

DIOCESE OF LIMERICK

VOCATIONS



FEBRUARY 2021

Patrons of the Sick

Our Lady of Lourdes
&
St. Joseph, hope of the sick
Pray for Us.

In this Issue...

Healing and Hope in the Midst of Suffering and Death

Spotlight on Vocations in the Limerick Diocese

Films of Interest

Upcoming Events

Recommended Reading

Healing and Hope in the Midst of Suffering and Death

Fr. Albert Duggan, O.P.

Catholic Chaplain Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

I recently celebrated my first anniversary of ordination to the priesthood, and I wanted to share a story related to this milestone. A couple weeks ago, around two o'clock in the morning, I received a phone call from the on-call chaplain at the hospital where I work. Calls in the middle of the night are rare, because most situations can wait until the following day, when I am scheduled to be in the hospital, so I suspected this case was urgent.

The chaplain explained to me that a patient in one of the oncology units was actively dying. His condition had deteriorated rapidly during the night, and the patient's medical team did not think he would survive into the next day. His wife asked that a priest come to offer last rites in his dying moments. I could tell that there was no question of waiting, so I told the on-call chaplain (a Protestant minister) that I would be there in twenty minutes. Shaking off sleep and getting dressed, I headed out the door.

When I arrived at the hospital, things were quiet, as they usually are in the middle of the night. As I entered the patient's room, the staff was doing everything they could for him, to maintain his blood pressure, to keep him free of pain, and at the same time trying to console the patient's family members as he endured his final agony. Over the preceding year, I had seen this kind of situation more times than I could count. But dying never gets old. As Psalm 116 declares, "Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones" (v. 15). I had never met this patient or his wife before, and would perhaps never see them again, but I could at least extend to them some words of consolation and the ministry of the Church. Donning my little violet stole, I proceeded to administer the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick and imparted the apostolic pardon for the dying.

The date of this encounter is imprinted firmly in my memory. It happened in the wee hours of the morning of my first anniversary of ordination. In the Catholic Church, when a man is newly ordained, there is a venerable custom of seeking a first priestly blessing from him. There is some debate about how long a priest can give these "first blessings": days, perhaps, or weeks? The most generous interpretation seems to be that these can take place anytime during the first year of his priesthood. I had thought this question to be merely speculative, but it occurred to me that in his dying moments, this man might have received my last "first blessing." Of course, the blessing—and indeed the greatest of all blessings present in the sacraments of the Church—comes from Christ and merely flows through the hands of a priest. On that day, I received the greatest anniversary present a priest could receive: nothing less and nothing more than a reminder of why I was ordained, namely to bring Christ and his sacraments to the ones who are so precious in his eyes.

Excerpt from the article *Healing and Hope in the Midst of Suffering and Death*, published in *The Linacre Quarterly*, 82 (2) 2015, pp. 124-127. Accessed online February 18, 2021 <http://europepmc.org/backend/ptpmcrender.fcgi?accid=PMC4434785&blobtype=pdf>

DIOCESAN VOCATIONS SPOTLIGHT

*Fr. Sean
Harmon*



Ordained: 1991

Chaplain to the
University Hospital Limerick

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN A DIOCESAN PRIEST AND WHEN DID YOU BEGIN IN HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY?

I was ordained in 1991 at St John's Cathedral by Bishop Jeremiah Newman. I was appointed as a fulltime chaplain to University Hospital Limerick in March 2019. I have assisted in hospital chaplaincy in various parishes where I have ministered particularly Galvia hospital in the parish of Renmore in Galway city and St John's hospital in the parish of St John's cathedral.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY?

As a hospital chaplaincy you are a part of the multi-disciplinary team in the holistic care of the patient. The chaplain on call would be responding to the various requests throughout the hospital especially requests for the sacrament of the sick ,prayers for the dying ,prayers for the deceased and the comfort of the their families. Also the chaplain would spend time in visitation of patients at the referral of the nursing and medical staff on behalf of the patient or their families. As a member of the multi-disciplinary team the chaplain would attend meetings and on a regular basis. The chaplain would also link in closely with the staff on each ward and would often lead a service on behalf of the staff if a colleagues has died or a colleague has suffered a bereavement.

