

# COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the  
Congregation of the Mission



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## Editorial

This edition of Colloque is running ‘behind itself’; it is the fervent hope of the editor (a man not renowned for running anywhere) that it will soon have the grace to catch up.

Two of the texts are based in the psychological theories and structures of L M Rulla, late of the Gregorian University in Rome. Linus Umorem examines the application of some of Rulla’s theories to initial formation, while Myles Rearden looks at the issue of priesthood in the light of Rulla’s insights.

In a very changing Europe (and, indeed, Ireland) we are glad to have the insights and experience of Franz Kangler as he looks at issues for Vincentians engaging with Islam.

Tom Davitt gives something of a taste of his involvement with mission in Iceland; a very different world altogether.

On the occasion of the celebration of the College Feast Day, 1st November, the new Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, presided at Mass in the College. His comments on the College and its history are thoughtful and provocative.

There is also a brief text from an honorary member of the Irish Province; Luis Huerga of Salamanca was a member of the community in St Paul’s, Raheny, for many years.

The opening text is that given by the Irish Provincial at the opening of the Annual General Meeting of the Province in October 2004. Even as he reflected on the changes in the Province, he could not have known that death was to visit us early in the coming year; we include here the obituaries of Pearse Gallagher, Jim Harbison, Desmond O’Connell as well as that of Seamus O’Neill who died in September of 2004. We also offer some of the many tributes offered to Michael Prior at a memorial service held in St Mary’s, Strawberry Hill.

# Flogging a Dead Horse

This was the text which Kevin O'Shea circulated among the confreres gathered for the General Meeting of the Confreres of the Province in October 2004

*Some of you may have the following bit of wisdom that is floating around cyberspace. Ancient wisdom says that when you discover that you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount. In some organizations we often try many other strategies, including the following:*

1. Changing the rider
2. Buying a stronger whip
3. Appointing a committee to study the horse
4. Creating a training session to improve riding skills
5. Changing the requirements so that the horse no longer meets the standards of death
6. Harnessing several dead horses together to increase speed
7. Increasing funding to improve the horse's performance
8. Hiring an external consultant to show how a dead horse can be ridden
9. Declaring that a dead horse is less costly to maintain than a live one
10. Promoting the dead horse to a supervisory position

## Annual General Meeting – October 15th 2004

Kevin O'Shea CM

As we commence our meeting this morning I would hope that none of you would suggest that we are in the business of flogging a dead horse or that we should follow the piece of cyberspace wisdom which I have distributed and left on your place. If so, I would opt for number 10 and gladly take on the role of supervisor. However we are not in the business of opting out. We are gathered as a faith community seeking to map the Provincial terrain for the next few years. Before doing so, I wish to place our deliberations today in the context of the past twelve months and above all in our continued trust in Divine Providence.

You will recall that our (Provincial) Assembly (Easter 2003) we drew up *Three Challenges for our Future*. Last October, rather than meet at local community level, we agreed to form various Interest Groups. The findings of these groups are our working document for today. I would ask that you show some understanding towards those who prepared these final documents. The conversations of the interest groups were very varied and widespread. To try to focus them into a definite template on an A4 page as requested by me was not easy.

I wish to express my thanks to all who participated and especially those who presided over the groups and attended our Council meetings.

The next landmark was the General Assembly in Rome last July. Central to this Assembly was the election of a new Superior General but also the drawing up of certain lines of action for our future as a congregation. Those of us who were present at the Assembly were very much conscious of the great difference that existed between First World Provinces who were experiencing a 'winter season' as opposed to Third World countries, where there was a springtime of growth and expansion. This was very notable in our discussion groups. Some recommendations in the Document may not seem relevant to our Province but, nevertheless, there are many points of reference in the document that will be important as we plan our future. As I indicated in my letter to you, the core section of this document is section three – *A Hopeful Look towards the Future* – where we are asked to:

re-vitalise our vocation,  
strengthen our apostolic work,  
renew our community life.

Before we begin our reflection on these documents I would also like

you to pause and reflect on the significant loss that our Province has experienced over the last 12 months. It has not been an easy year. It is important that we acknowledge our pain and to grieve over our losses. I am, in particular, thinking of the departure of Dan O’Connell and the tragic death of Michael Prior – two active members on whom some of our hopes might have rested. Our loss has been immense and their absence leaves a huge void in all our lives. This is particularly so for our younger confreres who are greatly missing the vibrant personality of Dan O’Connell and our confreres in London who were numbed and shocked at Michael’s premature death.

In times of loss St Vincent would remind us that

*“God is always open-handed to those who call upon Him  
and generous to those who hope only in His bounty.. . .*

*Our confidence is increasing*

*that God will soon give us peace, according to the maxim that where  
human means fail, divine operation begins.” (Letter 1463)*

I must confess that personally I found the last twelve months rather difficult. I found some strength in a prayer, given to me by my spiritual director:

<i>WHERE</i>	<i>you are - however unchosen is the place of blessing</i>
<i>HOW</i>	<i>you are - however broken is the place of grace</i>
<i>WHO</i>	<i>you are, in your <i>Becoming</i> is your place in the Kingdom</i>

In his input at the vocations meeting last Friday, Fr. Tom Lane spoke of our fragility and warned us against possible temptations:

- 1) To regard our vocation situation as uniquely our own. The reality is that many, indeed most congregations, are in the same boat as ourselves.
- 2) To act as if a special providence will keep us alive, even if a thousand fall at our side
- 3) To join those who point fingers of blame and who moan about the lack of faith and commitment in the young generation, forgetting that we have moved into a totally new historical situation, socially and culturally.
- 4) This last temptation would be the greatest treason – to be convinced that the dice is fully loaded against our way of life and to say that it is time for a resigned death wish, a kind of collective euthanasia that would let us die with dignity.

As we traverse these difficult days we must hold on to the spiritual dimension and recognise that God is with us.

The General Assembly, as indeed our own 3 challenges, call us to – *Revitalise our Vocation, Strengthen our Apostolic work, and Renew our Community life.*

This day will be spent considering how best we can “Strengthen our Apostolic work”. Michael McCullagh and Sean Ruth will shortly be presenting us with a possible approach. This does not mean that the other two challenges do not have to be addressed.

I would ask that the local communities continue to seek ways of renewing their Community life. We have ample resource material:

- our Constitutions,
  - Fr Maloney’s writings
  - General Assembly Document, to name but a few.
- The Assembly document recommends that “Renewing our community” should be central to all local community plans.

### *Revitalising our Vocation*

As we begin this meeting I would like to say a few words about revitalising our Vocation.

John Paul II speaks of a possible “interior weariness” that can overcome priests.

- the scarce fruits of our apostolic endeavours,
- the adverse social and cultural environment,
- expectations which have not been met,
- the dimension of the cross that goes along with the following of Christ,
- our advanced age... produces this "spiritual weariness"

Pope John Paul calls on us to "*return to our first love.*"

It is all the more necessary for us, when confronted with an ever-changing world, to centre ourselves on what is essential and to find a unifying centre. And we will only find that in Christ. Only He is the firm rock of our existence. Any other foundation would be building on sand.

Our constitutions remind us of the centrality of Christ in our vocation “*hence, “Jesus Christ is the rule of the Mission” and shall be considered as the centre of its life and activity.” (Cons 5)*

St Vincent was a man of action. For him, seeking the Kingdom of God demanded both concern and action. But he immediately adds:

The interior life is necessary, we must cultivate it, because if we lack it, we lack everything.

For forty years Vincent himself sought the meaning of life but did not find it until he opted to love Jesus Christ, to imitate him and to follow him more closely as evangeliser of the poor. Right to the end of his life



he had to constantly renew his choice.

This is our calling too. We must somehow get back to our original choice of following Christ.

Next Sunday we begin the special year of the Eucharist. Pope John Paul would remind us:

The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church. In a variety of ways she joyfully experiences the constant fulfilment of the promise. *Lo, I am with you always, until the end of time.* (Mt 28:20)

As we celebrate the Eucharist during the coming year, let us commit ourselves anew and seek to witness the presence of Christ in our lives.

In his talk, “A Context for Vincentian Vocations”, Tom Lane writes:

Witnesses of the Lord’s resurrection beget other witnesses. Our daily witnessing challenges us to be men of faith and of deep, deep prayer. He calls each of us to continual conversion. In the process each of us will keep discovering new implications in our vocations to live as dear friends. We will even discover that each of us is called to be a “re-founder” of the Congregation of the Mission. But, dare I say it, with all our programmes of renewal we are not good at faith sharing and prayer sharing with people with whom we join forces for the sake of the Kingdom of God. I notice that this topic gets considerable prominence in the new Assembly document.

I greatly welcome Tom’s word in this regard and in particular his reminder that each of us is called to play our part. It is too easy an option to leave it to others.

There must have been some spiritual empathy between last Friday’s Vocation meeting and the Council meeting at Lanark. When discussing “creating a culture of Vocation” as we do at all Council meetings, we struggled as to how best we could sustain some momentum at the monthly vocation meetings. One proposal was that the December meeting in Park View would be set in a prayer context and hopefully would lead to some faith sharing. I would also encourage others either to participate or to form their own prayer groups in the lines of that already in place at St. Peter’s, Phibsboro – Sunday evening 5.00 pm.

Another aspect of faith sharing is the writing of our vocation story. Paschal Scallan and Dan O’Connell visited various houses in the Province and some confreres have volunteered to write their faith story. I hope Paschal will be in touch with them in the not too distant future. He had prepared a letter, which he gave me in June, but I asked him to defer it until the autumn. I apologise for not circulating it with my September letter but hope to do so with my next one.

The struggle of 'our becoming' goes on. This is the context or backdrop by which we live our lives as priests.

Some months ago I read a reflection by Lola Fowler entitled, "Middle Time." She introduces us to the spirituality of this middle time by writing,

*"Between the accelerating of beginning  
and the satisfaction of concluding  
is the middle time  
of enduring, changing, trying,  
despairing, continuing, becoming.  
Jesus Christ was the person of God's middle time  
between creation and accomplishment."*

We are in that middle time, between a past that is rapidly disappearing and a future that is uncertain. While acknowledging our fragility, grieving our losses, our tentativeness in planning, our apprehensions as to the future, we are nonetheless being called to live this middle time with faith. Our trust is in a God who promised to be with us until the end of time. What the church of the future will be, what the priesthood will be like, and how the CMs will play their part is unknown, but have we the courage to move forward in hope? Perhaps the message of Pope John Paul to the members of the General Assembly should echo in all our hearts:

...my message to you is this; Duc in altum! Put out into the deep.  
Let us listen to the call of our General Assembly

Congregation of the Mission, be who you are.  
Do not yield to mediocrity! Fan into a flame the  
fire within! Like St Vincent, walk passionately in  
the footsteps of Jesus Christ, Evangeliser of the poor!

# Priesthood and the Second Dimension

Myles Rearden CM

The phrase ‘the second dimension’ is used within the influential and highly developed Catholic school of spiritual formation centred on the Gregorian University’s Institute of Spirituality and associated with the late Fr Luigi Rulla, SJ. It refers to the familiar human condition of people professing and indeed possessing very high ideals of a moral or religious nature, while being in the grip of subconscious urges and inclinations that run contrary to them. As the writer of an important recent book from within the school puts it, ‘the presence of unconscious forces introduces an area of motivational ambiguity’ (Costello, *Forming a Priestly Identity*, Editrice Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, Rome, 2002, p27). Indeed he sees an accurate expression of ‘the second dimension’ in the celebrated words of St Paul, ‘I cannot understand my own behaviour. I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate.’ (Rom 7:15, p220). In this paper I wish to consider Costello’s discussion of the second dimension as a condition of seminarians or priests who, while sincere in their vocational commitment, lack the energy, consistency and focus that would make them effective missionaries or pastors.

## *The other dimensions*

The two other dimensions, first and third, represent those who act freely and easily in relation to their moral and religious values, and those who possess only natural values such as the desire for wealth, success or health, and encounter no interior obstacles in pursuing them. It is not entirely clear why the triad is described as a set of ‘dimensions’. Costello himself seems to experience some difficulty on the point, as he says: ‘The dimensions can be seen as three ways of understanding a person’s struggle to live with the tension of self-transcendence’. (p220) Someone in the first dimension can only fail by a deliberate free choice, or, to put it differently, anyone’s failure by deliberate free choice is ‘a failure in the first dimension’. A failure in the third dimension can only be the result of some deep psychopathology such as, say, clinical depression. Failure in the second dimension is due to what would normally be called ‘ambivalence’.

## *The context: priestly formation*

Costello’s entire discussion is set in the context of formation or education for the Catholic priesthood, and in particular the paradox encountered

by the participants in the 1990 Synod of Bishops, (the Eighth Synod), namely, that seminary programmes were producing a significant proportion of indifferent priests, and some who are much worse. (pp11-26) The solution the Synod opted for was a new emphasis on human formation in seminaries, that in, on maturity as a goal of seminary training. (p29) Costello however sees the Synod's understanding of maturity as defective, and with it the anthropology on which it is based (pp29, 116 & 307-309). The Synod, he implies, inclined towards the rather optimistic views of humanistic psychologists like Rogers or Maslow, rather than the more conflictual views of Freud, who concentrates on conflict within the psyche, or of Erikson, who takes a sociological view of the psychic struggle. Conflict is at the heart of the problem, specifically conflict of the second-dimension kind.

*'Self-transcendent Consistency'*

Costello opposes not alone humanistic views based mainly on self-actualisation, but also the adequacy of Freud's and Erikson's particular versions of conflict. He opposes still more of course the various behavioural theories, and sets aside developmental theories of limited scope like those of Piaget and Kohlberg. Instead, he proposes what he calls the theory of 'Self-transcendent Consistency'. This 'considers the development of personal identity in the light of the "mystery" of the human person'. (p148) He presents it as being not only 'in fundamental harmony with the vision of humanity proposed by the church and reflected in the documents of the Eighth Synod of Bishops' (p148), but also as leading to a 'helpfully expanded' form of the Synod's understanding of maturity. (p252).

