attend an environmental conference in Saskatchewan in 1966

was turned down as it was "not a priority", he said that a similar recent request was approved by the diocese. He attended a conference in Seattle led by Thomas Berry who describes ours as a "critical time" in which we are turning down our life systems.

THE PRIEST DESCRIBED

how he presented the ideas of Thomas Berry to a Synod meeting on the environment, many of which were adopted and written into the Synod decision paper.

In concluding his remarks, Father Charles listed his four priorities for us as Christians today. "Firstly, we must be attentive to science and realize that all is interconnected. Then we must really study the spirituality of our native people. They are the most spiritually sensitive people the world has ever known.

"We must practice Christian meditation to get beyond our senses and come to a deeper awareness of Christ." And lastly, he said we must "follow our bliss" and do that in life which brings us the most joy.

Following his address, Father cut a beautiful cake provided by Isolde Angele and the celebration was concluded with a joyful lunch during which Doug Flynn seemed to sum up everyone's feelings when he said of Father Charles, "He's an asset to our parish".

it. It is an honour to have a man like him among us."

He also remembered a day before **Father Charles** was ordained when **Charles** tried to convince him to become a hermit. **Father Gary** told him, "I'm not quite ready, but you go ahead!"

AFTER MASS TWO hundred parishioners packed the church hall for a luncheon as the tributes continued. Long time parishioner **Frank Roberts** noted that while many people may think of **Father Brandt** as the priest who celebrates mass at St. Patrick's once a month, his service to this parish goes much deeper — right back to his ordination.

Roberts recalled that **Father Charles** used to help **Father Ray Cunningham** and enjoyed going to the missions because of the opportunities for steelhead fishing along the way. He also served as a pro-tem pastor after **Father Ray**, being

PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN Ed Hrechuk presented **Father Charles** with a framed quote from theologian **Thomas Berry**. Inscribed by calligrapher **Joan Jamieson** it reads, "The human community and the natural world will go into the future as a single sacred community or we will both perish in the desert".

In his response to the presentation, **Father Charles** outlined his own spiritual history that brought him to his hermitage on the

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