HOW DOES YOUR WORK AS A HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN IMPACT YOUR VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD?

As a chaplain I have been very humbled by people's faith in the midst of very difficult situations, of loss and bereavement also people have a great appreciation of our ministry.

WHAT ARE THE GREAT JOYS AND CHALLENGES AS A HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN?

I have found that as a hospital chaplain people like to meet us for chat or a word of comfort and support. This I believe is a very important part of chaplaincy, to meet people where they are at. It is a great privilege to be present with a patient and their families in the difficult moments of life and bring them the hope and consolation of God's love and care.

As a chaplain it is always a challenge to truly listen and hear what a patient or their family maybe saying-and to not rush in what you perceive is the answer to the question they may have raised.


WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING IN YOUR SPARE TIME.?

In my spare time I would like to visit family and friends. I also like to read, to go for walks and it is always a very special treat to attend a GAA match particularly camogie or hurling.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANY YOUNG MAN CONSIDERING A VOCATION TO THE DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD.?

If you feel God is calling you to the priesthood -I believe it is very important to have a good mentor who will assist you and guide you on your journey of discernment. I feel very humble that God has called me to the priesthood and I believe it is a very fulfilling life .Priesthood alike any other vocation or way of life has it challenges, its joys and blessings.

THE THREE EFFECTS OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

-  **A particular gift of the Holy Spirit**
Strengthening, peace and courage to overcome the difficulties that go with the condition of serious illness or the frailty of old age.
-  **Union with the passion of Christ**
In a certain way, the sick person is consecrated to bear fruit by configuration to the Savior's redemptive Passion.
-  **Union with the passion of Christ**
In a certain way, the sick person is consecrated to bear fruit by configuration to the Savior's redemptive Passion.
-  **An ecclesial grace**
By celebrating this sacrament the Church intercedes for the benefit of the sick person, and he, for his part, through the grace of this sacrament, contributes to the sanctification of the Church.
-  **A preparation for the final journey**
This last anointing fortifies the end of our earthly life like a solid rampart for the final struggles before entering the Father's house.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS  **CatholicLink** SOURCE: VATICAN.VA

Canon Donal McNamara



Ordained: 1973

Moderator for
Pastoral Unit 4,
St Munchins

The Annual Lourdes Pilgrimage is an integral part of the life of our diocese. We recently asked Canon Dónal McNamara to share his experience as past director of the pilgrimage and the impact that it has had on him as a priest.

LIMERICK LOURDES DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE

October 2019 was my final social gathering with the Limerick Lourdes Hospitaliti, which consisted of all the voluntary workers, musicians, singers, youth representatives, fundraisers and all who have been associated with the Pilgrimage over the last twenty six years.

I had been Director of the Pilgrimage and initially when asked to take it on, the thought of doing so was a daunting one. However, it turned out to be one of the most fulfilling, rewarding, uplifting and faith filled experiences of my priesthood. Yes, there was without doubt a tremendous amount of work involved in the planning, organizing, fundraising, recruitment both of voluntary workers and assisted pilgrims, but the willingness, readiness and acceptance of all to come on board was so reassuring and affirming, that it turned what was initially a daunting task into a labor of love.

October 2019 was my final social gathering with the Limerick Lourdes Hospitaliti, which consisted of all the voluntary workers, musicians, singers, youth representatives, fundraisers and all who have been associated with the Pilgrimage over the last twenty six years. The Lourdes Pilgrimage is a very special event in any diocese, Why? because people come from the four corners of it and they do so because they have chosen to do so on their own. They are not coerced, or pressurized in any way, well, maybe at times, with a little encouragement!!



Lourdes is a place of prayer, penance, healing and togetherness and where there maybe no visible miracles on the return journey, at least none apparent, internally, the miracle of acceptance of ones crosses, trials, anxieties is always so evident and heart felt.