Costello introduces 'Self-transcendent Consistency', insofar as it coincides with the anthropology of the Synod, the Church, and we might add, the Bible, by way of the concept of 'mystery'. (p150) The function of this word is to expand 'the developmental horizon and...avoid the partial perspectives' of the other theories. It has thus not a vague but a positive sense, that of 'a glimpse into a reality whose full meaning cannot be grasped here and now because it transcends the immediate capacity of senses and intellect'. (p150) It is 'grounded in the existential fact that man [*sic*] simultaneously inhabits two different "worlds" that represent different spheres of meaning. One is the world of desire where humanity poses questions, searches for meaning...[a world] with no fixed limits. The other is the world of limitation where people and vulnerable... restricted and conditioned.' (p151) The mystery is the conflict between the worlds. It is difficult to avoid considerable discomfort at the rhetoric if not the actual ontology of dualism in this passage. However, it soon becomes apparent that

Costello includes very tangible aspects of the world of limitation in his general concept of mystery. He significantly singles out as one of the aspects of the mystery the '20-60-20' statistic, as follows:

In round numbers, about 20% of any large group reveal difficulties in living that are usually considered psychiatric symptoms; 60% show some degree of immaturity or incomplete development affecting the range of their freedom; and 20% may be considered relatively free of psychological liabilities of the kind in question. (p153, citing B.Kiely, *Psychology and Moral Theology*, 1980 (1987), p44)

The result of this virtually universal law is that 'human development does not always reach a positive conclusion', which suggests that 'to the extent that each person is the outcome of his [*sic*] own destiny, the "mystery" of development, like salvation, must be worked out in fear and trembling.' (p154) Priestly training, and indeed all education not to say all social organization, has to take place not alone in relation to openness to the divine, but in relation to a 'normality' of considerable and widespread human inadequacy. The '20-60-20' demographic statistic places a very considerable constraint on development, whether of individuals or of groups, and is – though Costello does not signal it as such – a particularly significant expansion of the anthropology current in the Church, though not perhaps that of the Bible.

Costello's presentation of Self-transcendent Consistency then proceeds to a discussion in terms of quite technical psychology of the notion of identity, and specifically of the development of identity. Basic identity is achieved as the infant moves away from attachment to its mother, and still more as a child becomes more aware of his or her place in the world and of people's individual specifiers. (p167) 'Ego identity' (the phrase is Erikson's) describes the consolidation of personal identity that takes place during late adolescence and early adulthood. (p.171) It is, one supposes, what vocational guides are looking for when they require that candidates be mature: though neither identity nor maturity are static conditions of the person, but subject to progressive and regressive shifts (pp.173-177). That is a point to which Costello pays considerable attention, in connection with the work of JE Marcia. This writer makes use of the concepts of 'crisis' (as does Erikson) and of 'commitment'. Maturity (above the level of personal maturity) consists in commitment to such things as occupation, religious and political ideology, but it is only decisively achieved as the result of crisis. (p173) Crisis means not simply a time of stress and confusion, but 'an active decision-making period when the person is engaged in a serious consideration of meaningful alternatives.' Maturity can take different forms. It can be genuine

'identity achievement', it can be 'identity foreclosure' where there is assimilation of parental (or, presumably, other social) structures with little critical engagement. Or it can be 'identity moratorium', when a decision has not yet been reached (often, one supposes, because it has been indefinitely postponed, as in the case of the stereotypical 'eternal student'). The condition of those 'who show little current commitment to occupation and/or ideology regardless of whether or not they have experienced periods of crisis' is described as 'identity diffusion' (p174): as such, it represents no doubt the condition of failure in the second dimension which is Costello's main concern. Costello endorses these theories of Erikson and Marcia to a considerable extent, apart from their lacking a pedagogical element and remaining within the self-actualisation paradigm of development. (p176f) One might question the justice of the second of these reservations, on the ground that it depends on the nature of the social roles or ideologies the person is critically considering, and the kind of consideration he or she attaches weight to. Marcia in particular may come close to the heart of the matter.

### *Priestly Identity*

When Costello turns his attention to specifically priestly identity he defines it thus:

Presuming the presence of an integrated personality structure, 'priestly identity' can be defined as the commitment to pattern his life consistently on the objective values and ideals that specify the ministerial priesthood. (p190)

It consists therefore in the achievement of identity by way of a crisis or period of critical thought, experimentation and self-assessment: not foreclosure, not diffusion and not a moratorium. Moreover, this achievement will involve for everyone facing and mastering the range of personal inadequacies and blockages to which he is subject, in view of a clear awareness of what is involved in priesthood.

Commitment to priestly values – what exactly they are we shall come back to – is, according to Costello, the outcome of three forms of self-transcendence: (1) Cognitive, 'the fact of unrestricted questioning' on all relevant points; (2) Moral, whereby decisions are taken on the basis of values and not satisfactions; and (3) 'existential discovery' by means of action, whereby he knows that he has in so acting made himself an authentic human being (p194). To these Costello adds emotional attraction, which penetrates all three of the above levels. This is what prompts an instinctive response to many situations, and, his point seems to be, gives ease and possibility to the activities of priesthood (p195f): though the topic is not perhaps sufficiently developed by him. He does

include however a set of points from Nuttin and says that the commitment to a consistent choice of priesthood must occur at all three levels of psychic life: psychophysical (appetites), psychosocial (relationships) and rational-spiritual (the cognitional faculty in its search for meaning). It may be commented at this point that not a few who are experienced in working with priests and former priests agree that it is at the level of rational and spiritual commitment that many find their priesthood failing them.

Neither the Eighth Synod of Bishops nor Pope John Paul II in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* have provided an altogether satisfactory theology of the priesthood, though they have certainly moved things considerably forward. Costello is content to assemble the following set of elements as a description of the ideals and goals around which commitment to the priesthood can be made:

The following core values emerge consistently from these sources [the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the second chapter of *Pastores Dabo Vobis*]: union with Christ the priest, holiness of life, the evangelization of humanity, proclamation of God's Word, sacramental celebration, pastoral charity, prayer on behalf of the church, ecclesial service, eucharistic devotion, evangelical simplicity of life, fidelity to the gospel, celibacy for the sake of the kingdom, a total and permanent commitment. The synod summarized priestly ideals in the threefold phrase 'witness to the mystery, servant of communion, in service of the mission'. (p236)

Surprisingly neither he nor the Pope nor the Synod suggests making pastoral charity the absolutely core element of priestly identity, despite the teaching of *Pastores Dabo Vobis* that 'pastoral charity is the dynamic inner principle which unites the priest's identity, his ministry and his spiritual life' (p85). If by pastoral charity we mean a passionate devotion to people and their welfare in relation to God, it seems reasonable to suggest that it, and commitment to it at all levels, is the core of priestly identity. It, plus the person's critical recognition that it is where he can feel most at home, is what should lead people to seek priestly ordination, and remain at work as a priest. It certainly will not involve any of the superficial or partial anthropologies from which Costello seeks to distance himself, let alone a superficial theory of salvation, Christology or theology generally. A programme of priestly formation focused entirely on pastoral charity, suitably articulated into its components by way of the values Costello listed in the passage quoted a little earlier, could be exactly what is needed. Given the dyadic character of charity, directed towards God and towards people, it will incorporate

the self-transcendence that is central to Costello's theory: provided the theocentric and Christocentric aspect includes the specifically priestly dimension of acting 'in persona Christi capitis'. This, and the emphasis on pastoral charity, are, it may be suggested, the central elements of what has been achieved in recent decades towards the development of a theology of priesthood<sup>1</sup>

### *Practical measures*

In his final chapter entitled 'Praxis of Priestly Formation', Costello makes two proposals. The first regards the formation of seminary educators, and is based on a document on that subject brought out by the Congregation for Catholic Education in 1993. Not surprisingly, his principal concern is 'the provision of formators who can recognize the presence of difficulties related to the second dimension', and who have the professional competence to offer a pedagogical intervention that can support the candidate in his efforts to overcome such difficulties' (p299). This leads on to his second proposal, which is based on the findings of an unpublished thesis from the Gregorian University by M D'Almeida (*Initial Formation*, 1990-91). D'Almeida's work advocates the provision of Vocation Growth Sessions for candidates for the priesthood. Costello describes them as follows:

... vocational growth sessions [have as their] purpose to help the candidate in his ongoing efforts to make his own the moral and religious values of the priestly vocation and those natural values that will promote his continued developmental growth. It is a pedagogical intervention which should not be confused with either psychotherapy or spiritual direction, each of which has its own proper aims and methods, even though there are considerable areas of common interest. (p300)

As he describes the benefits of vocational growth counselling it becomes clear that it is, for practical purposes, a form of spiritual direction, inasmuch as by means of it 'prayer can be integrated with a deeper and more realistic self-knowledge; the more conscious the person's motivation becomes, the more profoundly it comes under the influence of the action of grace. Those forces which may have been paralysing the candidate for as long as they have been under the influence of the second dimension, can thus be reoriented and redirected as self-

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<sup>1</sup> The impressive account of priesthood by Roderick Strange in his recent book *The Risk of Discipleship* (D.L.T. 2004), especially in chs. 4 & 5, lends strong support to the proposal of considering pastoral charity the core element of ministerial priesthood.



transcendent love' (p301f). The experience at Maynooth is of the great benefit such meetings have for seminarians, and of their 'freeing up' spiritual direction proper from having to devote too much attention to human development issues, so as to attend to the sense the seminarians have of how God is making himself present to them in prayer and their lives generally.

The question may be raised of whether the primary agent of helping seminarians with their second-dimension issues is the one-on-one meeting of any or all of the types available in seminaries, rather than, additionally, the actual pastoral charity with which not alone the seminary, but the diocese, the national church and the universal church are governed: the charity itself and the skill of governance that can distribute its benefits to all levels of the church. It is certainly the case that defective governance, whether due to lack of pastoral charity or lack of skill, creates anxiety and dissatisfaction, of a kind likely to irritate and aggravate people's second dimension problems, not least those of priests in the parishes. Not a few of the difficulties currently being experienced by the Church are attributed, perhaps not unjustly, to failures in management and government at various levels of the church as an institution. Such typically second-dimension manifestations as low morale, depression, the need to over-compensate, and the hurling of accusations and blame, are not going to be solved by individuals acting alone with help from confessors, directors or counsellors: they also need good structures to be devised, set up and then well managed.

This certainly does not come within the scope of an Institute of Spirituality, but perhaps it does of a Pastoral Institute, and of pastoral care itself, as envisaged, for example, by Alistair Ross in his recent *Counselling Skills for Church and Community Workers* (Open University Press, 2003). The problems of the priesthood are not, I would suggest, in principle unsolvable, and important pointers to the solution seem to emerge from the main work considered here, that of Costello, and the works of Strange and of Ross.

# Maturity through Formation Forum

(A challenge to the Formation  
of the Vincentian Students in Nigeria)

Linus Umorem CM

## *Background comments;*

The prophetic vision of Walbert Buhlmann on the future of the Church is already a celebrated experience in Africa and perhaps Asia and Latin America.

While the greater part of Europe is concerned about the fate of empty churches and religious houses, the greater part of Africa is concerned about how to manage the teeming numbers. As would be expected, this paradox is often dismissed by many cynics as a historical phase associated with the socio-economic state of Africa. But such an assumption is only plausible as a one-tail explanation which seeks the cause without an overall understanding of the African Character and Religious culture.

The understanding of the experience of the church in Africa must begin with the appreciation of the Africans as a very religious people, where morality, custom, philosophy, culture and religion are hardly separable. African people love to celebrate together and love to live together. Togetherness is the word and the church seems to provide a facility for this. This is particularly evidenced in the Africans resident in Europe and America who continue to uphold their religious consciousness and favour togetherness amid conflicting values.

This is probably the background to the teeming number in Churches and the religious houses in Nigeria. Today in Nigeria there are 48 Catholic dioceses, grouped into 9 provinces with an estimated 20% of the overall population.

But besides this positive development is the great challenge to the Church in Nigeria and Africa in general, the effective formation of the large number in the churches and the religious formation houses.

This paper will address only the formation of religious in Nigeria and particularly the Vincentians students.

## *Initial Comments*

As a departure, let me mention here that as the number of aspirants to religious life increases in Nigeria, so also have various and “questionable” indigenous religious congregations emerged. This was of a strong concern at the first Nigerian National Pastoral Congress.

This concern was expressed in the *Lineamenta*, thus “There is a certain eagerness in our region to found new Religious institutions. The Church needs to be alert bearing in mind that new foundation come into being because of particular sensitivity of a founder/foundress to the word and dedication to the church”. (1) This concern establishes the fact that every new congregation must derive from a charism which gives mission and character identity to the congregation.

Now, following the ‘bumper response’ to Religious Vocation in the church in Nigeria which we have noted, it will not be surprising to note that the Congregation of the Mission in Nigeria is also benefiting from this time-event.

From here, I will narrow down to discussing the formation of the Vincentian missionaries in Nigeria.

The Vincentians came to Nigeria as missionaries in 1960 from the Province of Ireland. In 1960, Bishop Moynagh of Calabar sent an official invitation to Fr O’Leary, the Provincial in Blackrock, who appointed Fathers Frank Mullan, Harry Morrin and Paddy Hughes to the mission. The three left Dublin on 19th October and sailed from Liverpool next day. After stop at Las Palmas, Freetown and Lagos they landed at Port-Harcourt in South-East Nigeria on the First day of November. (1)

The first Nigerian Vincentian (2) was ordained in 1973, and since then there has been an enormous growth in the Vocation to the Vincentian Missionary Order in Nigeria. The current statistics of the Vincentians in Nigeria has, 52 incorporated members, 63 scholastics, 14 seminarists (Novices), 8 postulants. This shows that there is a total number of 84 students in formation. Recently, Bob Maloney CM (Former Superior General) expressed his deep concern for the formation of the Vincentian Students in Nigeria,

A number of confreres speak of a vocation boom. This however entails a responsibility on our part. First, careful selection is necessary. Then we must provide good accompaniment for our students so that the Charism of St Vincent will become deeply rooted in their hearts (3)

Careful selection and good accompaniment seem to be the most significant, in this statement. Thus, one may interpret Bob Maloney to define the success of any formation process by the variables of careful selection and good accompaniment. Good accompaniment presupposing an efficient and effective companion.

#### *Vocation as a response to God’s invitation*

Any meaningful discussion on the response to the Christian vocation must have the presupposition that there is on the one hand a vocation

in the sense of a call from God and on the other hand the capacity to respond.

This presupposition could be understood as the primary motivation of any young person who expresses the desire to be accepted in the Religious congregation. But we must note that the human capacity to respond to God's invitation is not automatic but processional and maturational. It requires discernment, freedom and decision. A decision not in the sense of finality but a conscious commitment that is constantly renewable. The Religious Vocation is where two freedoms meet. That is, the freedom of the human person and the freedom of God to engage the human person in such relationship.

We must assume that man is essentially free. But in his choice to respond and engage in this bilateral relationship he can be circumscribed by some influences which may be cultural, social, environmental, conscious and unconscious. "In this case, there follows a limitation on his *freedom*. The freedom that falls under limitation is not essential freedom but effective freedom." (4).

