

Thank you, Matthew, for asking me to write a few words about Fr. Ray and the recordings. I really am happy with what you are doing for our friend Fr. Ray and for all of us.

This is my first blog article or whatever you call it so hopefully it is ok! :)

I first heard of Fr. Raymond E. Brown through his wonderful conference cassette recordings on the Gospel of John. A Dominican friend loaned me a set of the recordings and it blew me away! I had never heard Scripture explained in such a clear and understandable way and the recordings were full of insights covering the major themes of John. It was a real eye-opener for me. From then on I had the desire one day to record the great man and several years later my prayer was answered when I recorded Fr. Ray in London – January 1998. It was during these few days that I got to know him better and he kindly allowed me to make the recordings available to the conference and eventually to the wider public. I found him to be just as he was when he taught: patient, kind, pastoral, wonderfully well- balanced, and a very loving person who was driven and empowered by love to make the Scriptures come alive for everyone who listened to him.

For some months we communicated through fax and letter and Fr. Ray kindly asked me to record him for his planned visit to the UK in the year 2000, but as we know, sadly, this was not meant to be. Just days before he died, Fr. Ray faxed me, giving me permission to make his recordings available to the wider public. Fr. Ray went to be with his Lord on August 8th 1998. Later that year I contacted Fr. Ron Witherup of the Sulpicians, asking if it was okay to continue to offer Fr. Ray's recordings to the general public.

Fr. Ron requested a copy of all the communications I had had with Fr. Ray. The Society of St. Sulpice agreed that from our communications, Fr. Ray had wished to carry on with me offering his recordings. I was thus given permission to look for any other recordings that were made with a view to making them available to the general public. So this is what I have been doing ever since! There are now 18 different conference recordings available on my site www.welcomerecordings.com

There are some wonderful stories behind most of these recordings and how I managed to rescue many of them whether by digitally enhancing very poor original recordings, or saving the only copies available, such as the Gospel of John lectures, just days before the Upholland Institute, a seminary here in the UK where the talks were given, closed their doors forever!

It is very rare to meet a man such as Fr. Ray who showed such great love and understanding concerning both his work and to those who had the privilege of listening to him. Therefore, I am forever grateful Fr. Ray passed on the baton to me, as Fr. Jack McCardle remarked. It is beyond words the effect that these recordings have had and continue to have on all who listen.

I wasn't sure if I was going to mention this ...but well, why not! During the conference in London, in the middle of a talk, the power went off. I was, let us say, somewhat traumatised! Ray quickly realized the situation and knowing that he could have carried on without a mic, announced there would be a half-hour break. During that time, I quickly got out my battery-powered tape deck. Fr. Ray asked me why I brought the backup deck when normally power cuts don't tend to happen too often. I explained that I had a feeling something might happen like this. Just before part 2 of the talk continued Fr. Ray asked me not to record for a second and then proceeded to tell everyone how I had brought the battery deck just in case. He said it reminded him of the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and how the wise ones made sure they had enough oil in their lamps!

He knew I needed that encouragement on many levels, actually. That was the sort of person he was.

Whoa! I wasn't going to say this either, but again, here goes During that somewhat stressed half-hour of darkness I realised I needed help as my batteries were looking a bit flat with the deck refusing to budge!! OK, it gets worse! I went to a resident priest asking him if he had some spare batteries which he did. I then asked

him if he would hear my confession which he did. And I lie not , as soon as we walked out of his room together all the lights came on! We both looked at each other with open mouths! So, in the end, I didn't need the backup deck. It was only when I got home, in fact, that the deck had developed an internal mechanical problem – maybe with all the movements- and it wouldn't have worked in any way shape or form even with full powered batteries. Talk about been pulled out of it!!

I thank the Lord for his mercies and for putting me on the path with Fr. Ray and for this continuous walk with him as all of us together journey on tasting the Promised Land, getting glimpses here and there, knowing that Fr. Ray's work continues to help us on our own incredible journey.

Love to everyone,

Paul Soffe