

Father Matthew Donoghue



Matthew James Donoghue was born in Bathgate on the 25th March 1917. He was Educated at St Joseph's College Dumfries, St Mary's College, Oscott and then at the major Seminary of Coutances in France. He was ordained for the St Andrews and Edinburgh Diocese in Edinburgh in 1939.

After his ordination he undertook further studies at Cambridge University from 1939 to 1943. Thereafter he was a Professor at Blairs in Aberdeen from 1943 to 1956.

His first Parish appointment came as assistant Priest to Thomas Canon McGarvey here at St Patrick's Kilsyth in 1956 where he was to remain until 1958. From St Patrick's Kilsyth he was transferred as Parish Priest to Our Lady Star of the Sea at North Berwick for the period 1958 to 1972. His final Parish was St Margaret's in Edinburgh where he was Parish priest from 1972 to 1986.

Fr Donoghue retired in 1986 to a small house at Cramond, before ill health forced him to settle at Nazareth House in Lasswade, Midlothian, where he died on the 11th February 2003.

(It is interesting to note that the Harry Potter-like Altar Boy behind Fr Matt in this photo is a young Fergus McCann - a future owner of Glasgow Celtic FC.)

'Matthew James Donoghue, priest. Born: 25th March 1917, in Bathgate, West Lothian Died: 11th February, 2003, in Lasswade, Midlothian.

MATTHEW James Donoghue was educated by the Marist Brothers (originally a French religious order) at St Joseph's College in Dumfries, which had a long tradition in drama and literary studies, and nourished his quicksilver imagination and wit. Having decided to study for the Roman Catholic priesthood, he was sent to St Mary's College, Oscott, near Birmingham, and later completed his studies at Coutances, a French seminary on the Normandy coast.

Fr Matt was ordained by Archbishop Andrew Joseph McDonald at St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, in December 1939. McDonald's policy was to send his brightest priests to Oxford or Cambridge for further study, and Fr Matt went to St Edmund's House, Cambridge, where he gained a double first in English and history.

The experience of being tutored by the pioneering but irascible literary critic F R Leavis never left him, and he became a family friend of Leavis and his wife, Queenie. Fr Matt's passion for poetry and drama was to be his zeitgeist, which he integrated with a profound knowledge and love of the church's liturgy.

In 1943, he was appointed a professor in the junior seminary at St Mary's College, Blairs, near Aberdeen, where he came into his own, filling generations of students with what would become a life-long interest in English language and poetry. There were also the first signs of his characteristic habit of delightful forgetfulness and unpunctuality, which he developed into an art form.

Peter Lamont, a student at Blairs in 1947-48, says: "He was known among the students as 'the Wee Matt'. He was terrible for being forgetful and late. I remember on one occasion, we were playing football and Fr Matt was picked for one of the teams. We were up on the pitch, waiting to play but we were one man short - it was 'the Wee Matt'. I was sent to find him.

"I went the long walk back to the college and knocked on his door. He came to the door in his pyjamas. I said, 'Father, you're supposed to be playing football'. He replied, 'I knew there was something I took my clothes off to do'. He had put on his pyjamas instead of his football gear!"

Monsignor James Brennan, a retired former rector of Blairs, says: "Fr Matt left Blairs in 1956 to work with me as a fellow-curate at Kilsyth in North Lanarkshire. A few times each year, the larger parishes hosted our deanery meetings. On one such occasion, I remember Matt coming down the stairs, swathed in a large travel rug, declaiming large chunks of Shakespeare. He said that the stairs in Kilsyth reminded him of an Elizabethan stage and was an ideal place for recitations. He was a wonderful person and a most entertaining companion."

As well as his parish work, Fr Matt was a regular on STVs 'Late Call' and Radio Scotland's 'Thought for the Day'.

From 1958 until 1972, he was the parish priest of Our Lady, Star of the Sea, in North Berwick, before moving to St Margaret's at Davidson's Mains, Edinburgh. He retired in 1986 and lived in Cramond, before ill health forced him to settle at Nazareth House, in Lasswade, where he died peacefully.'

Father Matt Donoghue - Obituary. Published in The Scotsman on Tuesday 22nd April 2003.

'Father Matt Donoghue, a former professor at Blairs College in Aberdeenshire, and religious broadcaster, has died aged 85. The son of a West Lothian hotelier, Matthew James Donoghue was born in Bathgate.

Fr Matt was ordained in 1939 but, in common with the other brightest and best of the church's young clerics, he continued his studies at Cambridge, where he gained a double first in English and history.