Here lies the problem. The candidate may proclaim being motivated by the meaning given by the definition of the religious life, without knowing that he is actually motivated by his own subjective meaning. The tragedy here is that the candidate may not even know his actual motivation because he cannot understand his internal processes. Thomas Merton observes that "although our ideal is based on objective norms; we may interpret those norms in a very limited and subjective manner: we may distort them unconsciously to fit our own inordinate needs and expectations"(5)

This tragedy evidently questions the formation structure in our Congregation. As far as my experience could be true, the model of the Vincentian formation in Nigeria at the moment seems to lack some ingredients to facilitate effective freedom and the maturity of the formatees.

However a section of the *Constitution of the Congregation on Formation* makes reference to freedom. But in the understanding of the present writer, such freedom tends to be an illusion and self-defeating since the interpretation of the constitution assumes that at the end of one year of internal seminary which deals more or less with apostolic and moral piety, the candidate would have been mature enough to recognize *more accurately* their vocation in the Congregation.

The internal seminary is a time in which members begin their mission and life in the Congregation and, with the help of the community and their moderators, recognize more accurately their vocations and prepare themselves by special formation for their incorporation into the Congregation with freedom. (6)

The special formation to which this constitution refers is interpreted and applied as more or less the formation in the Vincentian spirituality, good morals and apostolate.(7) Thus the whole formational structure tends to stretch out on the parallel line of theological, philosophical, pastoral and moral concern. The individual who has to respond to this theocentric invitation to self-transcendence of love is not considered in his affective nature. Where this is considered, it is at the polar continuum of Normality-Pathology. Easily noticeable in our formation is the kinds of attitude which Herbert Kelman refers to as Compliance and Identification. (8) The seminarian who keeps the rule and pleases the director is the good and mature seminarian .Such formation only results in conformity to external rules, short of personal initiative and growth and cannot lead to personal assimilation of and internalization of Values. But internalization is very necessary for the Christian vocation. Thus, “a value is internalized in so far as the person is free, disposed to accept this value leading to theocentric self transcendence, as something by which the person himself is transformed and finally accepts all this out of love for the intrinsic value of the Christian ideal chosen”(9) But a religious formation imbued by the “banking and authoritative system” both presumes and stagnates the maturity on the response of the candidates.

Thus, one is able to understand the well known phenomenon of the enthusiastic conversion during the Novitiate, followed shortly by a sometimes painful reversal when neither the Novice Master nor an environment favorable to sustaining enthusiasm are any longer present. The explanation is that the visible change was mostly at the level of external behavior or of the conscious ideal, but was not reaching the true motivational forces of the personality (10).

Consequent upon these premises, the next part of this write-up is going to look at the possibility of expanding our Formation structure to take account for other factors especially as concerning the nature and the condition of the candidate who sometimes could have a very tortured history and emotional desires; these in turn affecting his decisions and actions unconsciously and thus making growth and vocational effectiveness difficult.

### *Personal Vocational Formation*

I reiterate here that a vocation is a call from God for a specific orientation and mission in life. Thus no one is called as one in a crowd but personally. “Fear not; I call you by name, I have you, you are mine, you are precious in my eyes and honored and I give people in exchange for you” (Isaiah 43,1-7).What makes a vocation personal is then the inner experience and integration of the whole life in response to a new orientation, identity and mission. So the aim of Formation then will be to help the candidate

to come to terms with his most intimate and personal experiences so as to effectively respond to the call from God.

Personal-Vocational formation will, first of all, presuppose that there could exist mixed motivation or personal incongruities in candidates trying to discern their vocation. An individual may proclaim love for the poor as a motivation for the Vincentian life while actually he desires prestige. Thus values turn to serve needs. The formation structure with this presupposition will therefore be such that can provide help to resolve such personal incongruities.

This is precisely where the Christian vocation is considered in terms of certain perspectives of scientific anthropology of a psychosocial nature, which derives from the foundation of the Philosophical anthropology.(11) This aspect it is assumed, would take account of the subjectivity of the human person, his “tragic struggle”, subjective history, conscious and unconscious motivation: “How and to what extent the motivational system of the individual is disposed to the dialogue with God”.(12)

I would hasten to say that so far, human science tends to be suspect of the Christian sensibility. Psychology has often been indexed as a force that tends to undermine religious belief and specifically the priestly vocation. Albert Outler had sought to present the very fact of the incompatibility of human science and Christian theology. According to him, “naturalistic and deterministic presuppositions about man in scientific psychology put it in great tension with the inevitable supernaturalistic assumptions of Christian theology.”(13) Sigmund Freud whose celebrated theory of the unconscious seems to dominate psychology, was himself an exuberant atheist whose staunch commitment to the advance of empirical science profoundly colored his attitude to religion (14) Confronted with this dangerous background, it means that if the human science of psychology is to be integrated in the process of Christian vocational formation, it has to be a Christian psychology. But can there be a Christian psychology? To this question, B Kiely answers in the affirmative but with caution: “the kind of Christian psychology here in question is one in which psychology as a science and faith as a view of life completes and complements each other. It is not a matter of an imperialist takeover on either side.” (15) Nonetheless; this new vision does not mean that the Christian psychology and psychotherapy would uncritically adopt the exaggerated Freudian Psychology in the anthropology of Christian vocation.(16) The council fathers recognized the help humanistic science could render to faith and recommended that in pastoral care, sufficient use should be made not only of theological principles, but also the finding of secular sciences, especially psychology and sociology, in this way the faithful will be brought to purer and more mature way of living the faith. (17)

Thus, the relevance of psychology in the anthropology of Christian vocation tends to focus on the understanding of the human motivation, critiqued by the philosophical and theological prepositions which may lead more or less to freedom to respond to the invitation of God to the journey of faith.

The concept of freedom necessarily mediates two states. Nature, we know, abhors a vacuum. So freedom must be understood in the sense of *freedom from and freedom for*.

We have already made the basic assumption that man is *essentially free*. "Such freedom essentially possesses a deeper character which is ontological and at the same time theocentric". It is on this background that the human person is called to take a position before God.(18) The paralyzing effect on freedom may be particularly great in the case of subconscious motivation (19) This is true because while the subject thinks he is deciding based on the objective value, he does not know that he is motivated from an unconscious need which gratification fails to satiate and the subject becomes frustrated and regrets ever deciding as such. Therefore, I shall say here that a candidate is free when his choices are the product of full awareness of operative needs and actual constraints. That means, his coming to know what he truly wants and what he can have. Now according to Lonergan, the degree of one's freedom depends on factors such as; the external circumstances, the psycho neural state of the person, his intellectual horizon, the presence or absence of *antecedent willingness*. To broaden one's effective freedom, the key factor is the achievement of *antecedent willingness*. That is a willingness to persuade oneself and to submit to the persuasion of others. This brings "an effective attitude in which performance matches aspiration".(20) This is not to happen in a day but it is maturational and a process as disposed by the formation forum.

Such freedom would dispose the candidate for the action of grace. Since grace acts and respects human nature it would mean that the effect of grace will depend on the degree of the disposition of the self. That is, freedom is a condition of the action of grace and grace is the condition of growth in freedom. I must say that grace and freedom are not opposed. "Grace enlivens and sustain human freedom, setting it from the slavery of sin, (Jn. 8, 34-36), healing it and elevating it in its ability to open to receive God's gift." (21)

### *Practical Implications*

a) *An Integral Formation*: The integral formation here takes a leave from the presupposition that the existing structure does not take cognizance of all factors that make up the Religious Vocation. The formation of the candidates has been structured after the time- honored theological and

philosophical principles and adopting the constitution, with a bias for moral theology. This structure could only pay attention to the intellectual and moral formation of the candidate at the level of the conscious and external enforcement while assuming the passivity of the person and his unconscious motivations.

But an integrated formation would have to go beyond this and adopt the theory of self-transcendence consistency (22). And by so doing, helping the candidates to grow at the level of the second dimension (23), to understand the possible influence of the unconscious on freedom. An integrated formation would require helping candidates to *internalize* the Vocational values as against the current formational environment of *compliance* and *identification*. It will seek to confront vocational inconsistencies, interpret unconscious dynamics in such a way that candidates are helped to progressively, with the action of grace, build personal vocational identity centered on the person of Christ. (24)

The integrated formation in responding to the cultural influence will help candidates to reexamine their symbolic processes against the vocational and objective values. This may lead more or less to “affective development”. Affective development involves the transformation or transvaluation of symbol so that “symbols themselves change to express new affective capacities and dispositions”. (25) I will emphasize this point very much as it is significant in the Nigerian context. The candidates who come into the congregation are from different cultural background with different approach to living the Christian values. It will be the task of a good formation forum to recognize this difference of cultural symbols and meaning and integrate them to arrive at self-ideal-in situation.

*(b) Formational Goal Review:* The goal of any system normally determines its structure and programme. To foster a free response and Maturity in our candidates it would be helpful to review the goal of our formation. The questions that may be associated with this task would be: Are they merely to fit in to the ideal of the congregation or to grow in self-ideal in the situation of the congregation? The former I suspect would only foster conformity and uniformity. But the later will effect meaning and freedom for self-transcendence since the person would tend to understand his ideals in the situation of the congregation.

To respond to this then, during the first phase of the life in the congregation, candidates will be helped towards fuller and more appreciative appraisal of the congregation through effective communication, interpersonal interaction with leaders and further study of the nature and status of the congregation (life and charism of founder, constitutions, statutes and norms). The relationship of the Formator and the Student is very important here. Moral authority is more influential



than word or intellectual authority. When we consider influences on young people, we must note that they are influenced not as much by where they are in the sense of the empty environment, not so much by what they hear but more by someone who is practical, and whom they have come to believe in because he meaningfully represent what they aspire to. The young spontaneously shade what is meaningless, to remain with and interiorize and assimilate what is meaningful as they observe in significant others.

Besides, in a formation aimed at maturity of the candidate, the Formators will always note that, young people want identity, recognition and the freedom of responsibility within trusted guidelines. They want to be appreciated not dictated to (26), they want to know who they are and to be first appreciated as such. This calls for a relational leadership and formation.

(c) *Forming Formators*: The success of any formational structure depends on the free and intimate interaction between the *Formatees* and the *Formators*. The danger is that we may have all the good theories but without competent and dedicated people to help in implementing them. Based on our implied theory (The theory of self-transcendence consistency) and the practical task, the training of the Formators should be such that would recognize the significance of the *second Dimension*. These formators would appreciate the possible influence of the unconscious motivation in relation to vocation and would have resolved these problems in themselves. (27)

There is the known human tendency to transfer, project and observe one's personal conflict in another person when some one has not dealt and is not able to deal with his conflicts and blind spots. In the Gospel, Jesus cautions "how dare you say to your brother/sister let me take the splinter out of your eye when look there is a great log in your own? Hypocrite! Take the log out of your eye first and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother/sister's eye" (Matt. 7, 4-5). The training of the Formators will emphasis among other things personal growth and maturity, given the delicate nature of their future task. A Formator who is not trained and who does not have the aptitude for the task can be efficient but not effective to supervise the personal and vocational maturity in the candidates.

Furthermore, the Congregation for Catholic Education points out about the Formator that his faith should be manifested in a coherent lifestyle, right consciousness of oneself; one's values and limits, intimately recognized and accepted; free and a stable possession of one's affective world.(28)

*Concluding Remarks,*

It is the conviction of the writer that Nigeria is a very ambitious and aggressive society. Aggression, sometimes covert, serves the ambitious desire. The candidates who express desire to be accepted in the congregation may be influenced by this societal character. The actual motivation may be the desire to control, exploit or be accepted in the society. It may even be a desire for women. But the candidate seeks the authority of the priesthood to mask such ambitious, aggressive and self-gratifying desire. The formation forum should be open enough to help this candidate to recognize these needs in himself and possibly transform them to the zeal for souls or accept them as vocational (religious) dissonant needs, in which case he may better function in a vocation other than religious life.

Above all religious formation is not an easy task. For whatever we do it is the Lord who completes it by his grace. So we must seek the grace of God in the vocational accompaniment always.

## NOTES

- 1 Mary Purcell, *The History of the Vincentians*, Dublin, 1973, 199
- 2 Fr Timothy Njoku was ordained as the first Nigerian Vincentian on 23 June 1973.
- 3 R P Maloney, *Letter to the Confreres of the Vice-Province of Nigeria* (February 4 2003), 4
- 4 L M Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, Vol. 1, 197 (ACV) cf B Lonergan, *Insight*, pp619ff
- 5 T Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 29
- 6 Constitution, Chapter V11, 83, Art. 1
- 7 Congregation of the Mission, *Norms for the Vice Province of Nigeria*, IV, 52.
- 8 H C Kelman, "Process of Opinion Change", *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1961) Vol. xxv, 62-65. Compliance is defined here as the attitude of accepting influence from another person or from a group because he hope to achieve a favorable reaction from the other. This is done regardless of what his private beliefs may be. Identification is can be said to occur when an individual adopts behavior derived from another person or group because this behavior is associated with a satisfying self defining relationship to this person or group.
- 9 ACV, Vol1, 349
- 10 *Psychological Structure and Vocation*, 11-12. (PSV)
- 11 ACV, Vol 1, 234
- 12 ACV, 234

- 13 D Browning, *Images of God in Contemporary Models of Pastoral Care*, 145
- 14 T Costello, *Forming A Priestly Identity*, 255
- 15 B Kiely, "Can there be a Christian Psychology?" *Studies*, 79 (1990) 152
- 16 F Meures, "Un progetto Interdisciplinare di Antropologia Cristiana", *La Civiltà cattolica* (1987) , 223
- 17 Second Council of the Vatican, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 62 (GS)
- 18 *ACV*, Vol 1, 237
- 19 L M Rulla, *Depth Psychology and Vocation*, 169. (DPV)
- 20 B J Lonergan, *Insight*, 645-647
- 21 John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 36
- 22 There are already in existence a good number of theories of personality but these theories can not be the basis of research on religious Vocation having not been tested. Moreover, none of these theories takes *religious values* into consideration and these are the fundamental features of the religious Vocation. But Rulla and colleagues develop a theory that endeavors to integrate spiritual values and psychological insight into a logical and coherent whole. Cf, R Champoux, "Introductory Overview", *PSV*, 2-3.
- 23 This is the idea of Rulla; in the first dimension one is considered as completely free in the sense of effective freedom. He is prevalently conscious and morally responsible for actions at this dimension. Actions therefore tend to sin or virtue. The second dimension mediates between the first and third dimension. It is the dimension of conscious and unconscious motivated actions. There is a degree of effective freedom here and there is also the limitation. Actions at this dimension tend to real good or apparent good. This is the dimension of the non-culpable error. The third dimension is the dimension that has to do with opposite poles of normality or pathological illness. Here one is almost without freedom and tends to be driven by unconscious forces. *ACV*, Vol 1, 193
- 24 T Costello, *Forming a priestly Identity*, 280
- 25 B J Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 66
- 26 Bruno Clifton, "Evangelising the Youth" in *Priest and People*, August, 2004, 334
- 27 *DPV*, 216-217
- 28 Congregation for Catholic Education, *Preparation of Seminary Formators*, 27-34

# The Challenge of Islamic Migration to Europe

Franz Kangler CM

Province of Austria

*This is the text of a talk given by Fr Kangler at the annual meeting of CEVIM, the Conference of Visitors of Europe and the Middle East, held in Trier, Germany, in April 2005. In the light of the changing face of Irish society, it may be particularly pertinent for us today.* Editor.