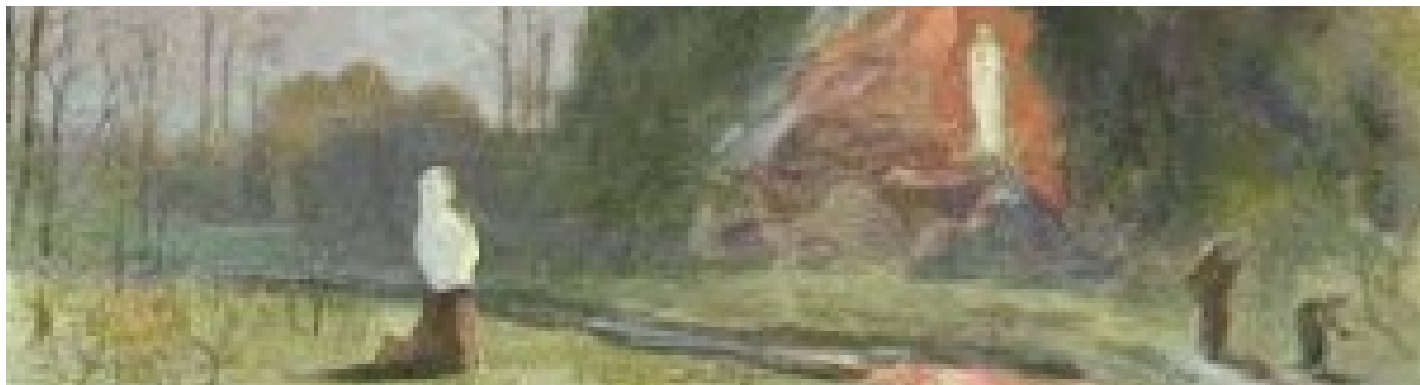
I tuned in to a TV program the other evening and it was all about the well known and loved former Munster, International, Lyons rugby player Donncha O Callaghan and he trying to come to terms with his retirement from the game that he loved and played for over twenty years, and doing so with great difficulty at forty years of age.

You know, I empathized with him, not retiring from my rugby career!!, but rather retiring as director of the Lourdes Pilgrimage. Yes, I often referred to it as, **A Labor of Love**, and without doubt, Lourdes has that effect. I loved it and still do, but as Donncha O Callaghan said, there comes a time when you have to step down, albeit with great difficulty, sadness and a heavy heart.

Yes, Lourdes is a place of prayer, pilgrimage, healing and reassurance and it's also a place of fun, laughter and happiness.

The Diocesan Pilgrimage hasn't taken place since I retired in 2019, not because I have stepped down!! No, but because of the pandemic.

However, Please God, when the Pilgrimage resumes and hopefully it will in June of 2022, if you can and have the opportunity, don't miss the journey of a lifetime. Pencil it in and go and trust me, you won't regret it, because like St Bernadette, she who was "drawn by an irresistible force" you too will experience likewise. It becomes magnetic and each year you are drawn to that hallowed place, to the rock of Massabielle in the South of France, where Our Lady appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, commencing on February 11th 1858 and on eighteen consecutive occasions. The first pilgrim to Lourdes was Bernadette who was also the first sick (and soon to be disabled) pilgrim to go to the Grotto. For over 160 years, the Immaculate Virgin has never stopped calling each of her children, one by one, to Lourdes.



Lord, you know my condition. You know my sickness and pain. You know too the hurt and pain of all the world. As we recognize the need for more holy and courageous shepherds for your Church, accept the offering of my suffering for an increase in vocations to the priesthood. And following my sufferings, may the ministry of these future priests comfort those who are sick in body, mind, and spirit. Thus in all things, may your Son who suffered and died for us, be praised and glorified. Amen.