In 1943, he was appointed as a professor in the junior seminary at St Mary's College, Blairs, near Aberdeen, where he came into his own, filling generations of grateful students with what would become a life-long interest in the English language and the theatrical declamation of poetry. There,

also, appeared the first signs of his amiable eccentricity and his characteristic habit of delightful forgetfulness and unpunctuality, which he developed into an art form.

On one occasion when he failed to turn up for a pre-arranged football match, one of the students was sent to fetch him. Father Matt came to the door in his pyjamas and when reminded of his sporting engagement remarked; 'I knew there was something I took my clothes off to do'.

After leaving Blairs, Father Matt combined his parish work with a growing reputation as a performer on religious programmes, such as Scottish Television's *Late Call* or *Thought for the Day* on BBC Radio, where his penetrating style and dramatic delivery won him many admirers.

From 1958 to 1972, Fr Matt was parish priest of Our Lady, Star of the Sea, North Berwick, thereafter serving as parish priest at St Margaret's, Davidson's Mains, Edinburgh. There, he was a familiar and well-loved figure, walking his dogs (over which he had only minimal control), his flapping black cloak earning him the affectionate nickname of Batman among the locals.

In 1986 he retired to a small house at Cramond, before ill health forced him to settle at Nazareth House in Lasswade, Midlothian, where he died.

Father Matt Donoghue; born March 25, 1917, died February 11, 2003.'

Father Matt Donoghue - Obituary. Written by Michael Turnbull. Published in The Herald on Weds 26th Feb 2003.

'I remember only two Sunday sermons now. They occurred within just a few weeks of each other though probably not in the same year. All right, I'll explain: first, Dominica in Septuagesima, the seventh Sunday before the First Sunday of Passiontide, which is two Sundays before Easter. Isn't there a shorter way of saying it? There is, but it's not much help: Dom in Sept. Sacristans had a kind of handbook to tell them what colour vestments to set out for Mass in the morning, and where to place the markers in the big *Missale Romanum*. Th hdbk wnt n fr abrvns n a bg wy. Anyway, the Gospel for that Sunday is Matthew 20: 1-16, which ends, "Many are called but few are chosen." (It helps to be Scottish here.) Father Matt Donoghue had steeled himself not to say "frozen" but he did, and came down from the pulpit still not realizing what he had said and wondering what all the commotion was about.'

A Sledge Named Blairs. MEMORIES OF BLAIRS COLLEGE 1948 - 1953 by DESMOND HUGHES Pg 8

'There were other profs like Gerry, all from Cambridge, who didn't teach 'their' subject: Father James O'Hanlon (the Jigger, for his skills on the football field), Father Matthew Donoghue (wee Matt) and Father Daniel Boyle (Danny, or the Byle) had all studied at senior seminaries in France and taught French; but the Jigger was a Classics graduate, with a special interest in Pindar; wee Matt did also teach English, though, and got great performances from his fifth forms when they put on Shakespeare.'

A Sledge Named Blairs. MEMORIES OF BLAIRS COLLEGE 1948 - 1953 by DESMOND HUGHES Pg 42

'The profs would sing at those concerts: wee Jimmy of course, and wee Matt, who sang 'The Road to Mandalay' in a high clear tenor. He always seemed to start too high and you thought he's never going to make it but he did, and at High Mass too, where we risked doing ourselves an injury (had we thought like that) if we tried to make the response in the same key. We were never in any real

danger, though, for the Duff would always step in and pitch it somewhere within our reach. Big Wat was a bass and he got as much fun as we did from his Mud, mud, glorious mud, and Oh no, John! And he had the nerve after that to tell us that we shouldn't sing love-songs! Tim, like wee Matt, had only one song. He seemed shy standing there in front of everybody, but he was somehow just perfect for Red River Valley.'

A Sledge Named Blairs. MEMORIES OF BLAIRS COLLEGE 1948 - 1953 by DESMOND HUGHES Pg 51



In the photo above Canon McGarvey and Fr Matthew Donaghue and St Patrick's school children of St Patrick's School Choir (c1957)

Back Row l-r: Canon Thomas McGarvie, Janice Kerr, Rosemary McGuire, May Peterson, Kathy White, Jean Burns, unknown, Agnes McBride, Connie Beattie, Margaret Drain,

Middle Row l-r: unknown, Ann Valentine, Anna Armstrong, Helen Howard, Margaret Beattie, unknown, unknown, Patricia McBride, unknown, Margaret Brady.

Front Row l-r: Anne Beattie, Marie Reynolds, Sadie McGuire, Theresa Reynolds, Eileen Brady, unknown, Mary Drain, unknown, unknown, unknown, Katherine Quinn.



Fr Matt Donoghue in the centre of frame with hands joined at Marion Year Mass in Kilsyth St Patrick's Sportsfield in 1954.

