

Fr. Bernard Doonan

Bernard Doonan was born in Denny in 1940. He was educated at Drygrange Seminary and he was subsequently ordained at St Alexander's Denny in 1969.

His first parish was St John the Evangelist at Portobello in Edinburgh where he was appointed assistant Priest from 1969 to 1972. After this he was appointed as a Professor at Drygrange Seminary from 1972 until 1986. He returned to Parish work at St Mark's Edinburgh for a year in 1986-87 and was then moved to St Margaret's South Queensferry where he ministered from 1987 to 1989.

It was then that Fr Doonan came to St Patrick's Kilsyth soon after the sudden death of Canon Karl Kruger the incumbent Parish Priest of Kilsyth in 1989. Sadly, after only a year in Kilsyth Fr Doonan also died suddenly and unexpectedly on the 28th September 1990. The Parish of St Patrick's was devastated at the loss of our 2nd Parish Priest in the space of only 15 months.

Fr Doonan's requiem Mass took place in St Patrick's Kilsyth and he was subsequently interred in his family plot in his home Parish of Denny.

Fr Bernard Doonan – Eulogy by Fr Gerry Hand.

Father Bernard Doonan Parish Priest of St Patrick's Kilsyth died on the 28th September 1990, in the 51st year of his life and in the 22nd of his priesthood. At the funeral Mass in St Patrick's on the 3rd of October, the following homily was given by Father Gerard Hand of Gillis College, Edinburgh.

‘Those of us from outside Kilsyth have come here today to mourn Fr Ben Doonan. But I think we have also come to be with you, the Parishioners of St Patrick's, as you cope with your grief at losing a new Parish Priest for the second time in eighteen months. There are feelings of sadness bafflement and perhaps even anger and guilt amongst us today as we try to come to terms with Ben's death as it effects Mrs Doonan and James, the friends of Ben here today and the Parishioners of Kilsyth. These are natural feelings in the face of a happening that we cannot understand or see the point in.

The only thing we may be able to do in faith is to face the words of the Scripture, and while not avoiding our emotions, let these words keep our faces turned towards Christ when we hear:

***‘The length of days is not what makes age honourable’
‘He has sought to please God, so God has loved him.’
‘If we live, we live for the Lord... so that alive or dead we belong to the Lord.’***

This challenges us to see that ultimately our main relationship in life is that of being with the Lord.

It is that giving of ourselves to being with the Lord, that lets the Lord produce a rich harvest from us. The Christian mystery is that in being more available to God, at the same time we are made more available to others. By living the cross, married people develop a deeper human love. By living God's love, single people are sources of God's love and grace for others. The priest in his commitment to Christ's sacrificial love is called to make visible the love of God in his love for the people he serves.

Today in that light we can talk about celebrating Ben's life of love as son, brother, friend and priest. One of the last pieces of advice he gave to one of our students when he was staying with us last week, was the main task of the priest in the midst of all the complexities and busy-ness of a priest's mission today, was to love the people he was sent to. Ben gave himself wholly to that task and in the midst of our sadness; we can also try to rejoice in that.

Ben learnt how to love in the family of his mother, father and brother and in the family of the people of Denny. He went to school in Denny and St Modan's in Stirling. He spent 3 years at medical school and having left that, he spent some time with the boys in need of care at St Ninian's Falkland. (A useful preparation perhaps for his future ministry in the seminary!)

All along this path it must have been a great temptation to give up and take an easier way because of the difficulties he had with his sight. It is a mark of his courage and determination that he continued and lived out a very active priesthood ranging from spiritual direction to putting on presentations to 200 teenagers on school missions.

The only advantage that he said he got from his impaired sight was that he got out of Hebrew class in seminary by claiming that he could not see the dots on Hebrew vowels. At least, so he said.

But maybe in a strange way that was one of the sources of his vocation. That God worked with a physical weakness to make it a source of grace for Ben and those he ministered to.

Ben entered Osterly in 1961 in order to study Latin in preparation for entry to senior seminary at Drygrange which he did in 1963. He learned and developed, and he influenced others, sometimes by word and sometimes by the wave of his pipe. The former students of Drygrange who are here today are witness to the warmth of friendship he shared there. Fr Conway who will celebrate the funeral rites after Mass, was one half of the duo known to us younger and less respectful students as 'Bill and Ben' and to those even less respectful as, 'The Flowerpot Men.'

Ordained in 1960, Ben spent 3 years at St John's Portobello where he is still remembered for the warmth and zeal he maintained to the end of his ministry.

In 1972 he was sent back to Drygrange as a member of staff to teach philosophy. He seems to have carried out a number of tasks there. He was complaining somewhat wistfully only last week that the only subject that he hadn't taught there was Scripture. Perhaps two things could be highlighted about his work there: one is the development of the pastoral training programme he took over from Fr Barclay, particularly his work in trying to help students and staff learn to work as a team in school and parish missions. The other and perhaps less obvious one to generations of less than enthusiastic philosophy students is his teaching of philosophy. In that he constantly challenged staff and students to understand the world we live in, both in terms of where we are coming from and in regard to the future world we were going to be working in.

