

Obituary for Canon Kevin Rea RIP

Canon Rea was born almost a hundred years ago on the 6th May 1924 in the village of Quartertown, Mallow County Cork. His parents John and Margaret had 4 children, and Kevin was the youngest. His siblings were Kathleen, David and Noel.

His education started at the age of 5 when he attended the Christian Boys School in Mallow. At the age of 12 he went to the Boy's Patrician Christian Academy School. On leaving school he entered the seminary of St Patrick's in Maynooth, in County Kildare and later was sent to train at the Venerable English College in Rome for the Diocese of Plymouth. He was ordained in Rome in 1949, and his brother David and Mother were both present for this special occasion.

Both he and his brother Fr David served as priests of the Diocese of Plymouth, following a long tradition of young men coming from Ireland to be priests here, leaving home and family and creating new lives in a mission territory, which would become their homes.

Fr Kevin was a quiet and charming man, who managed to engage people with a simple and gracious calmness. He had a long life in the priesthood which started in Plymouth and ended in Plymouth. In 1950 he received his first appointment as curate and then moved to Keyham in 1952 where he stayed until he was chosen to be the Bishop's Secretary which meant a move to Vescourt, the Bishop's residence in 1957, which he faithfully served Bishop Restieaux for 12 years. During this time as secretary he travelled the diocese with the Bishop and served as a quiet and effective counsellor to the bishop and priests, all of whom would have met him and trusted his wise and caring priestly manner.

After leaving Vescourt Kevin moved as PP to Salcombe in 1964, staying there until 1971 when he returned as Parish Priest to St Budeaux. His last appointment was to Torpoint, a place he loved and stayed in after retirement making that his home for the next 30 years.

Canon Rea was created a Canon of the Cathedral Chapter and served as Chancellor for the Diocese for many years, always bringing to any task he performed as pastoral sensitivity and kindly countenance.

He took time to prepare his funeral and stated quite clearly that he did not want a eulogy, but if something had to be said, and I quote, "let it be short"!

With this in mind and respecting his wishes and wise words, please let me mention his family, who meant such a great deal to Canon Kevin. Kevin and his brother, Noel, had a very close bond. He had a special rapport with his nieces and nephews. And when in Ireland on holidays he was careful to make the all feel special and loved each receiving a handsome gift of a 10 shilling note every Christmas!

We welcome those who cannot be here because of the restrictions of the Pandemic, and have joined us online. Hopefully Catherine, Maridle, John, Paddy, David, Kevin and their families will be joining us from as far as field as Texas, Ireland and Wales.

Former parishioners, priests and many others have given tribute to the qualities of Canon Rea, and most especially to Christine, his god daughter, whose mother served as Canon Rea's housekeeper for 20 years. Christine, your attention to detail and devotion to this holy man and this priest has been an inspiration, we thank you for your care and love that you showed CR, throughout his retirement most especially, for being with him, for including him in your life. Not only were you enriched, but so was he.

Kevin, may the Lord now welcome you home to heaven. May you now receive the reward prepared for you and after a long life in the Holy Priesthood of God, may you now share in the eternal banquet prepared for you in the heavenly kingdom. Amen.