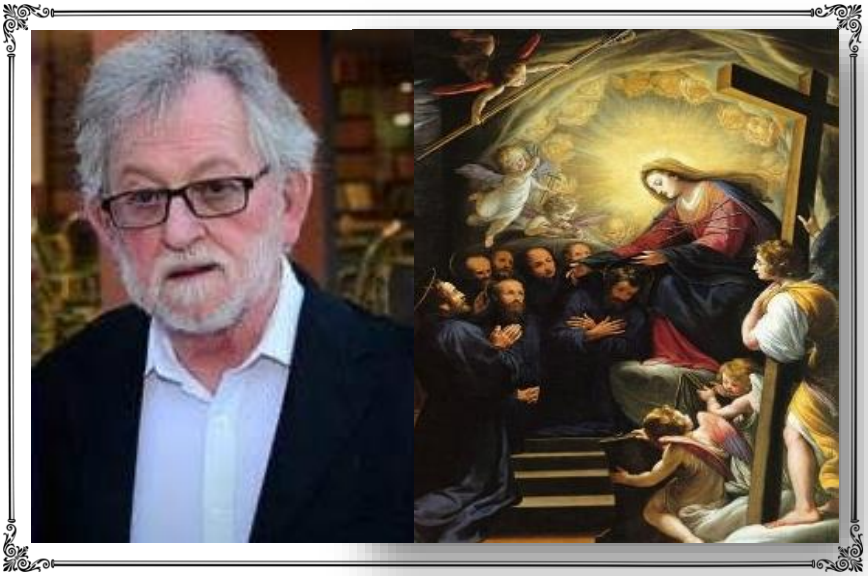
"…THIS ENTHUSIASTIC, LIVELY, KIND BROTHER…"

Obituary of Fr Raymond O'Connell O.S.M

By Fr. Paul Addison O.S.M



Raymond O'Connell was born in Youghal, Co Cork, Ireland on 17 November 1950, son of William O'Connell and Eileen (neé Gleason), one of several children in a good family. He was baptised in Youghal, Diocese of Cloyne and named Raymond. As he approached his 18th birthday, he entered the Order of Friar Servants of Mary at Benburb Priory on 2 September 1968, where he was clothed as a novice on the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, 15 September 1968. On completion of noviciate, he made First Profession vows on 21 September 1969. He began studies for the priesthood, and still at Benburb Priory made Solemn Profession of Vows as a servant of Mary on 28 June 1975, Vigil of Saints Peter and Paul. He completed studies for the priesthood at Maynooth, receiving his degree of Bachelor of Divinity there. He was ordained to the priesthood at Benburb Priory on 1 August 1976.

Pursuing further studies, Ray attended the London Tavistock Institute where he attained his Diploma in Human Relations. He continued progressive studies, receiving an MS Degree at Trinity College, Dublin, 1983, and an MSc Degree at the same place in 1991. He remained enrolled as a candidate for a PhD Degree at Dublin City University. He also did a year of Graduate studies at the Richmond Fellowship, London, in June 1976.

His community placements were at Benburb 1968-1969, Dublin (Highfield Road, Rathgar) , 1969-1971, Dublin (Ramlegh Close) 1971-1973, Dublin (St. Kevins Park) , 1973-1974, Dublin (St Joseph's) 1974-1975 for Theology Studies, Dublin (Elm Park House) while studying at the Richmond Fellowship, London.

On appointment to Benburb community, Ray served in Youth retreats, 1976 – 1980, as well as serving the community as Procurator. His administrative skills were welcomed as he was appointed Vicarial Treasure for the Order's Irish Vicariate. In 1980 he was relocated to Elm Park House Priory in Dublin, where he conducted a service of fundraiser for the Vicariate. He gave long service as school chaplain from 1981 to 1990, moving to serve our Servite Blakestown community in Dublin in 1983 until April 1990.

Transferred once again to Elm Park House community in April 1990 until June 1994, he served as Bursar to the community as subsequently as the Prior from 1992 to 1994. He offered his

administrative skills once more when he served as Financial Director at the Milltown Institute from 1995 to 1998.

He was appointed Prior back in the Servite Priory Benburb in 1998, serving through to 2003. This was the period when the Irish Vicariate and the English Province were joined to form The Province of the Isles. Ray continued at Benburb until 2019, where he became famous for his creative and administrative energies and enthusiasm, making many friends and promoting many activities. He was Director for the Benburb Centre and Properties from 2003 to 2017, as well as Treasurer and Bursar for the community. He was elected Prior at Benburb for the period Nov 2019 to Nov 2020.

It was around this time that his health failed, with developing cancer requiring much medical care. He had suffered a severe stroke in December 2018, obliging him to relinquish the Priorship. Soon he was relocated to Ashbrooke Care Home, Clonoe, Co. Tyrone, a care facility which looked after a number of our brothers from Benburb. He preferred to be in a Care Home near his sister Helen and family in Youghal, Co. Cork, and he was transferred there at the end of November 2020.

Ray always longed to be away from a Care Home and back in a Servite Community. This was not possible, and he was assigned *de familia* to the Grangewood community in June 2022, receiving care and moral support from the Prior Provincial Fr. Colm McGlynn, from his sister Helen, and from numerous long-term friends. He was hospitalised on a number of occasions with failing health. Latterly he needed emergency care in hospital and his days were numbered. In fact, he returned to residence in Youghal and District Care Home, Fortroe, Youghal very briefly before he was called home to God, and died on the evening of Sunday, 18 August 2024. Sadly, his dear sister Helen was away in Canada for the joyful birth of a grandchild, but Ray had been graciously attended by the Prior Provincial Colm McGlynn.

His funeral took place at Holy Family Parish Church, Youghal, Co. Cork, with the reception of his body into church on Tuesday evening 20 August 2024, and Funeral Mass conducted by the Prior Provincial Fr. Colm McGlynn OSM at Midday Mass on Wednesday, 21 August 2024, in company of Servite Friars Marley Prior Fr. Jim Mulherin, Provincial Bursar Fr. Chris O'Brien, members of the O'Connell family, and many friends.

Prayers over for this enthusiastic, lively, kind brother looked after many brothers in their sickness and suffering to be made welcome by our Lady of her Servants and presented to the Risen Christ at the Marriage Banquet of the Lamb of God. May he have a merciful judgement and the joy of a good and faithful servant.