That keenness of mind was needed when in 1986 the seminary moved to Gillis College Edinburgh. Ben continued to teach in the college but took up residence in St Mark's Oxfgangs, where he worked in the Parish and in the city hospital. He was also called upon to be Deanery representative to work with Father Kruger on parish renewal. It was a heavy work load and he was forced to call upon his reserves of faith and humour, sometimes rather trenchantly expressed, to survive.

It was with both relief at having a settled appointment (so he thought) and with apprehension that he accepted his appointment to be parish priest of South Queensferry after his interim period at Oxgangs. This meant that his appointment to the seminary was at an end. He looked forward with excitement to going to South Queensferry and yet with some anxiety as to how he would manage on his own. Likewise, he was ready to leave the seminary but also a little afraid as to how he would make the break after 14 years. In the event although he found the first few months difficult in adjusting, he loved the people and Parish of South Queensferry. He made it his priority to listen to the people and to try and help the long-term residents of the parish bind with the relatively new arrivals in the area. A real expression of that were the parish events where the ground floor of the house and the club rooms below were literally packed with people drinking wine or tea and getting to know one another and to forming their parish community.

Ben was shocked when he was asked to leave South Queensferry after only 2 years to become the parish priest of Kilsyth after the death of Canon Kruger. He was very disappointed in having to leave that Parish he loved but he accepted the Archbishop's request to come here to Kilsyth just over a year ago.

Again he took some time to settle, but he threw himself into the challenges of a very different type of parish. Soon he was speaking with love and affection of the people of the parish. He was full of ideas and plans for the Kilsyth Catholic community. He recognised the pain many of the parishioners experienced on the death of Father Kruger and was anxious to help people work through that.

Kilsyth is famous for the number of organisations and groups that operate within the Parish. Ben with realism saw that a lot of work needed to be done to help them to become more independent of the priest and yet more able to relate to one another and to the priest as a centre of unity within the parish.

Death struck suddenly just as Ben was looking forward to returning fully to the parish. In the light of the Scripture we are asked to make an act of Faith in Father Ben's death and to accept God's providence for him, especially in the light of a life lived in the spirit of prayer and in the virtue that the Scripture refers to and in the light of a priestly light lived to the full.

We are asked to give thanks for Ben's life which made Christ visible in:

- **his preaching and celebrating the sacraments.**
- **in a constant love and welcome to the people he was among**
- **in a living out his promise to the person of the Bishop, of obedience and service to the diocese**
- **in a willingness to constructively criticise and yet to build up and support ideas and plans that he didn't always fully agree with**

And above all in the sense he conveyed, that in spite of his real worries and anxieties, and without false sentimentality, he was happy being a priest and a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The words of today's scripture let us see, in terms of grace, understanding and virtue that Father Ben's life was indeed long. And so, it is with confidence that we can make our own today's Gospel that says, '*If anyone serves me, my father will honour him.*' May he rest in peace.'

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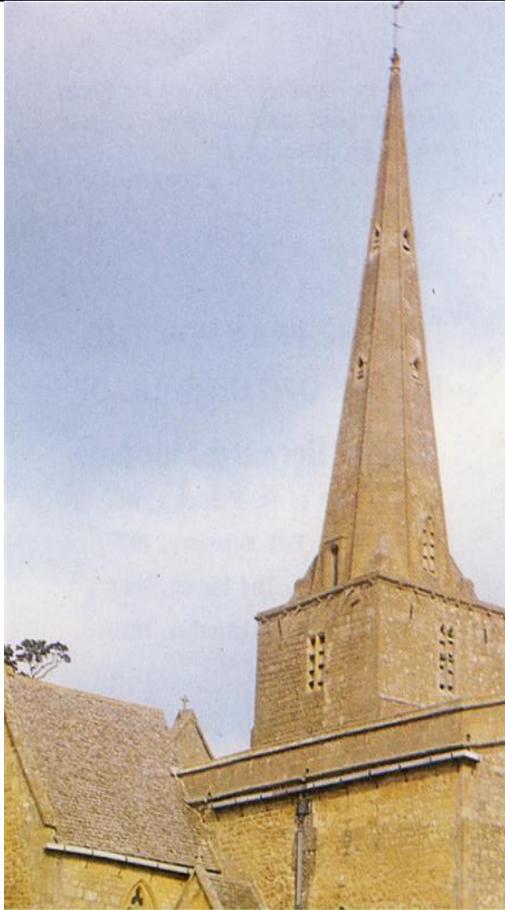
Fr Ben Doonan at St Patrick's Kilsyth



Fr Ben Doonan visits St Patrick's School Sports Day June 1990.



Fr Ben Doonan in St Patrick's after Mass



Ask, and it will be given, look and you will find, knock and the door will be opened

"It is not ourselves we preach but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

(2 CORINTHIANS 4)



PLEASE PRAY FOR THE
REPOSE OF THE SOUL OF

Father Bernard Doonan

Parish Priest of St. Patrick's, Kilsyth

Born 19th February, 1940

Ordained 2nd March, 1969

Died 28th September, 1990



"Pray for me, as I will for thee, that we all right merrily meet in heaven."

(ST THOMAS MORE)

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