If I want to talk today about an issue which has been worrying people more and more in these last years, I would not like to do it as an academic dissertation, as you can find in many different publications, but would like to profit from my personal experience of living with people of other religions. In fact I have been working in Turkey for 28 years together with Muslims in an education centre, St George's College in Istanbul.

## *1. Islam in Europe*

Twelve to fifteen million Muslims are said to be living in Europe and this number is still increasing due to immigration from Turkey, Northern Africa, Asia and the Balkans. In the Balkans, Islam has been deeply rooted since the Turkish rule. It was interesting above all for Bosnia, where Muslims found a respected lifestyle as a recognized religious community in the Hapsburg Empire and, with the Islamic Law of 1912, they were officially recognized. The concept of "Euro-Islam" was created long ago by an Austrian Muslim of Bosnian origin, Smail Balic.

The first big wave of immigration towards Western Europe came in the 50s and 60s. It received little attention all over Europe because it was believed that these immigrants would go back to their mother countries. The economic changes in the 70s saw to it that any further flow was reduced and the reunion of families was favoured. With the arrival of their families the immigrants established residing social communities, which wanted economic and also social and cultural development. The second generation growing up in the host countries quickened the political commitment, above all in countries like for example France and Britain, in which it is easier for people from former colonies to obtain the citizenship. In this context, and above all for us Lazarists,

it is important to point out that a big number of immigrants are still to be found in the lowest layers of the working classes and the rebuilding of their religious identity is a defence to fight social impoverishment, joblessness and rejection. If we consider the example of Great Britain, Saudi-Arabs, Iranians and Pakistanis show great interest in the common creation of this religious identity of Muslim migrants and in particular of the growing second generation. Although some immigrants' children have obtained a prominent position, a big number are still banned from any social rise. They seek safety more and more in the Islamic organisations giving them directions in order to reinforce their awareness of their value. The states that protect them influence therefore the building of an Islamic identity in Europe basically investing money for the building of mosques, supplying teaching materials and financing scholarships.

In the German speaking countries and in Scandinavia, the immigration of workers comes above all from Turkey, which takes the difficult Turkish religious and political issues with it.

## *2. The political dialogue with Islam*

In the meantime politicians in Europe are taking the Islamic questions very seriously indeed. This is surely a consequence of the facts of September 11th, but the Islamic religion has been a political factor since 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini expelled the Shah from Iran to create a republic according to Islamic laws. Since these events congresses and seminars have been organised to start a dialogue between the West and Islam. It is clear that in these seminars the concept of dialogue with Islam is mainly restricted to intercultural dialogue. Actually the dialogue with Islam must include the religious and political dimension of Islam to do justice to the Islamic self-consciousness.

The fact that our politicians in these last years have been willing to intensify this dialogue with Islam is due of course to the negotiations for the entry of Turkey. Moreover there are millions of Muslims from Maghreb or from the Near East who came as immigrants looking for a job or as refugees and see their future in Europe. The demographic factor is important as well, because in contrast with the aging society in the European Union, the population of Islamic countries is mainly younger than 30.

The dialogue with the Islamic world suffers from a basic difference in some fundamental assumptions because both sides start from different religious and political standpoints. At the time of its birth the Islamic faith created a state and relatively quickly it produced precise and binding standards for the organization of the Muslim society. In this order, which they consider divine, there is for many Muslims no distinction between religious, cultural and political belonging. In this

field Turkey, which is so familiar to me, has found a different way since the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

Christianity has gone another way since its beginning. Here the separation of religion and politics was much stronger, but then the exact boundaries have been discussed for centuries. The modern age brought about a radical transformation. Since then history has not measured itself with a pre-existing idea of God. The state in Europe is seen at the end of this development as completely secular and lay. It is founded on rationality and the will of citizens. Religion is declared a private thing that does not interfere with the common will. Politics is seen as an issue concerning only rationality. The disagreement about a reference to religion in the future constitution of the European Union shows that this position is very strong in European politics today.

The dialogue between Europe and the Islamic world is therefore influenced by the contemporary difference in these fundamental fields and it must take this tension into consideration. For both sides this is a learning process that will take its time.

### *3. The Catholic Church and Muslims – a flashback*

This learning process is very important for the life of religious communities.

From Mohammed's prophetic activity in the 7th century till the 20th century the Catholic Church refused the Islamic faith. It was a religion to refuse above all because it did not recognize the central Christian truths of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and the Salvation through the Cross. It was said that the Koran, the holy book of the Muslims, was nothing more than a collection of dreams – interrupted by some Biblical stories that Mohammed had heard through getting in touch with Jews and Christians. As with the death of the last Apostle the Revelation was complete, nobody could pretend to be a prophet and announce a new revelation.

But Islam was fought not only as a religion but also as a political system. On the other hand, Europeans have been intensively interested in Islam from a spiritual point of view since the 14th century and they translated the Koran into European languages. Scientists have tried to represent this religion and in the modern age a new scientific branch, oriental studies, has been invented as a result of their work, which has led to a few positive judgments.

A change towards a positive attitude was introduced only in the 20th century. Forerunner of this development was the French orientalist Louis Massignon, who through his interest in the Muslim mystic al-Halladsch, who was put to death in 922, went back to Christianity.

The process begun by Massignon and his followers had repercus-

sions a little later in the documents of the Second Vatican Council in the ‘Constitution on the Church’ (*Lumen Gentium*) and in the ‘Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions’ (*Nostra Aetate*).

#### 4. *Personal experience with Islam in Turkey.*

I would like here to talk about my personal experience. When, at the end of the 60s, I was asked by my community if I could imagine to work in Turkey after my ordination, it was a very unusual thought for me. Turkey was at that time much farther away than today and during my theological studies not much had been said about the religion of Islam.

Nevertheless the above-mentioned new attitude towards Islam had already emerged thanks to the Second Vatican Council, which Louis Massignon described as a “Copernican revolution in the Christian-Islamic relations”. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Council had unmistakably declared that the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator and in the first place it had referred to the Muslims “who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God”, as it is literally said in this text of the Council.

Slowly a dialogue between Christians and Muslims began to be considered and it was discovered that there are many different steps in this dialogue. Firstly the Church considered the dialogue of life as fundamental, and then that of action: first of all it is simply a matter of meeting believers of another religion on the level of interpersonal relations, which later lead to the dialogue of action, to practical collaboration of groups and institutions in common, important questions like the field of education.

Thanks to my job as a school principal, I am myself in a position of cultural relation between our two countries: in our St George’s Institute we have been actually dealing with this dialogue of life and action for more than 120 years. This is highly esteemed both on the Turkish and on the Austrian side and the importance of St George’s as a meeting place was stressed last year during the visit of the Turkish Minister of Education in Vienna.

#### 5. *A Vincentian community in Istanbul*

I would like to explain briefly the reasons why German and Austrian Lazarists have been working in Turkey for more than 120 years and how it happens that I, an Austrian Lazarist, am speaking about this subject here at the CEVIM-Conference organised by the German province.

The French brethren came to the East after the dissolution of the order of the Jesuits 220 years ago and a German-speaking care of souls began in the house of the Lazarists in Istanbul at the end of the 19th century.

This care was the foundation for today's work thanks to a Lazarist from Cologne. In normal times Conrad Stroever CM would never have come to Constantinople. As the Superior of Cologne he was one of the leading figures of his community. But when in the "Kulturkampf" the community in Germany was suppressed, the brethren had to choose whether they wanted to become secular priests or to leave Germany. All declared themselves at the disposal of the General Superior in Paris and were sent all over the world. They set up important activities in many countries in Northern and Southern America and in the Near East, such as the foundation of St George's.

In 1882 Conrad Stroever was able to acquire the church and the convent of St George near St Benoit's with his superiors' hesitating approval, in order to have here a centre for his German-speaking activity. This foundation took place also thanks to the social work of the Daughters of Charity in the orphanage and in the care of the sick.

Stroever's wish to annex to the newly re-established German province was rejected by Paris because this would reinforce the feared growing German influence in the East. Therefore the second German speaking province, that is the Austrian province, which was guided at that time by a German from Cologne, Miingersdorff, took the responsibility for St George's for political reasons in 1891. Whereas other big German foundations of the Lazarists of this period, such as the Schmidt School in Jerusalem, lost their relation to Germany, St George's is still a part of the Austrian province. St George's College is one of the highly esteemed schools in Turkey and the care offered still today by St George's Hospital to the poorest population groups of Istanbul is widely appreciated.

The parish of St George has been the centre of the institution since its foundation. The social work in collaboration with the Daughters of Charity and with the Vincentian Community founded at the College is also very important for us. We are also trying here to meet the new challenge of Islam in Europe together with an Austrian secular institute, whose members have been collaborating at St George's for 40 years. We founded a Christian-Muslim Forum as a meeting point with Islam, and priests and groups often ask this collaborator of St George's for help for the organisation of conferences and workshops. But also influential authoritative institutions, like the German Bishops' Conference, or political organs, like the European People's Party in Brussels, have invited us to some events.

For us Lazarists in Istanbul the building of an open residential community in these last years has been an important challenge, which has modified some forms of life in common of the past. Some brethren from other provinces, for example from the province of New England,



were also working with us for 10 years and this made our community bilingual for a while. A Polish Lazarist also worked on probation for a year in Turkey. At the moment two young Theology students, a man and a woman, are living with us in the residential community for a probation lasting some months and the two seminarians from Austria and Germany will spend a month of their novitiate with us as well. We are aware that we want to share intercultural and interreligious experiences and also to find new forms of life for our community. The General Superior's exhortation, through Robert Maloney and Gregory Gay, for international help has produced no results so far, maybe also because the importance of an interest in Islam for the activity of a house or a province is hardly understood.

#### *6. Christian Churches in Europe for Cohabitation with Muslims*

The urgency of this question is however clearer and clearer for the Christian Churches in Europe and therefore they prepared a common working document about the cohabitation with Muslims in 2003. In it the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) invited to the demolition of fears, mistrust and prejudice between Christians and Muslims. Under the title *Meeting Muslims?* they give suggestions about how to organise life in common without losing the identity of both sides.

This document warns Christians not to retreat "defensively" in front of the new experience of a society which is increasingly pluralistic, secularised and globalised. This defensive attitude is "outdated", but it is often difficult to reject it because of fear of being "weakened".

All through her almost 2000 years of history, the Church has come into contact with other faiths, before and after the emergence of Islam, although the latter has constituted a particular challenge. Face to face encounters have, most often, been negative "but both in the East and the West there have been exceptions on both sides who have prepared a more constructive way", says the document.

The Churches enumerate "Stages for encounter and dialogue". First of all we must be aware of our wounds. "Forgiveness is not possible if we do not take into account the wounds of history inflicted by each of our communities on the other", says the document. At the same time we must recognize our failings. Moreover we must look for shared values without refusing or suppressing the existing differences. "Vigilance is necessary to evaluate differences of faith or practice. Whoever finds everything good in another community is naive, or a coward who is scared by difference. Our job is not to suppress the differences, but rather to dismantle the psychological barriers between us".

The Churches suggest a better formation of Christians for the

encounter with Muslims: “If we have less fear of one another, we will do great things. Coming close to the other will not be the dead-end of being crushed, but an avenue of respect for the other”.

### *7. A Challenge for the Vincentian Community*

I believe that these official texts of the Church are a challenge for us. If the Church and we in her want to perform our task, we need meeting points and therefore we want to work in Istanbul against all attempts at isolation and segregation, which have been strongly felt in the society as a contrary movement to these initiatives both in the Islamic world and in Europe.

This is also deeply connected with fear of others, of strangers. I would like to quote a Turkish example of this fear from an academic symposium about missionary activities in Turkey, which took place in Istanbul last year:

Above all we must take into consideration that young people who attend secondary schools or universities in other languages or take part in foreign languages programmes get much more often in touch with missionary propaganda, so that different measures seem necessary in order to warn them, to inform them and to reinforce their national and religious awareness. It has been shown by research that these young people who attend and finish such schools experience serious problems in the relationship with their parents and other adults. It is no wonder that these young people who are alien to their own families and to the national and religious culture and identity of our society represent an easy prey to Christian missionaries. For this reason it is extremely important to seriously check and reorganize the programmes and teaching materials of such schools.

(Translation from the book  
*Missionary Activities in Turkey*, 2004, p 443, §5.)

On the other hand there are also some positive experiences in this field: we were invited last year to a UNESCO Conference in Istanbul to give a talk about the living together of Christians and Muslims in Austria as an example to imitate.

Since I have been working for many years in Turkey in the cultural field of education, it has become clear to me how important a growing understanding of the religious beliefs of others is for a true encounter, which moves towards the other “Weltanschauung” without any fears. Firstly we must do this ourselves before we can require this change from the others. The texts of the Church talk about the dialogue of reli-

gious exchange and the dialogue of religious experience.

In the last decades, as I have already said before, a really revolutionary change has been begun by the Second Vatican Council, but this change has not been perceived enough and therefore it is necessary to stress it again.

I have always been convinced that we should do this in the Vincentian Community.

Today we as Catholics can be very happy that there is a clear official position of our Church on the issue of our attitude towards Islam, which has been reached after long search concerning the evaluation of other religions during the latest Council. But it is surprising that sometimes even the highest authority of our Church, an ecumenical council, is not given much consideration, where it says in the declaration *Nostra Aetate* no. 3:

The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself, merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honour Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

This concept has been later resumed, by Pope John Paul II. During his visit to the mosque of Omayyad in Damascus he referred to this practical encounter of cohabitation and of better information about each other:

It is my ardent hope that Muslim and Christian religious leaders and teachers will present our two great religious communities as communities in respectful dialogue, never more as communities in conflict. It is crucial for the young to be taught the ways of respect and understanding, so that they will not be led to misuse

religion itself to promote or justify hatred and violence.... Better mutual understanding will surely lead, at the practical level, to a new way of presenting our two religions not in opposition, as has happened too often in the past, but in partnership for the good of the human family.

If we consider these reflections, it becomes clear that for many aspects a deeper knowledge of the very complex Islamic faith would be necessary. We should not develop illusory dreams about a dialogue of religions, but we can state that this dialogue is possible in harmony and respecting the theological backgrounds of Christianity and Islam.

