**In Memory of my mentor & my friend**

**Fr Ernie Smith**

“The person that I am with at this moment is the most important person in my life.”

As I returned to my normal school life at the age of 14, after having spent the holidays on a Young Christian Students (YCS) camp, this quote & its significance was most impressed on me by Fr Ernie Smith.

I vividly remember walking down the school corridor and looking into the faces and the eyes of other students rather than just seeing them as a crowd.

This personal mantra has remained as an inspiration for me to be my best self

since that time of first meeting the larger than life, Fr Ernie Smith.

The other incredibly indelible impression that I also walked with was that Ernie believed in me and what I was capable of.

I worked briefly with Fr Ernie as a youth worker with YCS. I then went to University to complete a Bachelor of Social Work. I had only just graduated when Fr Ernie was appointed Parish priest of West St Kilda. He offered me my very first job.

Within my first week, we walked around the streets. There was absolutely no blueprint to what we were going to do. So very typical of Ernie was his attitude of “let’s give it a go!” so we simply opened the door with a spirit of hospitality & acceptance we became involved in the life of the people and the local community.

I still marvel today about what Sacred Heart Mission has become. What fills me with a sense of pride is that the spirit of the place has not changed since those very first days of simply opening the door and sitting around the table.

My mentor, my friend Ernie made a difference - a huge difference to so many people’s lives; myself included.

I loved Ernie & he lives on in my heart and I know for a fact that he was - is loved by so many others so he lives on and burns bright in their hearts as just like me, they were blessed by knowing him

*There is an energy in us which makes things happen*

*when the paths of other persons touch ours*

*and we have to be there and let it happen.*

*When the time of our particular sunset comes*

*Our thing, our accomplishment won’t really matter*

*a great deal.*

*But the clarity and care with which we have loved others*

*will speak with vitality of the great gift of life*

*We have been for each other*

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