

“It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ...Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

Progress in Christian discipleship, as discussed by Paul in his letter to the Philippians, always has as its goal what he calls “perfect maturity,” fully growing into the image of Christ and conforming our lives completely to his so that we can share fully in his new life. This growth means constantly moving forward, putting our old life behind us and living more and more the life of Christ.

We think a lot about moving forward this time of year as many of the young people of our community celebrate graduation. Whether they are moving forward from eighth grade to high school, from high school to college, trade school, or the work force, or from college to graduate studies and careers, many of our family and friends are taking the next big step forward in their lives. Let us keep them in prayer that they may also take the next big step in their growth in Christian discipleship. Whatever path forward their lives take, may they take their faith with them, and may it grow and deepen so that they can give ever-greater witness to Christ in whatever they do.

I ask you to pray in a special way for our native son, David Whiteford, as he takes the next big step forward in his life, from the transitional diaconate to the priesthood. For the past four years he has been undertaking intense graduate studies and formation toward this step, a period of intense personal and spiritual growth. This process was necessary to prepare him to be conformed to Christ in a completely unique way through the sacrament of Holy Orders. Through this sacrament, he will be given Christ’s power to turn bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, to forgive sins, to anoint the sick, and to shepherd parishes. We pray for David as he takes this step forward that God may bless him with all of the graces he needs to be the best of shepherds.

Congratulations to all of our graduates here at St. Boniface and to David as he is ordained. You are taking a big step forward in your life. Take that step with Christ, and never stop growing in Christian discipleship toward perfect maturity.