I believe that this must be stated clearly, also to put some limits to such declarations which can lately be heard even in the Church, which claim that the declarations of the Council and the activity of Pope John Paul concerning non-Christian religions are leading us into the wrong direction. After these official declarations of our Church it is unquestionable that Christians and Muslims adore the same only God and it cannot be said that they cannot appeal together to Abraham.

Through a series of historical accidental events, an activity in an Islamic country is still linked with the Austrian province and therefore we are maybe expected to attract the attention of our whole community to the necessity of this testimony for a hopeful and good attitude of our faith in Jesus for the whole world:

To reinforce our own identity in the open encounter with others so that it does not lead to boundaries but it helps to experience harmony.

Therefore, I am very pleased that our general assembly for Europe has asked itself some questions about the relation with Islam and I accepted with pleasure the invitation of Norbert Ensich for this talk, which of course could touch only on few questions. I am at your disposal for any further questions now or at any other time, but I heartily invite you to visit us in Istanbul as well.

# Summer “Supply” Ministry in Iceland

Tom Davitt CM

## I

In *Colloque 47* Sister Judith Greville contributed a memoir of her time in Australia, and in the Editorial the editor invited others to submit similar personal memoirs, hence this article. At the start I should point out that Icelandic uses some letters which are no longer used in English, though anyone who did Old English in UCD with “Fisk” will remember them: thorn, Þ þ, pronounced as *th* in *think*, and eth, Ð ð, pronounced as *th* in *though*. There is also what Fisk used to call “the ligature”, æ. These letters occur in many of the proper names in the course of this article.

From September 1964 till near the end of August 1965 I was in New York studying at Fordham University. Towards the end of my time there I had to make arrangements for my return flight. I had an open return Aer Lingus ticket, New York-Shannon-Dublin. I investigated the possibility of changing to another airline and another route. I have been accused a number of times of having a Magi complex: “They returned by another route”. On the map there seemed to be two possibilities: go south by a Portuguese airline and take a few days in the Azores, or go north by an Icelandic airline and take a few days in Reykjavík. Such changes were much more easily accomplished in 1965 than now. The journey via the Azores would have added considerably to the cost, whereas going by Iceland involved very little extra expense, so I re-routed myself New York to Iceland on the now defunct Loftleiðir, Iceland to Glasgow on Icelandair, and then on to Dublin on Aer Lingus. I booked myself a room in a hotel in Reykjavík through the Icelandic office in New York.

Iceland at that time was a vicariate apostolic entrusted to the Dutch Province of the Montfort Fathers. The vicar apostolic was Jóhannes Gunnarsson, the second Icelander since the Reformation to become a Catholic priest. He lived in a flat in St Joseph’s Hospital on Túngata, opposite the cathedral. I said Mass in his oratory and had breakfast with him.

On the basis of what I saw during those few days I decided that when I would be returning to New York in the summer of 1966 to finish my degree in Fordham, I would go via Iceland in each direction. I had discovered that Loftleiðir offered very good value 48 and 72 hour stopovers in their own hotel for people travelling to or from the US with them. I took the 72 hour stopover in each direction.

By the summer of 1966 Bishop Jóhannes had retired for health reasons to a Montfort house in the US and died the following year. I cel-

ebreated Mass, in French, in a convent on Stigahlið, about fifteen minutes walk from the Hótel Loftleiðir; the nuns were Swiss and Belgian.

Iceland is about one and a quarter times the size of Ireland in area. Its population is around 250,000, of whom nearly a half live in the greater Reykjavík area. About 2,500, or one per cent, are Catholics. I have heard that this proportion of Catholics is the greatest of any of the Scandinavian countries.

In the late 1980s and '90s when I was supplying, at any given time there were about a dozen priests in the country. The priests of the diocese were Icelanders plus one Dutchman, one Frenchman and two Irishmen, Patrick Breen from Clontarf and Denis O'Leary from Cork, both alumni of St Patrick's, Thurles. Once, on the evening before I was due to leave for Iceland, Patrick's father phoned me to ask if I would bring a parcel up to him. Experience had taught me to ask what size of packet, and the answer was seven kilos of Miraculous Medals, minted in Germany with the invocation in Icelandic. The next morning he brought them to me in the airport and I took six kilos, all that I could fit within the permitted weight limit. There were also some Dutch Montfort Fathers, and finally three other priests who worked there for years but were not incardinated into the diocese. These were Robert Bradshaw, a priest of Cashel & Emly, Seán McTiernan, a Kiltegan priest who had been in Nigeria, and a Dutch confrere Hubert Oremus, who is still there.

In 1972 and 1978, going to and from the US for Translation Board meetings and summer supplies, I again availed of the 72 hour stopover in each direction. Since 1968 the new bishop was Hinrik Frehen, who had been a professor of theology in the Montfort house in Rome. He told me that when he was called to the Vatican about his appointment, he was told: "We know you have never been to the country and do not know the language, but we want you to go". At some date during his episcopacy Iceland ceased to be a vicariate apostolic, and the diocese of Reykjavík was established.

I was in Strawberry Hill 1974-77 and I used to borrow from Richmond Library the Linguaphone Icelandic course; there was no great demand for it. Later I bought my own set in Dublin. In 1977 I returned to Dublin to begin work on the Marriage Tribunal, with residence in All Hallows. I signed on for the extra-mural course in Elementary Icelandic in University College, Dublin. This involved a two-hour session one night a week in Belfield. Twenty-two started the course, but only three of us completed it. The lecturer was Dr Rory McTurk, who had been a protégé of Tom Dunning in the area of medieval studies.

Icelandic is a difficult, highly inflected language, and later on when I was in the country I had to make a decision about my further study of it. English is widely understood, so there was no need to have more

than minimum conversational ability, and I therefore concentrated on pronunciation and phrasing for the best celebration of Mass that I could achieve.

## II

At Christmas 1982 Patrick Breen came out to Rickard House to visit a sister he had known in Mount Prospect. He was a deacon at the time, and during lunch he told me he was for the diocese of Reykjavík, having got to know the country while on Legion of Mary work there. I told him of my visits to Iceland.

Later, when we were alone together, he told me that Bishop Frehen was looking for somebody from Ireland to do a month's supply in the summer of 1983. This was mainly for the English Mass on Sundays in the cathedral. I told Patrick I would be very interested, and added that I had enough Icelandic to be able to say Mass in that language, if he could let me have the relevant texts in advance. He told the bishop and sent me the texts, and I committed myself to a month in the summer of 1983.

Bishop Frehen had put up a new building on Hávallagata, behind the cathedral. One wing was Bishop's House, and the other the cathedral rectory, and there were various offices. I stayed in Bishop's House. I did my share of Icelandic and English Masses in the cathedral, and was sent for one long weekend to a place called Stykkishólmur, several hours by bus from the capital, on the west coast. This was because the resident priest was called to the capital for a meeting.

In 1984 I did not go to Iceland, as I had a lot of research that I wanted to do in Paris and Rome. I spent the first few days of July in the Irish College in Paris, and then took the overnight all-sleeper train, *Il Palatino*, to Rome and spent the rest of the month in the curia.

In 1985 my mother suffered a stroke, and her doctor advised me not to go too far away; late in the summer I spent a short while in London. In 1986 Bishop Frehen was sick and I did not go to Iceland. He died in October that year.

In 1988 Alfred Jolson SJ was appointed bishop of Reykjavík. He was American, but his paternal grandfather was Icelandic and he had relatives in the country. His mother was a Houlihan, and he had relatives in Ireland. I cannot recall whether I first contacted him directly or through Patrick Breen, or whether the invitation came from Reykjavík, but I "supplied" in 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994.

My usual supply in those years was a short spell in the cathedral in Reykjavík at the beginning and end of my stay, with the rest of the time up north in Akureyri, the second town of the country, with a population now of about 12,000, a large increase since my first visit in June 1966. On that visit I went up by bus from Reykjavík, and it took eleven hours,

as the road has to follow the uneven coastline, the centre of the island being mountainous and uninhabited. It was a very interesting journey, including a few stops for meals. With an improvement in road surfaces and the building of bridges, the travel time has been considerably shortened. However, on all subsequent occasions in either direction I went by air, a forty-five minute flight in a Fokker Friendship.

On that first visit I stayed in a summer tourist hostel, a building which for the main part of the year was a boys' boarding school. In June, that far north, there is no real darkness at night, and I took several colour slides of the hostel, and also one of the sun sitting above the horizon, at midnight. On that visit there was no resident priest in the town and I had no possibility of celebrating Mass.

On my later visits to the north there was usually one resident priest there, and for most of my visits this was Bob Bradshaw. He was a very committed legionary and was very close to Frank Duff, of whom he wrote a biography, and was a friend of Tom O'Flynn. He spent his summers in Russia, and after welcoming me to his house he would leave for there a few days later. He died in Siberia in 1993, though in hospital and not in the Gulag.

There was no separate chapel. Two of the ground floor rooms of the residence had been converted into a chapel, giving enough space for the usual Sunday attendance. I would say Mass on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings in Icelandic, and on weekdays in English for the Irish legionaries if there was no Icelander present. One local Icelander objected to these Masses in English, arguing that all Masses in Iceland should be in Icelandic, irrespective to the nationalities of those attending. He was neither a regular nor punctual attender, and if he came in late I used to switch languages when he arrived.

On one Sunday I had, unexpectedly, Rory McTurk present, who had been my teacher in UCD in 1977-78. Although he was an Anglican I asked him to do the first reading. He was attending some sort of international academic meeting. Later on an Austrian professor who was attending the same convention told me that Rory got a kick out of informing the others that Catholic affairs in Akureyri for the summer were in the hands of one of his former students. By this time he was a professor in Leeds. On another occasion a large Italian family turned up just as Mass was over; they were tourists and had misunderstood what they were told about the time of Mass. One of them had a small hand missal in Italian, so I said a second Mass for them in their own language.

Before the Reformation there had been two dioceses in Iclenad, Skálholt in the south (*de qua infra*), and Hólar in the north. In July 1991 I decided to visit Hólar. I drove there, a round trip of about 270 kilometers.



Hólar í Hjaltadal is a very small settlement in a fertile valley. There is an 18<sup>th</sup> century Lutheran church and an agricultural college. I found that there was one Irish student at the college. I had a glorious summer's day for the trip, with the temperature nearly 20°, Celsius of course, most of the day. This was not normal, but such days do occur, and on them one can really appreciate how beautiful the Icelandic countryside is. I have been there in May, June, July, August and September, but the "real" summer in the middle of that period is much shorter than in Ireland. I never experienced the other seven months.

One summer, I forget which year, I was asked to go out to an island called Hrísey in Eyjafjörður, the fjord which has Akureyri at its head. This meant a drive by car of about forty kilometers along the west side of the fjord, and then about five kilometers on a small ferry out to the island, which is situated near the mouth of the fjord. I was to hear the confessions of a group of Polish people who worked in the fish processing plant on the island, and then celebrate Mass. The arrangement for confessions was that I was given a printed sheet with a list of sins in Polish and a parallel column of the same in English, each sin being numbered. The penitent would indicate the numbers and then I would give absolution in English. I wonder what the spirit of James Rodgers thought about this. Perhaps, for all I know, there might have been a "reply" on it in the Bouscaren. For Mass a parish missalette in Polish, quite out of date, was used for the first reading. The congregation said all their parts in Polish, and I used English for the rest of the Mass.

One last anecdote on Akureyri before I move on to Ísafjörður. One summer there was an Irish legionary staying there. She was a physiotherapist, but was also had been studying singing in Dublin. One Sunday, after Communion, she decided to sing the Irish post-communion hymn *Céad míle fáilte romhat, a Íosa*. This has the repeated refrain *a Íosa*, and she began to notice that the congregation was reacting in an odd manner. There were smiles first, then titters and finally laughter at the repetitions, much to her perplexity. Afterwards she found out that what they thought they were hearing was *ýsa*, the Icelandic word for a haddock.

In those summers, before returning to Reykjavík, I used to fly over to Ísafjörður, the main town in the Western Fjords, with a population of about 3,000. There was a small house there, which had been purchased by Bob Bradshaw. Mass was in a ground-floor room, for the eight or ten people who would come when they were told that a priest arrived. A rather unusual aspect of Sunday Mass there was that while I was celebrating the liturgy in the front room, a young Ulster Presbyterian woman would be boiling the kettle and setting out cups and saucers in the kitchen for the tea and coffee after Mass. She always turned up, and

theology or ecclesiology never entered into the after-Mass get-together, nor did politics.

One of the things I enjoyed very much on my visits to Ísafjörður was the approach to the runway at the airport, usually in a Fokker F50 turboprop. The approach was up into a long dead-end fjord, with the plane below the top of the sides of the fjord, and the wing tip fairly close to the right hand side. The pilot was losing height all the time as he approached the dead end, and as we reached the end of the fjord he banked steeply to the left in a u-turn and dropped quickly down on the end of the runway which was along the base of the cliff on the other side. This never ceased to thrill me. It was also thrilling to watch this approach from the ground, while waiting for the return flight. On one occasion I saw the plane coming, making the turn, and then suddenly revving up and climbing away from the runway without touching down. I thought he would make a second approach but we were informed that he had gone back to Reykjavík because he could not land in the cross wind. This meant that I had to return to the house, retrieve the key and start up all systems again. The next day the airline phoned to let me know the new arrangements. This involved first of all a journey by bus across the mountains to Þingeyri on a neighbouring fjord, where the runway was not affected by the adverse wind.

### III

As well as the Cathedral of Christ the King in the city, with its square tower prominent on the city skyline, there are other centres of Catholic presence in the greater Reykjavík area. In Breiðholt there is St Mary's church, built in 1984; a Bob Bradshaw initiative, I believe. Further out is Hafnarfjörður, a township in its own right, with St Joseph's church. Also in Hafnarfjörður there is a Carmelite convent. Several years ago, with the advancing age of the nuns, a decision was taken to let them return to their own countries, mainly Germany, and close the convent. One of the leading daily newspapers ran a front page headline: "Who will now pray for Iceland?", an interesting insight into this Lutheran land. About a year or so later a group of Carmelites from Poland re-occupied the convent. On one Pentecost Sunday they asked for a priest who could celebrate Mass in Latin, so I was sent. As a memento of my visit I was given a pall embroidered with Holy Spirit symbols, which is now in Rickard House. A short while ago I was in the Irish Cancer Society shop in Dun Laoghaire and to my surprise found an audio tape entitled *Bæn fyrir Íslandi*, (Prayer for Iceland), a selection of hymns and motets in Polish, Icelandic and Latin recorded by the Hafnarfjörður Carmelites.

