

OBITUARY – FATHER PATRICK MALACHY KILGARRIFF R.I.P. 1927-2023

Father Patrick Kilgarriff (Paddy) was born on the 12th of October 1927 in Ballaghadereen, County Roscommon in Ireland. His parents Martin, & Ellen had one other child and she was born in 1920 seven years prior to Fr Paddy. Her name was Breda and she emigrated to Canada where eventually she died some years later. Father Paddy was blessed with three nieces and one nephew named as Gerry, Ailish, Kathy and Martin whom he always looked forward to seeing.

Part of his schooling included going to St. Nathy's in Roscommon which is one of the oldest secondary schools in Ireland (Founded in 1810) This was followed by "All Hallows" Seminary in Dublin where he was to meet with Fr Denis Collin who also became a priest and one of the 8 who found themselves on the journey to England. That year "The Golden Era" for priests, 36 in total were ordained from All Hallows. Father Paddy was ordained on the 21st of June 1953 and just over a month later the 25th of July '53 he was on his way to the Southwest and to the diocese of Plymouth where Bishop Grimshaw was then in office. The motto for "All Hallows" was "Go out and teach all nations" and this was to influence Father Paddy's ministry over the years.

He spent the first 5 years at Plymouth Cathedral from 1953-1958.

Teignmouth 1958-1960.

Tiverton 1960-1963.

Sidmouth 1964-1967

Branksome 1967-1970

Lynton 1970-1977

Ilfracombe 1977-1978

Sidmouth 1978 until his retirement on September 1st 2002.

His appointments of Secretary then Treasurer for Secular Clergy Fund he was to hold for 30 years from 1966-1996.

Interestingly, he supported the APF - Association for the Propagation of the Faith, and even the "Childhood Guild Association" which fostered children's awareness of the mission nature of the Church.

He retired in Sidmouth, and he continued to run a group called the "Seven Steps Prayer group" they met fortnightly to reflect on the Sundays Gospel. The origin of this group was from the churches in Africa.

So much has been written and said about Father Paddy and I quote the following of some of them:

"His deep and loving concern for all in the parish whether they are old, young, sick, or well, and even those who used to visit for holidays. He was a true Father and friend."

"Truly a Priest for the People" "Warm & friendly manner, always approachable, and a humorous wit. He had that precious commodity of making each and everyone feel they matter and are special".

“The smooth running of the business and financial affairs of the Church during his time”.

“The respect of other clergy from different denominations. It was said that he was the longest serving Minister of Religion in the town of Sidmouth and widely respected by all who regarded him with love and respect as their elder brother”.

Out of the 8 priests who came to Plymouth in 1953 only Father Denis Collin survives. His contribution regarding his friend whom he has known over many years says this:

“If I had to choose one word to describe Paddy’s Ministry, it would be “Caring”. He was truly caring for his Parishioners and for many priests especially when they were seriously ill. When I was ill 3 times, over many years his concern and hospitality for me was outstanding. His own experience of illness before he was ordained, I am sure had a very big effect on him. His effect on me was considerable – he once told me that I took life too seriously! He was perfectly right!

A big highlight in his life was a visit to Kenya with me, to stay with our Diocesan Mission there. Father P.J. Kelly who is now retired, lived at that time in the Mission and received us warmly. That was truly a wonderful and enlightening experience. It showed us the vibrancy and hospitality of the Church in that country. Will never forget the generosity of the people in Chebukaka with their joyful worship. One day even the sign of peace took 20 mins in the congregation of about 2,000.” (He certainly lived the All Hallows Motto.)

A few of Father Kilgarrieff’s One-Line Sermons.

“A smile is a light in the window of your face that shows your heart is at home.”

“There is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us, that it hardly becomes any of us to talk about the rest of us.”

“My parents did two things for me; they gave me a sense of my own importance and they let me know that I was loved.”

“Love not time will cure everything.”

Father Celebrated his seventy years of priesthood with a special Mass & party on Sunday 18th June’23 at the Church of the Precious Blood in Sidmouth. Attended by friends, family & fellow priest including Father Denis Collin. He received a Papal Blessing from Canon Paul Cummins that had been beautifully framed. Everyone was delighted to honour & celebrate a priest who had provided such faithful and long service for many years. It was a happy and joyful occasion.

Who was to know that two weeks later he was to go to the Lord. His admission to the hospital from Roselawn Nursing Home where he had been a resident since August’22 was only to be for a brief time, and he died on Sunday 2nd of July’23.

His second name was Malachy which means “My Angel” or “Messenger of God.” We pray that after a long & faithful service Father Paddy may with the angels’ rest in the love and peace of the Lord.