

# Congratulations

## Celebrating Golden Jubilee

Bishop Colm O'Reilly

Fifty years ago on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1960 in St Patrick's College, Maynooth sixty eight young men were ordained to the priesthood among them a young man from the parish of Colmcille, Colm O'Reilly. He celebrated his first Mass the following day in his home parish of Colmcille. Fr Colm was appointed curate in the parish of St Mary's in Granard where he served for nine years before being appointed curate in 1969 at St Mel's Cathedral in Longford and later in 1978 he became Administrator. In 1983 the Holy Father named him successor to Cahal Daly as Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. For the past 27 years Bishop Colm has been a very pastoral and caring leader of our diocese. He has also served as President/Chairman of many Episcopal Agencies including ACCORD, CURA and the Council for Justice and Peace.

So fifty years on in June, Bishop Colm returned to his native Colmcille to celebrate his Golden Jubilee Mass among his own people. He has a special place in the hearts and homes of the people of Longford and the diocese where their Confirmation photo with Bishop Colm has pride of place on the mantle piece.

Bishop Colm is one of our own, a man of great faith and prayer and it is fitting that we congratulate him in this his Golden Jubilee year as a priest and wish him many, many more years of good health and God's blessing on his priestly work.

## Celebrating Silver Jubilee

Fr. James McKiernan

On the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, I celebrated being ordained a priest for 25 years. Yeah, my Silver Jubilee. And like everyone who reaches any kind of milestone, I wonder, where has the time gone? I've now been a priest more than half of my life. It's a sobering thought. Yet also a wonderful one, because so much blessing has come to me because of it. As you know in recent years priesthood has taken some

real hits. The abuse scandal has marred the public perception of priests. And even though abusers are a small handful of sick people, priesthood itself has been maligned and misunderstood because of them.

I was really happy to be able to take some time over a period of a few months during the Summer to celebrate the gift that priesthood has been to me. And hopefully the gift it has enabled me to be for others. I've had amazing opportunities because of my role as priest, from my initial time in the Parish of Clonguish, to the wonderful years I spent in Chipata Zambia, to Coosan in Athlone and now in the Parish of Leamonaghan in Offaly. But the most cherished ones have been the trust others have placed in me with their most cherished concerns, hopes and dreams.

Being a priest has given me instant intimacy with people who've shared their joy and pain with me without even knowing who I am. I've sat in the confessional and had people tell me their deepest secrets and struggles hoping that I could be an agent of forgiveness and healing. I pray I have been. I've welcomed infants into various communities. I've buried the dead. And I've preached a Gospel that I have found to be life-giving and expanding. Who could ask for more than that? Not me.

And so I'm thankful for the gift this ministry has been in my life. And for the many along the way who've trusted me enough to be an agent of God's love and grace. I've received much more than I've given. It has been enriching as well as rewarding, I've enjoyed it all and I couldn't ask for any more over the past 25 years. So here's to the next 25 years and the opportunities and the possibilities that it will bring to my life - God willing. Thanks to all who have been a part of it from my family to the countless number I have engaged with; here in the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois and in the Diocese of Chipata. I pray that I will continue to be enriched and indeed humbled as I continue to served God and his people.

## Celebrating Silver Jubilee

Fr. Vincent Connaughton

The image of being like the Parish Priest, or to imitate him in the saying of Mass was probably a familiar scene for many young boys growing up in the late sixties or the early seventies.

That was an image I had growing up, and indeed used to practise it in my family home. Soon, that image faded away, and the reality of Secondary School, and one's career began to take toll.



Fr. Vincent Connaughton

Having attended St. Mary's N.S. in Newtowncashel, I then went to the Vocational School in Ballymahon for one year and there after as a boarder to the Salesian College in Ballinakill, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, for the last four years of my second level Education. The Salesian College was a boarding School like many other boarding Schools of its time. It was here that I quickly learned how to become more independent and self sufficient.

I had four very happy years in Ballinakill, and the Priests, Brothers and Staff were very helpful, and some of the Staff I am still in contact with to this present day. I completed my Leaving Cert in 1979, and at first thought of joining the Salesian Order as a Priest, but later changed my mind to become a Priest for the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois.

The long road to St. Patrick's College, Maynooth started for me. I still remember the President's talk to all seventy two of us and I quote "if half of you will be ordained for the Irish Church in six or seven years from now, it will be great for Ireland." In fact thirty seven of us were ordained to the Priesthood in 1985.

My first appointment was to be Chaplain to the Marist College and our Lady's Bower Secondary Schools in Athlone. It was here that I came to know the students, staff and parents of the Schools, as well as helping out in the football, and in the Parish of St. Mary's and Our Lady Queen of Peace, Coosan. To this day I am still invited back to perform Weddings Christenings etc for many of my past pupils.