## IV

I mentioned above that in 1988 Alfred Jolson SJ was appointed bishop. He and I got on very well together, and we were soon using first names, his one being abbreviated to Al. I think he probably did not find it easy to settle down in Iceland, and he missed his fellow Jesuits. He had spent most of his life in Iraq, in a Jesuit college, as well as some time in Zimbabwe. He returned to the US from Iceland quite frequently, and also often visited Ireland where he had relatives and many friends; he also had one or two possible vocations for his diocese. He was very friendly with a family in Dalkey, and I met him quite frequently when he was with them. I also drove him out to beyond Mulhuddart to visit an elderly Icelandic widow who has been living there since 1945. He came to lunch once in St Joseph's, and he often dropped into the bungalow at Rickard House. He used to brief me on the situation of the church in the Scandinavian lands, especially Iceland. He was worried about the need to look for students or priests, not to mention possible bishops.

In 1993 there were celebrations for the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St Þorlákur, the only Icelander formally canonised. He had studied canon law in Lincoln, and I had seen reproductions of a stained glass window of him there. I once went to Lincoln to see it, believing that it was in the cathedral, but I discovered that it was in some other ecclesiastical building to which I could not get access. Þorlákur had been bishop in Skálholt. The celebrations in 1993 were Catholic and Lutheran. The present Lutheran church in Skálholt is modern, and there is no Catholic one. There is only one Lutheran bishop in the country, with the title Bishop of Iceland. He has some "ordaining bishops", who do not have territorial jurisdiction. I went to Skálholt with Bishop Al and a few other priests. We vested in the school opposite the church, Catholics and Lutherans. As the time for starting drew near the bishop asked one of his priests to give a blessing, which she did, and we all processed over to the church. The Lutheran bishop presided in the sanctuary, while Al was principal celebrant with the Catholic priests. The Lutheran clergy took their places in the pews. There was no question of concelebration. The ceremony was televised, and as I was next to Bishop Al I said part of the Eucharistic Prayer, thus being seen and heard on Icelandic TV. I was told later that someone had taped the ceremony, but I never got a chance to see the video. After lunch the whole process was reversed. Al presided in the sanctuary while the Lutheran bishop celebrated, with his clergy in the sanctuary. The rest of us took our places in the pews.

The last time Al and I met was in Dalkey at the end of August 1993, sitting on a seat at Bulloch Harbour. I left to take up my new appointment in Rome in October. Earlier in the summer I had received a very friendly letter from him congratulating me on my new appointment, and saying

“Beware in Rome!” He also told me to “keep coming” to Iceland.

In February 1994 I wrote to him telling him of the death of Ken Williams CM, whom he had known and often spoken about. He replied on 2 March 1994, and in the letter invited me to come to Iceland in the summer as usual, adding that someone had suggested to him that I should come to stay permanently. He mentioned that he would be in Rome in October, representing the Nordic Bishops’ Conference. Shortly after writing that letter he flew to the US. He suffered a heart attack there, underwent surgery and had a second attack and died in Pittsburgh on 21 March. He was sixty-six. Rather ironically, only four weeks earlier Patrick Breen had written to me and in the letter said “The bishop is well”. He was buried behind the cathedral in Reykjavík. His mother is also buried there, as she had died while visiting him in 1990.

The Vatican very quickly appointed an apostolic administrator for the diocese. This was a Montfort priest who was headmaster of the school, named Ágúst George, a rather odd surname for a Dutchman. It was he who opened my letter to Al giving my dates for the summer, and he asked Patrick Breen to let me know that I was still to come and that those dates were suitable. The fax which Patrick sent me was dated 5 April, which shows how quickly things had moved.

In Rome there was a Requiem Mass for him in Icelandic on 23 March, in the OMI general curia. This was organised for the small Nordic community in Rome by Frank Bullivant, an English Oblate at their curia. As a young layman he had studied in Iceland and lectured in Icelandic at Oxford (I think). He and I were the only concelebrants.

## V

The man appointed on 12 October 1995 to succeed Al was a complete surprise, a man with no previous connection with Iceland, named Johannes Gijzen. He had been appointed bishop of Roermond in Holland in 1972 at the age of 39. In 1993 he retired for reasons of health.

A week after the new bishop’s appointment and his arrival in Iceland, John McKeon, an Englishman who had been ordained for the diocese earlier that year, told me in a letter the new bishop had been appointed by the Pope himself and that “Everyone here is delighted”.

In January 1996 Patrick Breen mentioned in a letter that the new bishop would be glad of my help during the summer. Apparently my name came up at table, and the bishop said that he had heard of me. He planned to be in Rome in March. Patrick wrote; “I must confess that I’m quite happy with our new ‘bishop’, and I’m happy that he can be with us for a good long time. He is 63 years”. He put the word “bishop” in inverted commas, because I think Bishop Gijzen’s initial appointment was as apostolic administrator *ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*. Unlike his two

predecessors he was from the diocesan priesthood, and he already had twenty years experience in charge of a diocese.

In March 1996 he came to Rome and phoned Fr Maloney to ask if he could come and see him. Shortly after his arrival Bob phoned down to me in the archives and asked me to come up to meet the bishop. What he wanted was for Bob to allow me to go to Reykjavík for a few weeks in the summer to help organise the diocesan archives. He had appointed the first ever archivist, a layman and historian named Gunnar Guðmundsson. The bishop also asked, in my presence, that this absence should not be counted as part of my annual vacation.

I was in Iceland from 18 June to 02 July. An interesting spin-off was a visit to the Icelandic National Archives, including backstage behind the scenes. Apart from working in the archives I tried to pick up some “vibes” as to how the new bishop was getting on. One criticism which I had often heard about Bishop Al was that he spent too much time away from Iceland. I think he never really liked being there, and, as I mentioned earlier, he missed Jesuit community life. The new bishop was on the spot all the time. Because of his experience he had put a lot of matters on a more organised footing. Apparently some of the places referred to as parishes had never, in fact, been canonically erected as such. He also assigned titular saints to the house-chapels in Akureyri, which became St Peter’s, and Ísafjörður, which became St John’s. He also set up a system for Masses in other places on a regular, rather than on an *ad hoc*, basis.

I was living with him in his house, which he had considerably improved. Here he revealed the difference between a bishop from the diocesan priesthood and his two predecessors who were religious. I found him very easy to live with, and never heard him refer to anything that had happened in Roermond.

I did my share of Masses in the cathedral in both languages, and was also sent for a weekend to Stykkishólmur. In January 1998 Patrick Breen told me that the bishop was looking for a supply for Stykkishólmur in the summer, but I did not take up the offer. On two previous occasions I had spent long weekends there, and I did not relish the idea of a month in that isolated place. The priest there is chaplain to a small community of nuns who run a hospital and a printing works. It is a very small fishing village with very few Catholics and very isolated, being several hours by bus from the capital. In retrospect I think I should have gone.

In 1991 the President of Iceland, Vigdis Finnbogadóttir, paid a state visit to Dublin, and I was rather surprised to receive a formal invitation from her to a luncheon which she was hosting for President Mary Robinson in the Berkeley Court Hotel on October 4<sup>th</sup>. I presumed that Bishop Jolson had arranged for my name to be on the guest list, but the

next time I met him he said that he had had nothing to do with it. I never, in fact, discovered how it happened. At the end of the meal, which had been an all Icelandic menu, as the two Presidents were leaving the dining room the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, passed close to me. He gave me what seemed a rather puzzled look, as if he too wondered how I had got on to the guest list.

# Homily Notes for the Feast of All Saints 2004; Feast of All Hallows College

Most Rev Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin

I think that after Archbishop's House and the Pro-Cathedral, All Hallows College must be the institution in the diocese which I have visited more often than any other since becoming Archbishop. This is an indication of the role that All Hallows plays within the diocesan community and for the Church across the country. I am particularly grateful to the College authorities for the way they have facilitated the Archdiocese of Dublin on a number of occasions, especially on the occasion of the gathering of all the priests of the diocese in September last.

Few seminaries are better known around the world than All Hallows. In travelling around the world, I had become accustomed to meet priests who had studied here and to see how the work of priests ordained here over various generations had contributed to building up the Church all around the English speaking world.

The missionary spirit of All Hallows was quite unique. It was very much that Gospel spirit of going out, of leaving home, of leaving the familiar. Young men came here and began a formation for what was for most of them the unknown. They went to work in dioceses that they had probably never seen until they arrived.

Today things are very different. Before a young man would be allowed take up work in a diocese in another continent, there would be all sorts of processes of verification and specific formation and trial. Everything would be done to ensure that the young priest would be equipped to face a different culture; every effort would be made to ensure that his early appointments eased him gently into the new environment. It was tougher in those earlier days. People just went out and were thrown in at the deep end and in most cases they quickly learned to swim and never looked back.

I am not advocating that we return to those days. What I wish to stress was the extraordinary sense of abandonment which characterised those All Hallows men of an earlier time. They left everything that was familiar to them and they dedicated themselves fully to the new task that was theirs.

Today, All Hallows is a different place. I am sure that earlier Deans or Spiritual Directors would be somewhat surprised to find that the silence of their long corridors has been replaced with the buzz of a modern

centre of formation. All Hallows has established itself as a Centre of Pastoral formation, of spiritual reflection and leadership. There are fewer soutanes to be seen here - compared with my first visit over forty years ago. Its students are primarily lay persons, women and men, who wish to develop their understanding of the faith and its relevance to the culture in which we live. All Hallows sets out to prepare people who will work more effectively in the pastoral services of the Church, especially but by no means only in Ireland.

This does not mean that the college should now quietly drop its title 'Missionary'. Anything but! Today we realise that the call to mission is addressed to all in the Church. Every Christian is a missionary. Every country is mission country.

While not wishing to underplay the need to continue our efforts to bring the message of Jesus to those who have not yet heard it, we realise today more than ever that mission and evangelization constitute the fundamental task of the Church in any part of the world.

I have consistently stressed the fact that the Church in Dublin must be a Church totally focussed on evangelization, that is making the name, the truth and the love of Jesus known to people, in such a way that it becomes a source of meaning and hope in their daily lives.

Mission today, however, still means going out, moving away from the familiar and the secure. Evangelization today involves moving into a new unknown, into a different sphere of life, which is just as much the "unknown" in our time as the foreign lands and cultures were for the All Hallows priest of the past.

It is not a moving out in terms of geography. It is a moving out from the categories of much of the culture in which we live, into the different logic, that of the Gospel. The journey we have to undertake is best set out in the Gospel reading we have just heard. It is a journey into a world where poverty, gentleness, mercy, purity of heart, a thirst for justice and a desire for peace are the dominant factors, as opposed to the desire for self-advancement, self-security, power and possession that are typical of so much of our society.

Being evangelized and evangelising means moving out of the world of our securities, into a situation where even those who suffer persecution and who mourn are looked on as being happy and blessed, as opposed to that desire for instant happiness, and satisfaction and worldly success which we see so often around us.

Faith and mission are always linked more with risk than with security. The Message of Jesus can only be witnessed to when it is accompanied by that special abandonment and complete dedication to the one thing that is important. This applies to mission here in Ireland today, just as it was typical of the All Hallows missionary of years past.



Mission must be radical. There is no such thing as a bourgeois, salon, air-conditioned missionary activity, which protects us from the heat and the cold of that dialogue between the Gospel and current values. Encountering the word of God must leave us uncomfortable. It must spur us everyday out of comfort and security, to permit us to take the leap of faith in Jesus.

This is the reason why the task of mission can never be looked on as some sort of job alongside another, that can be worked from nine to five and after which we can return to “everyday” life. Mission is the fruit of witness and witness is a full time job, with a job description that is ever evolving. Mission means first of all changing our own life; it is conversion and repentance, day after day, after day.

Witness means an openness and readiness to the demands of the Word in whatever situation of our lives we find ourselves. The Church too must be open and transparent. But saying that the Church should be transparent means not simply that we have complex administrative processes so that our openness is documented and recorded. It means something much deeper. Our lives must be open books. People must be able to encounter a Church community where Jesus Christ and his message and his love transpire, through the authenticity of our actions.

The Eucharist is the focal point of such a Church community. Eucharist is the food which nourishes us. Eucharist is the place where we are brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit, into that deeper unity of the one Body of Christ. Eucharist is the fundamental moment of proclamation and recognition of Jesus in our times. “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26).

Let me come back to those All Hallows Missionaries that I met in various parts of the world. True, they knew more about the state of progress towards the All-Ireland Finals than I did, and were well in touch with much of what was happening in Ireland, long before internet arrived. But what transpired above all in talking with them was the love and affection they had for their new environment and for the people they were called to serve.

Mission today calls for us to move away from the familiar, but we too must also love the context in which are called to work. We must love the world around us so much, that we are prepared to give ourselves up, just as Jesus did, so that that concrete world, its people, its families, its culture and all the good gifts of the Lord can be transformed, not through us, but through the power of Jesus working through us: Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life.

# An “Elective Affinity”; Florence Nightingale (\*)

Luis Huerga CM

*Translated by Joyce Howard DC*

This article was first published in Spanish in the *Bulletin of the Province of Salamanca*; No 172 (May-June 2004). Many thanks to the author for permission to reprint it here.

This is what Sr Lucie Rogé said at Salamanca on 22nd October 1977 (1): “I would like to quote you a paragraph from the report that the International President gave at the Tokyo Conference in June 1977:

Since the role of nurses is becoming increasingly important and they are taking on more and more responsibilities with regard to patients, their competence ought to be recognised and used by people at the highest levels of government when it comes to decision making in this area.”

And Sr Rogé continues: “We are living with our colleagues in a climate that promotes feminine and professional values...They expect from us...openness in complying with its regulations: “We are all equal”, they say...”

The years between Fr Etienne’s day and our own times have not been wasted. In 1854, Fr Etienne had told Florence Nightingale;

You have taken notes as though you were going to build a machine...Your machine might look like the model you have in front of you; it won’t be without its nuts and bolts, but it won’t work. You will have the machine but where will you get the steam power to drive it? The steam power here is charity, humility, self-denial, obedience and all the virtues that are the inspiration behind the religious life. All this, Madame, can only be found in the Catholic Church: the Protestant religion has lost sight of this concept and that is precisely why the religious life cannot flourish there. You can make as many copies of our Institutions as you like, but I venture to say that they will not last. (2)

In fact, when Miss Nightingale and her 38 followers sailed out to the Bosphorus, the London *Times* wrote the following: "Many and very experienced officials doubt whether this enterprise can be a success although a similar service in France has been highly effective. Unless they are given clear evidence to the contrary, the public will find it very hard to believe that Protestant England can make these women into Sisters of Charity who are just as able to carry out this exalted mission as well as a Catholic country can." (3)

The notion of steam power was a popular concept in Etienne's days: the railways, navigation and industrial concerns were all powered by this new source of energy. Well, it wasn't that Miss Nightingale was without steam power. In 1837, she did indeed hear a call, as she herself described it. She was then 27 years old, rich, beautiful, lighthearted and very well-educated. As well as knowing Greek and Latin, she had already learnt Italian and was knowledgeable in history and the positive sciences when, in 1850, after travelling across Italy, Greece and Egypt, she lighted on Kaiserwerth near Dusseldorf, where she engaged in theological and biblical studies. It was then that she heard what she referred to as "the voice of God" calling her to the work of caring for the sick, something that people at that time regarded as ill-befitting women of her class. At first, the "voice" was not clear. When she was in Egypt it became clearer and this was when Miss Nightingale observed the work being done by the Daughters of Charity in Alexandria.

