

Canon Owen O'Neill

1941 - 2021

1965 was a great year, the Sound Of Music was released, Jack Nicklaus won the Masters and Tipperary won the McCarthy Cup!

While all this was happening young Owen O'Neill was ordained a priest. He was one of 470 young men in Ireland to be ordained that year. It was a common occurrence in the month of June. When you left secondary school you knew some of your friends would be entering Convents or Seminaries to prepare for going overseas to help in the spreading of the Gospel. It was the spirit of the times and it felt great to be part of it. While in the seminary past men returned and told us about what was happening in different countries, we couldn't wait to get started.

After six years of study Fr. Owen was setting out for Nottingham, full of enthusiasm, ready to spend his life working for the Evangelisation of England.

St. John Henry Newman said, "There is one means to convert England, an ample supply of single-minded, saintly, parochial clergy." He would be pleased with Fr. Owen.

After a short holiday at the family farm, he arrived in England and was posted to St. Anne's, Ratcliffe-On-Trent as Assistant Priest.

Owen's Parish In Tipperary was 100% Catholic the Family Rosary was recited every night and Saturday night was always very busy getting ready for Sunday Mass.

If there was a funeral the church it would be packed. He got a shock when two people turned up for his first funeral in England. He quickly came to terms with a different world which, each year, was becoming increasingly secularised.

Owen's second appointment was to the Good Shepherd In Arnold where he worked with Canon Bernard Mooney and later with Canon John Berry.

2000 attended Mass there in those days. He Loved his time there, for about six years, when the Bishop appointed him in charge of the Catholic Children's Society. Part of The work entailed visiting every parish in the Diocese, promoting The work and fundraising. He did this work for six years, but didn't Like the asking of money side of it.

Next he was appointed Parish Priest of St. John Bosco's Eyres Monsell, with instructions to build a new church there at a cost of £100,000. To raise funds he started Bingo and called the numbers two nights a week.

Then he was appointed to Our Lady's in Lincoln for about 8 years returning to Leicestershire and Our Lady's, Market Harborough, With instructions to renovate the church at a cost of £1.2 Million.

It took 18 years to complete the work, but it was a great achievement.

In his years as a Priest, Fr. Owen has knocked on thousands of doors, instructed hundreds of people, visited prisons, hospitals, nursing homes and schools. He has heard thousands of confessions and prepared numerous people for marriage. He has been a true priest who has shepherded his flock. In him, we had a priest to be admired.

May he rest in peace.

And that will be Heaven!

At last the first unclouded seeing

To stand like the Sunflower

Turned full face to the sun drenched

With light in the still centre

Held while the circling planets

Hum with utter joy

Seeing and knowing

At last in every particle

Seen and known and not turning away

Never turning away again.

Evangeline Paterson