Accessed February 18, 2021 <https://scdiocese.org/prayer-of-the-sick-for-priests>

FILMS OF INTEREST



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEjHG4esp48&feature=emb_logo



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-p4ubJfx5iQ&feature=emb_logo

Fr. Fergal Cummins of the Diocese of Meath, Ireland shares with the Shalom World viewers about his vocation, mission and passionate love for Christ. Originally going to university for environmental sciences, Fr. Cummins responded to the call he had been feeling since he was 9 years old. In this episode of Vocare set in the beautiful County Offaly, hear him sharing the joys of living a life dedicated to the service of God, as a parish priest, hospital chaplain, pro-life activist and as a mentor for anyone who wishes to know or grow in their faith.

Upcoming Events

JOIN THE LIMERICK DIOCESE

MEN'S DISCERNMENT GROUP

Meets Monthly on Tuesdays
7.30-8.45pm
Hosted by Priests of the
Diocese

Please contact vocations@limerickdiocese.org for the zoom link

Human Life International (Ireland) Presents:

VIRTUAL VOCATIONS DAY

MARRIAGE? PRIESTHOOD? RELIGIOUS LIFE? SINGLE?

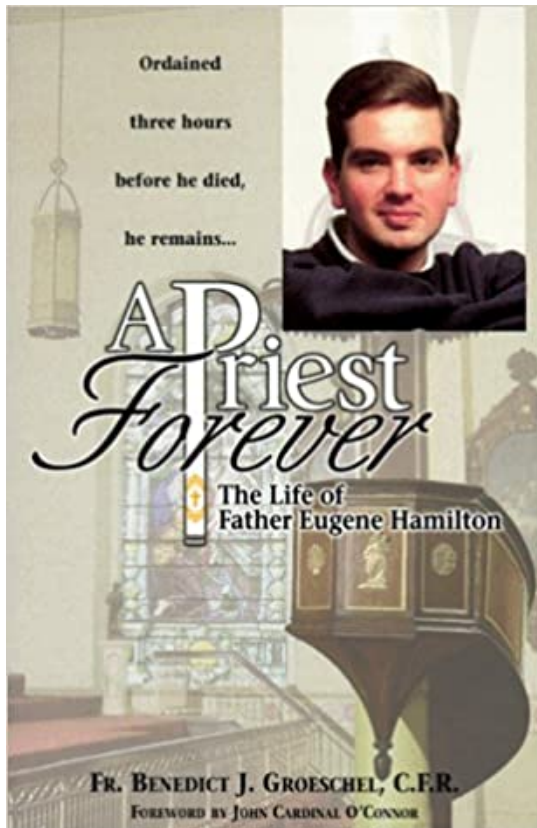
"FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU," DECLARES THE LORD,
"PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU,
PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE." (JEREMIAH 29:11)

WHEN 27TH FEBRUARY
@10AM. LIVE ON
FACEBOOK
& YOUTUBE

PLEASE VISIT WWW.HUMANLIFE.IE
FOR MORE INFO.



RECOMMENDED READING



A Priest Forever - The life of Father Eugene Hamilton

by Fr. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R.

This is the true story of Eugene Hamilton, a young man who dreamed of becoming a priest; a young man stricken with terminal cancer as his life was just beginning; a man who was ordained, by papal dispensation, just hours before he died.

An inspiring story for anyone discerning the priesthood, or those already ordained. A young man whose ardent desire was to serve God at the altar and his struggle to receive his hearts desire in the face of physical evil. Anyone will grow more in their love for the priesthood after reading about Fr. Eugene Hamilton.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Priest-Forever-Life-Eugene-Hamilton/dp/0879739444>

SUPPORTING VOCATIONS IN YOUR PARISH?

Please pray for holy vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life regularly. Would you consider having regular Adoration for this intention? Do you currently have any events or initiatives in your parish or schools to support the understanding and promotion of vocations? Would you like to? If we can help to organize something for you, please be in touch!

DIOCESE OF LIMERICK
VOCATION OFFICE

www.limerickdiocese.org
www.facebook.com/dioceseflimerick
vocations@limerickdiocese.org