It was from here that a Sister wrote to the Superioress General on 24th November 1850:

....they [the sick] are very submissive and extremely trusting. Hordes of them come into the dispensary and sit down on the benches. Then the consultations and the treatments begin...They are not used to taking medicines; they don't know how to take them so we have to treat them like children and give them the medication. These great big men with their beards and whiskers would make you laugh when they are give a spoonful of medicine or a tablet. They open their big mouths and grimace and screw up their faces. We also have to put ointment or drops into their eyes because they cannot do this for themselves. And they have to take their medication here in the dispensary, otherwise they would make a mess of everything. (4)

In Kaiserwerth, Pastor Theodore Fliedner had set up a hospital and a school for deaconesses: Miss Nightingale followed a nursing course there for one term. In 1853, she returned to London. The position of Superintendent in a convalescent home for upperclass ladies was then vacant and Miss Nightingale was appointed to the post. "When the

English government (continued Fr Etienne's biographer) influenced by public opinion, decided to bring in nurses to work in the field hospitals, all eyes turned to Miss Nightingale...For some time this lady had been head of the leading Anglican charity in London, and she took up this difficult task in a spirit of genuine self-sacrifice". (5)

But this "self-sacrificing" lady still went to Paris via Marseilles, because she wanted to have a closer look at the Daughters of Charity, study their Rules and begin to follow their way of life. Armed with a letter from Queen Victoria, she visited Fr Etienne and asked his permission to spend some days with her companions in one of the establishments run by the Sisters. Fr Etienne was not in favour of their living together because it would have created disorder in the community: instead, he himself took Miss Nightingale to the Mother-House where she was able to read the Rules, see the works and inspect everything at her leisure. Later on, she went to the orphanage in rue Oudinot, Necker Hospital and the house in rue de Reuilly: everywhere she went she was given all the information she needed. "In all these places I took careful and detailed notes" she said afterwards.

The British forces had set up their field hospital in an Asian quarter of Istanbul, Uskudar (Scutari). At first, the military doctors were opposed to the idea of women helpers but events dictated otherwise. After the siege of the Franco-British position in Inkermann (5th November 1854), the wounded began to pour in and this required the full-time service of these nurses. They were responsible for the hygiene, the regular observation and the systematic recording of the medical history of each patient. They also sent the soldiers' pay to their families and set up reading rooms for convalescent patients. The nation showed its heartfelt gratitude: a collection organised in November 1855 brought in huge sums of money for Miss Nightingale to use in reforming health care in British hospitals.

Miss Nightingale was responsible, for example, for having the patients in different units. The money collected enabled her to set up a Nursing College (St Thomas' Hospital) and this led to branches being set up all over the country.(6) She turned what was once considered a servile occupation into a highly respected profession; she did this through the systematic use of special techniques, and particularly by compiling and comparing relevant statistics.(7) She was the first woman to be elected member of the Statistical Society in 1860: in 1874 she was made an honorary member of the American Statistics Society.

The most "outstanding" of her 200 written works was her *Notes on Nursing*, published in 1860: this has been translated into eleven languages and the work is still in print today. Queen Victoria invested her with the British Royal Red Cross in 1883. In 1907, she was the

first woman to be awarded the Order of Merit. Other honours were heaped upon her. She died on 13th August 1910, at the age of ninety. In a letter to her father she expressed this absolute affinity with those she cared for: "When you are a nurse you do not see somebody as a poor man but as a brother in need of care..."

#### Notes

- \* "Elective Affinities" is the title of a famous work by Goethe (1749-1832). The name Florence was chosen because she was born in the city of Florence - an older sister, who was born in Naples, was called Parthenope, because this was the name given to that city in Virgil's funeral distich. I am indebted to Unity Doherty, a student of Fr Eugene Curran CM (All Hallows, Dublin) for many notes on Miss Nightingale.
1. *Writings and Talks*, CEME, 2000, p533
  2. *Life of Fr Etienne...*, Paris, Gaume & Co, 188 1, pp 372-6. The Sisters who cared for the sick and the plague-ridden men of the French and Piedmontese armies during the Crimean War (1854-6) received the highest praise and commendation from military and governmental leaders: their heroism stemmed, for a time, the tide of anti-Catholic feeling that was gaining momentum.
  3. Ibid. p733 note: Article quoted in the *Universe* dated 3rd December 1854.
  4. *Annals of the Mission*, vol XVI (1851) p.112
  5. Ibid. p372 ff.
  6. Strangely enough, they wouldn't accept black nurses. This changed, however, in 1865, when Mary Seacole set up a college for black women.
  7. The circular graph with percentage blocks was her idea.

## Father Seamus O’Neill CM

When I got to know Seamus forty years ago, I had no idea that we would form such a firm and lasting friendship; he was nearly twenty years my senior and I did not anticipate the closeness that would develop between us. But a few things about Seamus surprised me; the first was how good and effective a teacher he was. Both in the Primary school and in college, Seamus was an excellent teacher and his pupils and students appreciated this. At first I had not taken him seriously enough because I thought he was too conservative. But when I saw that he knew the Scriptures and especially the Old Testament so much better than I did, I stopped worrying about his conservatism. But his teaching ability was not the quality that most attracted me; I had gradually got to know someone who was gentle and gracious and a wonderfully caring priest. After sharing a number of holidays, we formed a deep friendship for which I am grateful and always will be. Another endearing quality was his humour but it was his unfailing goodness and kindness that were his most notable qualities. At the time of his death I asked some people about him and found that the most frequently used epithet for him was “gracious”. No doubt, much of this admiration came from the extraordinary faith and devotion to prayer that marked his life. I remember realising at some stage that part of my own prayer was for a share in his devotion to it.

I knew little of Seamus’ health problems. But after he had told me about his early pneumonia and fear of colds, I remember once going to visit him in his room when he was complaining of a bad chest. I found him barely visible behind a veil of smoke from his pipe; he saw the humour in the situation.

Seamus’ gentle and saintly qualities are less surprising when one remembers his family. He was the eighth of ten children, three boys and seven girls. Six of those girls became nuns. He is survived by three sisters: Eileen, Sr Bernadette of the Carmelite Convent in Tallow, Co Waterford; Ethna, Mrs Curtis in Kilcurry, Co Louth; and Nora, Sr Therese of the Convent of Mercy in Downpatrick. Seamus was very attached to all his family and very appreciative of all he had received from them. They were the object of many of his prayers. This reflects the deep family and religious spirit that must have been in his parents and that shone in Seamus all the thirty plus years that I knew him. It was to be seen in his faithfulness to the breviary and rosary and his unfailing devotion to the process of getting to know his Lord. And Seamus frequently acknowledged that debt he owed to his family. It would have

been easy to think of his devotion as over-pious but this would be to forget his knowledge of the Scriptures and how well based his devotion was. He was one who thought and prayed about his faith as few of us have.

Not only was Seamus an effective teacher but also one beloved by his students and pupils. I know former students who still speak of him with gratitude and affection. Though he was often diffident about his own ability - and would often prefer to ask someone else to do the job in hand, he would be successful when he carried it out himself. His students and pupils saw that this humble and shy man had a lot to offer them. A mutual friend to whom Seamus was once a supervisor said the following about him: "Fr Seamus was a priest who lived all the ample resonance contained in that designation. As supervisor he was gentle and gracious (his words of encouragement and affirmation and continued fidelity to his student helped her in life). His humility and desire that others receive the limelight hid his academic scholarship and learning.

As a priest he spoke by example of a deep inner life and an honouring of the need to nurture the soul. As a friend he loved unconditionally, without judgement he honoured difference. I always felt called by Seamus to be the best I could become. His life of selfless gift leaves me and many others with a rich treasure of memories that sustains us."

Seamus and I shared a number of holidays in Spain and Italy and it was then that I began to appreciate both his humour and the wonderful company he could be. I found that he was not only friendly and appreciative of other people but that his consciousness of his priesthood was unceasing. He lived the dictum that there is no holiday in the spiritual life. For him people were seen first as children of God and he frequently commended them to God. His prayer was as practical and natural to him as breathing and he was always concerned for people's relationship with their maker. Indeed, even while on holiday he was not beyond a little evangelisation. No doubt this too was something he had learned as a child and had developed all of his life.

In those holidays we also shared our love of Scrabble and because I had played the game before he did I was a little taken aback at how often he beat me. It was on one of the holidays too that I first learned about his interest in painting and drawing and saw that though self-taught he was surprisingly proficient at it. He once borrowed a bird book from me and I was astonished at how accurately he could reproduce drawings of the larger birds. Much later, when he was resident in the Sacred Heart Home, I saw that he had continued this interest and improved his skill.

There was one interest of Seamus that I was unable to share. He had a great love of the Irish language and many wonderful memories of the Donegal Gaeltacht and the people he met there. He often spoke with

great enthusiasm of the beauty of the language and though he had misgivings about the teaching of the language in schools, he never lost his love for it. It was typical of him that many of the passages he remembered and shared were from prayers. Two of his loves seemed to grow in his last days as he read these prayers and gave me a commentary on them.

Tom Woods CM

#### SEAMUS O'NEILL CM

Born: Lurgan, 19 November 1918  
 Entered the CM: 7 September 1938  
 Final Vows: 8 September 1940  
 Ordained Priest: 26 May 1945 at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

#### APPOINTMENTS:

1945-'50 St Patrick's, Drumcondra  
 1950-'66 St Vincent's, Castleknock  
 1966-'70 St Paul's, Raheny  
 1970-'84 St Patrick's, Drumcondra  
 1984-'88 DePaul House, Celbridge  
 1988-'90 193 Richmond Road, Fairview  
 1990-'94 Iona Drive, Glasnevin  
 1994-'99 St Patrick's, Drumcondra  
 1999-2004 St Paul's, Raheny (Sacred Heart Residence)

Died 4 September 2004  
 Buried Glasnevin



## Fr Pearse Gallagher CM

My first contact with Pearse was in Mr Waller's Class in 4th year in Castleknock; he having arrived from an earlier spell in O'Connell's School, preceded by a primary spell in St Patrick's Drumcondra, where, I presume, he had his first contact with Vincentian ethos.

We boys in Castleknock who had been on 'an cúrsa fada' naturally assumed that he was a Dub born and bred, a mistake immediately corrected by the incumbent. A proper reading of the "gospel of Donegal" left us in no doubt that Dublin in all things ranked as a very poor second-best to his native county. It emerged that the family had come from Gweedore to reside in Drumcondra on the retirement, from his teacher's principalship, of Pearse's father, a native speaker.

Subsequent to our three years in Castleknock, we found ourselves making the most fulfilling decision of our lives and arrived together in St Joseph's Blackrock, where we were accompanied eventually by six other aspirants, all of us, thank God, becoming members of the Little Company.

Pearse and I were to soldier together not merely through our formation period but through the university, through ordination and at various stages of our subsequent life in the community; briefly in St Patrick's College, Armagh, and on various mission ventures, ending up here in Phibsborough from 1986 to the present.

Pearse's physique and powerful voice made him a formidable dean of discipline but ensured that a mission career was only waiting for his arrival; and so it was, that my contact with him on the mission front were brief and uneventful. However, I can recall occasions on which I was privileged (especially in terms of Mission *as Gaeilge*) when we were working together.

As a missionary he was quite outstanding. There must be very few places, not only in Ireland but in Britain as well, where he could not claim, as he often did, "O yes I gave a mission there". It must be a cause of great satisfaction now in the Heavenly Kingdom to contemplate the many souls whom he had the privilege of saving, the number of those Parishioners here in St Peter's who have come up to us since his death to say "We will miss him from the Confessional".

As well as his many years on the mission ground which brought him for two others spells to St Peter's, he was also in Sheffield as superior where he was fortunate to have as near neighbours a family of close relatives.

He was deeply devoted to his family, in particular to his sister, a

Sister of Mercy who eventually found herself stationed in Nairobi. Pearse was privileged and delighted to have visited her there. Her grave is now in the same cemetery as the Venerable Edel Quinn. His two nephews and their families were a source of great satisfaction to him, their proximity being a great help especially in these last months when he was less mobile.

As a member of the Community, he would always be remembered as a model of observance and punctuality, never other than first at all exercises, never to be caught out in any Liturgical Office changes, always first with the news of any Community procedures.

On the occasion of a mission in the general area of Strabane during the troubled times, as the congregation were preparing to enter the Church for the start of the evening mission, they were horrified to see, right beside the wall of Church, a lorry drawn up, which had been earmarked as loaded with primed bombs. Pearse was one of the missionaries involved and he was trying to persuade any brave young men who would be willing to try to remove the obstacles to a safe area. The general reaction was "Ah now Father, would you like to have to do that job yourself" so he said, "right, I'll sit in the cab if one of you will drive"; they were so impressed that one of them accepted the challenge and the occasion was saved. – All in the missionaries day's work.

Sagart agus Gaeilgeoir De'n Chéad Scoth. Go Dugaí Dia an Choróin Rioga dó I Mease na Naomh.

#### PEARSE (PATRICK JAMES) GALLAGHER

Born: Gweedore, Co Donegal, 30 April 1920  
 Entered the CM: 7 September 1938  
 Vows: 8 September 1940  
 Ordained Priest: 26 May 1946 at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid Archbishop of Dublin

#### APPOINTMENTS

1946-51: St Patrick's, Armagh  
 1951-52: St Vincent's, Castleknock  
 1952-59: St Peter's, Phibsborough  
 1959-69: St Vincent's, Sheffield  
 1969-72: St Peter's, Phibsborough  
 1972-77: Our Lady's, Hereford  
 1977-87: St Stephen's, Warrington  
 1987: St Peter's, Phibsborough

Died: 1 January 2005  
 Buried: Glasnevin

## Fr Jim Harbison CM

Jim was “larger than life” – a big man in every respect – in physique, in heart and in his availability to others. As we come to terms with Jim’s tragic death, we also have come to recognise how much he was loved and appreciated by so many people. This does not come as a surprise to those who lived in community with him.