From Athlone, Bishop Colm asked me to take up an appointment in St. Mel's Cathedral Parish in Longford after six happy years in Athlone. I went to Longford in 1991 and remained there till 2008. I loved the Parish of Templemichael & Ballymacormack, and it was here that I journeyed with so many people especially in their illness, bereavements and the every day life of the people. During my early time in the Parish I became very involved with the work of St. Vincent de Paul Society. It was my great wish and hope to have hostel accommodation for the homeless, who were not always the welcome guest in the community. With the help of a couple of the members of St. Vincent de Paul, the County Manager, some Council Officials and the H.S.E, I saw my reality come through with the buying of a house on the Dublin Road to be named St. Martha's Hostel which opened its doors in 1996. Some years later I was able to secure funding from the Dept of the Environment, and we successfully opened the second Hostel which we named Bethany House. This was for women and children suffering from domestic violence in the family home. To this day I will always be grateful to the people who worked and helped me in fulfilling this dream for Longford in giving a new way of life for the homeless, and those who suffer from violence in the home.

After spending seventeen years in the Parish of Longford, I was asked by Bishop Colm to take up an appointment in the Par-

ish of Killennumery and Killery, the Island Parish of the Diocese situated in the North West and approx, twenty minutes from Sligo City. To be very honest, it was not an easy appointment, having left Longford, and come to a parish where I knew nobody. I renovated the parochial house, and I visited people and came to know them very quickly, and glad to say that I achieved a lot of work in the parish in the last two years. I am very privileged to be in this parish that I now call my home. If one is happy and contented in their Vocation and work, then that is the most important aspect for anyone on life's journey. I am very happy in this lovely scenic Parish of Killennumery & Killery.

The last twenty five years were not easy years in Ministry. Having lost my Parents within three months of each other was rather difficult. The abuse scandals were very tough to endure, and to apologise for the wrongs of other Priests was a rather difficult task to say the least.

For Priests to have betrayed their trust and to cause so much hurt and pain to people is still something that makes me very angry and frustrated. The one area of my life as a Priest is my Faith and the celebration of the Eucharist. The holy Mass is my daily energy as a Priest, and my holy hour every morning in the Church before Mass is my daily sustenance for the love of Christ as a friend and healer in my life as a Priest in Ireland today.

Finally, the sad tragedy for me and the many people of Longford and the Diocese was the devastating news of the fire in St. Mel's Cathedral that I received on Christmas morning last. This shocking news rocked our Diocese, and especially those of us who had the wonderful privilege of serving in this historic building which served the needs of so many people since Famine times. May I wish the Committee every success in their endeavours to restore St. Mel's Cathedral to its former glory?

In conclusion, having celebrated my Silver Jubilee to my Priesthood this June, I take the opportunity to thank my Family, my friends and so many good, kind and generous people in the Parishes of Athlone, Longford and Killennumery & Killery that I am now proud to know and call my friends, as we continue to progress together in Faith, Hope and Love.

## Celebrating Silver Jubilee

Fr. Patrick Murphy

I have very vivid memories of my ordination along with James and Vincent in St. Mel's Cathedral on 16 June 1985. Looking back at family photographs of the occasion it is clear to see how much we have aged. And yet it does not seem like twenty five years. How quickly the years have passed. I remember very well the homily at my first Mass. I described my years of formation and study in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth as a



Fr. Patrick Murphy

time of preparation for the journey I was then only beginning. I concluded the homily by asking people to pray for me, that the Lord would lead me and guide me. Twenty five years later I am certain that many have prayed for me. I am aware of some who have, and others have done so in ways that I may never know. For all the prayers and words of encouragement I received along the way I express my deep gratitude.

My first appointment was to the teaching staff of St. Mel's College. This was followed by five years as curate in Kiltoghert Parish (Carrick-on-Shannon) before my appointment to Edgeworthstown. Each appointment brought its own challenges in very different circumstances. My years as a priest have truly been fulfilling, challenging, life giving and happy. I look forward to the challenges of the future, to continuing to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a world that is sometimes hostile and sometimes indifferent to that message. What gives me great hope is my conviction that the message is true and that it is as relevant today as it was at any time in our history.

## Parish website LONGFORDPARISH.COM celebrates first birthday!

The parish website [www.longfordparish.com](http://www.longfordparish.com) was launched just a week before Christmas last year - the timing turned out to be fortuitous as it is a great platform on which to publish information of developments in the restoration of St. Mel's Cathedral. The pastoral council had decided to undertake the project in September 2009 and we sourced Martin McGinn of [www.odyc.net](http://www.odyc.net) to provide the technical expertise and to host the website. There is a great value for people here in the parish in having the website containing prayers and thoughts for the day and information on how to arrange weddings and baptisms. There is a further benefit for those who are living away from Longford that

they can keep track of events in the life of the parish and town. Every week the newsletter is uploaded online and there have been regular updates issued on developments in the reconstruction project and photos from outside, inside and above the Cathedral are there for all to peruse.

For example the report from the chartered loss-adjusters OSG, working on behalf of the insurance company Allianz, on the cause of the fire and containing a description of the damage caused and the next steps to be undertaken was uploaded for public access last April. The key to any website is to update the information and a common flaw is that after the initial

enthusiasm wanes sites that are not of commercial importance can begin to flounder. It is a lengthy occupation to edit photographs and keep the flow of information coming on stream. However so far we have managed to keep up with the news and hopefully its potential will evolve as use of the internet becomes ever more mainstream. The website is being revamped at the moment and will have a new, enhanced look for its first birthday just before Christmas.

Sincere thanks to all who have generously contributed articles and photos and to all who have placed links to our website [www.longfordparish.com](http://www.longfordparish.com).