Outgoing by nature, he made friends easily. He was equally at home in all strata of society and was happy that people accepted him as he was. Once the initial contact was made Jim never forgot a name and kept in touch, either by phone, letter or greeting card. His Christmas mail, which was rather large, was posted by the end of November. He loved to be first with the news and was always on the look out for a good story. He had an insatiable appetite for everyday events and would recall them in the minutist detail, sometimes to the discomfiture of those involved and to the amusement of others. On one occasion when at community table we were gently probing as to who had left the car low in petrol, Jim carefully and meticulously recalled the movements of each of the confreres on the previous days and the vehicles used by them, and then having studied the various responses and the faces of those present, he discerned a guilty pose, and with a courtroom pose, emphatically asked: “Where was X yesterday”? - the ‘quiet man’! It was not without reason that the community and staff at Castleknock used to refer to him as the “minister of home truths”. He said things as they were and expected others to respond in like manner. Unfortunately on many occasions, this was his undoing, for the more devious ones among us loved to spin him a yarn. He was always gullible for a good story but once he recognised that you were having him on, the familiar retort was, “come on now, who do you think I am!” He loved nothing better than to puncture one’s argument with some straight talk, leaving no room for further debate. The only retort one could offer was that of the late Denis O’Donovan “Harbo you are a very logical man.”

Although born in Dublin, Jim regarded Magherafelt as his home place. It was where both his parents were born and every family holiday break was spent there. He loved the place and later as a priest never failed to visit relatives and friends there on an annual basis. Jim grew up in Clones, where his father worked as a Custom Officer. He began school with the St Louis sisters, Clones, before transferring to the Boys National School. He then attended St Patrick’s College, Armagh, from where he joined the Community.

After his ordination, Jim was appointed to St Paul’s, Raheny. True

to form he immersed himself totally into the life of the College and worked tirelessly late into the night. One wondered where his energy came from. In hindsight we now know that he overdid it and his workaholic approach to life took its toll. Ill-health set in, resulting in a three month hospitalisation. On the surface he seemed to have made a good recovery but, deep down, his health was damaged.

Jim was one of four confreres who shared the unique distinction of serving in all three of our Irish Secondary Schools, St Paul's, Castleknock and Armagh. He was a practical, down-to-earth teacher and was particularly good with less gifted students. He was a strict disciplinarian and everyone knew that for Jim "the rule was the rule". His saving grace was that he had no favourites and treated everyone the same. He was noted for his sharp eye when called upon to supervise an examination and had the reputation of catching at least one culprit copying every time he supervised an exam. Later he would love to recall how he did it. On hearing of his death, a former pupil, Gerry Ryan, the RTE 2 presenter, spoke very warmly about him on his morning chat show; for him "Jim was a special teacher who played a formative role in his early life. He was strict, fair and honest". Sadly Jim's ill health began to act up once more and he had to retire from the class hall. He never complained but accepted it with cheerfulness and patience, supporting his colleagues in every way possible. They will always remember his supportive service, good humour and camaraderie in the staff room.

Although his years as a teacher were happy and fulfilling ones, it was as a curate at St Vincent's, Cork, that Jim really found his niche. He loved the buzz of being with people and they loved him. In no time they had adopted him as one of 'their own'. They valued his Sunday Mass, especially his homilies, which were always brief and well prepared. He was gifted with a strong clear voice and was audible through the Church even without a microphone. Sadly, ill health again began to take its toll and he had to opt for semi-retirement, but he never forgot Sunday's Well and its people. He was in touch with them by 'phone on a regular basis and many of his closest friends frequently visited him in Dublin. That twenty-eight parishioners travelled to Dublin for his funeral Mass some fifteen years after he left them, was true testimony of their love and regard for him.

During the final years, Jim returned to the Community House at St Paul's and helped out in the chaplaincy to St Theresa's, Rickard House, Mount Prospect and the Sacred Heart Residence. The sisters greatly appreciated his presence among them. Never one to refuse an opportunity for a chat, he always stayed for breakfast or lunch and managed to communicate the news of the day to the entire assembly. In his pre-occupation to deliver his message, I often wondered how he managed to

assimilate new items of news, but he did. At community level he was a catalyst for good humour and fun. He was friend to all and a permanent bond between us all. With his sharp antenna for all that was going on, he observed our comings and goings and was on hand to remind us where we should be. His weekly lunchtime call of “who is on confessions this evening?” ensured that the sisters at Sacred Heart Residence were not forgotten.

The balance between spiritual and physical nourishment was paramount in Jim’s life, right to the end. On the morning of his accident, I concelebrated with him. In his homily he developed a theme from the first reading “this is the love I mean, not our love for God, but God’s love for us” (John 4:10). During the intercessions at Morning Prayer, he prayed for vocations to the Irish Province. At breakfast he told us that he was heading for Navan to visit his brother-in-law in hospital, was taking a packed lunch with him and would be back before dark. Sadly he never returned to us, but I have no doubt that he went to his eternal home to enjoy forever the eternal light.

When confreres gather in the years to come and ruminate on Jim’s life they will fondly recall how he lived. He will be remembered for who he was, rather than what he did. May he rest in peace.

Kevin O’Shea CM

## JAMES HARBISON

Born: Dublin, 8 August 1934  
 Entered the CM: 7 September 1952  
 Vows: 8 September 1957  
 Ordained Priest: 11 June 1960 at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

## APPOINTMENTS

1960-75: St Paul’s, Raheny  
 1975-82: St Vincent’s, Castleknock  
 1982-85: St Patrick’s, Armagh  
 1985-90: St Vincent’s, Sunday’s Well, Cork  
 1990-99: St Vincent’s College, Castleknock  
 1999-05: St Paul’s College, Raheny

Died; 8 January 2005  
 Buried; Glasnevin

## Fr Desmond O'Connell CM

'Pray for me, Uncle D'. I grew up with these words. Uncle Desmond wrote them on prayer cards that he gave to his nieces and nephews at the end of his annual visit to Dundalk. It was his way of saying goodbye, before he got into his Volkswagen Beetle and headed back for Twickenham. Each year a similar card and the same wish. Prayer was clearly important to him. I remember Desmond praying the divine office in our garden. Every evening I would see him walk up and down our lawn, the divine office in hand, head bowed in prayer. He looked statesmanlike and dignified – quite inspiring to a young boy.

At his funeral mass, Fr McCullen gave the homily. In it, he used the analogy of a piece of string pulled tightly across a musical instrument to described Uncle Desmond. I think this image is very apt. Uncle Desmond was someone who was indeed pulled tight. He was taut, perhaps a little too taut. And as with a string pulled across a musical instrument, if in tune and played well, it will sound a most glorious and magnificent note. However, if the string is out of tune, or played badly, it can sound off key and quite jarring. The same was true for Desmond. I remember conversations with him where he offered great insight, was compassionate and wise, well informed and clear in his thinking. These were delightful and very special moments. I thoroughly enjoyed them, for I was in the company of someone very pastoral, reflective and interested in matters of church, politics and sport, with special emphasis on the progress of Arsenal. He could also be quite humorous. While sitting on a park bench in Essex with my sister Ruth, a man went past and shouted over to her, "Allo, you sexy beast." To which, Uncle Desmond shouted back, "Yes... she gets it from me". However, there were other times when we met and it was difficult to have a conversation. He would be distracted and find it hard to pay attention or listen. Something was not just quite right and it would annoy him to such an extent that he was unable to concentrate well on the relationship at hand. There were times when he could be short with people. However, when he realised what he had done, he would often go and apologise. This might be in the form of a packet of cigarettes left outside a bedroom door, a note, a few words or some sort of gift. There was something very decent about Uncle Desmond, there was an honesty and a deep down sense of goodness and fair play about him.

Years ago, I remember talking to a Vincentian colleague who had worked with Desmond among the Deaf community in Scotland and England. At some stage in our conversation, I expected him to tell me stories of Desmond's prickliness among the Deaf community. However, it was not so. He told me of the huge regard and high esteem that the

Deaf had for him. He was their priest and he loved them and they loved him. Quite simply, he was theirs. He gave himself to them in a generous and big-hearted way. He was very happy in this work and he was good at it. I saw this for myself when I went out to Brewery Road and celebrated mass with him there. He brought me around to meet the residents and workers. He knew them all, their stories and had a word for each. I saw him kind and caring, interested and alive with the folks there. I met his friends, people he cared for and people who knew and cared for him. He was very protective of this world and slow to have others say mass there. But little by little, as his health deteriorated, he had to withdraw and let it go. I have no doubt that this was very difficult for him. His world was becoming smaller.

He appeared to accept the bother of going to hospital twice a week for dialysis quite well. However, it was slowly taking its toll. When I would meet him in the last year, he was not able to talk for long and would tire easily. He spoke more and more about his own family of origin, telling me stories that he wanted to live after him. When I would prepare to leave, he would ask for a blessing, we blessed each other.

Near the end of his life, I told him of my decision to leave the Community and priesthood. He was heartbroken and, at the same time, he was decent and gracious to me despite his sadness. He loved the Community very much and was very faithful to his vocation in following Christ. He lived simply and privately, seeking to do God's will in and through the Community. It was strange but it was his death that provided me an opportunity to return to Ireland from Boston for the funeral, and there to connect with the Community again. His death provided an opportunity for new beginnings and new relationships in the Community. Even in death, I have been blessed by him.

I sometimes think that Desmond was one of the most sensitive people I've known. He 'felt' everything. Lots of seemingly small things upset him. It might be that he felt a draft (apparently he felt one while sitting by the window of a plane once!), or his tea might have too much milk in it, the food was not prepared right, the meeting was going on too long, or someone was talking too much regarding something they knew too little about! It must have been a torturous way to live, becoming distracted or disturbed by much of what others pay little attention to. And in the middle of this, there was a man who was generous, honest, full of integrity, faithful and prayerful; maybe we did not see enough of this man. At times, it seemed as if there was a struggle going on; a struggle for this gentleman to emerge. Now in death, I believe that this gentleman will emerge in the love of God. But in the meantime, I will continue to pray for you, Uncle D.

Dan O'Connell

## DESMOND M O'CONNELL CM

Born: Dundalk, 23 November 1924  
Entered the CM: 7 September 1942  
Vows: 8 September 1944  
Ordained Priest: 28 May 1950 at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

## APPOINTMENTS:

1950-'51: St Joseph's, Blackrock  
1951-'62: St Peter's, Phibsboro' (Chaplain to Deaf)  
1962-'65: St Mary's, Lanark, Scotland  
1965-'87: St Mary's, Strawberry Hill  
(Chaplain to Deaf in Westminster Diocese)  
1987-2005: St Paul's, Raheny,  
(Chaplain to Deaf in Brewery Road)

Died; 27 February 2005  
Buried; Glasnevin



## Michael Prior; Testimonies

The following testimonies to Michael were offered by Duncan McPherson of St Mary's, Strawberry Hill, during a memorial service for Michael in the College.

### MICHAEL AS A TEACHER AND FRIEND:

My love of things academic started in Michael's classes. He was a truly inspirational and passionate teacher and also lovely, funny man. I can honestly say he played a foundational role in my life. I think of him often with respect and fondness.

Cheers Michael! May he rest in peace.

*Dr Laura Williamson, School of Law, Glasgow University*

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One of my first memories of the RS course is Michael starting a Monday morning scripture lecture, by singing "My father was a wandering Aramaean..." accompanying himself on the guitar. I thought to myself at the time, this was a wonderfully novel way of teaching the Old Testament.

*Mark Brennan*

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### MICHAEL AS A WRITER AND SCHOLAR:

I had the strongest admiration equally for his scholarship and for his passionate concern for justice, and I greatly enjoyed his company of the, regrettably, few occasions we met. We can pray and hope that he has received the crown reserved for those who hunger and thirst for what is right.

*Fr Bernard Treacy, OP, Editor of Doctrine and Life, Dublin*

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He is 'still speaking' through his books, lectures, and various publications. His voice will continue to be heard in many places throughout the world. His strong prophetic message will reverberate until justice for the Palestinians is done and peace and reconciliation are achieved

*Dr Naim Ateek Director of Sabeel, Jerusalem*

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## MICHAEL AS CHAMPION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

He was a very special dear person, with a good sense of humour, a lovely singing voice, a wonderful smiling face that brought light whenever he came into a room... had the zest for life, a wonderful writer, and a great supporter for the just cause of the Palestinians.

*Saida Nusseibeh*

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We are grateful for every good thing, for every smile of hope that he generated on the faces of deprived people. I am confident that he understood very well the statement of the Lord Jesus when he said: Everything you do to one of these little ones, you do it to me. This is where his commitment to the Palestinian cause came from.

*Fr Elias Chacour, Mar Elias College, Ilbillin, Galilee*

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The Palestinians, particularly, will miss him a great deal. He stood by their rights on three counts: as oppressed human beings, as Palestinians who have the right but not the might, and as natural natives of the Holy Land whom the Bible loves, not shuns. He will be remembered long in the minds and the hearts of all those who seek peace with justice.

*Dr Salman Abu Sitta, Palestine Land Society.*

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He was a spiritual and intellectual powerhouse who consistently used his talents to bring to light the roots and the justice of the Palestinian cause. His death is all the more shocking because of its suddenness. In my work as a journalist I frequently had the pleasure of hearing Michael's eloquent addresses... I will remember his warmth, humour and the twinkle in those eyes.

*Susannah Tarbush*

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What most distinguishes Michael and makes him unique was his smile and realism. That is why he was intent on working so hard to uncover historical narratives that justify injustice in the name of religion or in any other name. Michael loved our people here but most important he loved justice. He was always hospitable and friendly, even with those who did not always agree with him on every point. I am sure that the city of Jerusalem and the Holy

Land and those who knew Michael personally would miss his... visits and his earnest commitment to the cause of justice.

*Bernard Sabella, Palestinian Academic*

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Michael was a great friend and wonderful advocate for the Palestinian cause and we shall miss him very much. What a loss for all of us on so many levels. May he enjoy the eternal reward he so richly deserves.

*Br Vincent Malham, President of Bethlehem University*

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#### MICHAEL AS CHAIR OF LIVING STONES

He was an unstinting friend of Palestine and a tireless advocate of Palestinian rights. Many, many, people will miss him. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

*Rev Daniel Burton*

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May God rest his dear soul and grant us all the strength to endure such a tragic loss to us his friends, to Living Stones, and the rest of this sad world which he tried to amend in the most honourable way.

*Ramsay Bisharah*

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Many people who have suffered continuing injustice have lost a stalwart champion and friend of high quality.

*Dr Colin Morton, Focal person of the Middle East Forum, CTGBI*

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I knew Michael well and admired him. He was a very dedicated priest and a great Vincentian. As I got to know him better over 14 years I found him to be a committed scholar, now he is truly a living stone.

*Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor,  
Patron of the Living Stones Trust*

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