

HOMILY FOR BR MATT GORMLEY

25TH JUNE 2021

Good morning my dear Brother and Sisters,

Before I begin my short homily, I would like to thank the Gormley family for sacrificing their son, Brother, Uncle and Friend to the Capuchin order. As St. Pauls says in 2 Timothy 4:7 - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Indeed, Br. Matt fought a good fight, ran the race for almost 80 years and was called back for eternal life.

Fr Odillo invited me to speak about Br. Matt, who was with Capuchin friar and priest for over fifty years.

As you are aware that Sr. Laura (Br. Matt's elder Sister) spent fourteen months with him in PE and only returned to Los Angeles two months ago. Her original intention was to spend three to four weeks with Br. Matt but due to Covid her stay extended for almost fourteen months.

I have asked Sr. Laura to share her fond memories of Br. Matt:

Matt and I have always been close. I was also the eldest in the family – a family of seven. From a young age we were friends and that friendship has lasted all through our lives. We have shared our faith, our struggles, our hopes and our joys. We tried to arrange our holidays, over the years, in such a way that we could meet up in Ireland and together drive around the country visiting family and friends. Holidays were special and always so enjoyable. It was 'catch-up time' for both of us. Even though our styles were very different we understood and trusted each other.

He was the extrovert in the family, a bit boisterous when growing up and full of energy. He was always very physically strong and wanted to be out and about doing things. He was fond of sport and played for his school team at hurling, which is an Irish game. A bit like your hockey, but a faster game and played with 15 players. He was also a good swimmer. He was bright in school and excelled at his work. He was particularly good at maths and would always have the answer to questions when his siblings asked for assistance. In fact, when we'd read out the maths to him, he'd have the answer immediately.

Our family was religious. Our parents had a strong lively faith and led by example. Matt was a normal happy teenager, interested in the girls and sports, never giving a hint that he was interested in religious life, so when he announced that he wanted to join the

Capuchins it came as a great surprise to the family. His interest began when he heard a Capuchin friar preaching in his parish. The friar was leading a parish mission at the time. One evening, after the service, he approached the preacher, Fr Alexius, who, incidentally, is still alive and living in Dublin, and asked him if it would be possible for him to join the Capuchins. Fr Alexius was very encouraging and invited him to come to Church Street, the principal Capuchin church in Dublin, and join the Third Order of St Francis, or, as we call it now the Secular Franciscan Order. Matt was happy to join and that was the beginning of his journey with the Capuchin Franciscan Order.

Well, it was a blessing in disguise and I was happy to stay as I found it a great comfort to be able to support Matt in his final months which were difficult due to Matt's ongoing health problems and rapidly deteriorating health. I also received another blessing because the Dominican Sisters invited me to stay with them and it was truly a house of welcome and kindness. I will always remember their hospitality and their love and support.

I received so many kindnesses from so many people in PE: the Capuchin Friars, the late Una Larkin and her family who welcomed me like a member of their family, the ministers of the Eucharist who visited Matt at Home Sweet Home Care Centre with holy Communion every week. There were others, of course, and they all contributed hugely and made life easy for me. The Christian community is alive and active in San Francisco. Praise God. Again, all I can say is thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you all for your kindness and prayers and attending his funeral Mass, also, to all those who are tuned in to our holy Mass today by internet. Praise God for the wonders of modern technology. Thank you all for your support and love for a friar, Matthew Gormley who served his Lord and Master with great devotion throughout the whole of his life. May he rest in peace. Amen

Sr. Laura

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Br. Matt was born on 13th July 1941 Dublin Ireland.

In 1960, in the month of September, he left home and went to the Novitiate of the Capuchins, situated 70 miles from Dublin in the city of Kilkenny. There were five other novices joining on the same day. Among them was Patrick Flynn a lifelong friend who also spent some time working in SA. They were all received into the Order on the 3rd of October. The training for priesthood was to last for eight years. Matt, I'm told, was a diligent student and worked hard. He was very committed. He was ordained a priest along with his five companions on the 16th of June 1968 at the Capuchin Friary, Ard Mhuire, County Donegal, a friary situated in the north west of the country. Matt was always keen to go on the Missions and he asked permission of his superior to allow him go to Africa. He was assigned to South Africa.

Matt made the journey to Cape Town by boat, travelling with five other Capuchin friars. This was in the month of November '68. They arrived in CT after a journey that lasted two weeks. This was the start of Matt's missionary life. He immediately settled into life in CT. His first assignment was to the parishes of Belgravia and Bridgetown as assistant priest. He only spent a few months there and then was assigned to St Anthony's, Langa. He spent 11 happy years there. This was a most productive time for Matt and he used his great energy and talents to develop and build an adult educational college at the heart of Langa. This was made possible by the generous sponsorship of the German Catholic church and their missionary outreach to developing countries. Matt was part of a team of people who put huge energy and time into its development. It is still operating today and has gone from strength to strength. He also learned to speak Xhosa fluently and loved to minister in the language. He built up wonderful relationships with the sisters and people in the parish who became lifelong friends. He was always interested in people and he had a warm open personality. He enjoyed being with people and had a flair for ministry.

On completing his assignment at Langa, he embarked on a two year sabbatical to do further studies. He returned to Ireland where he studied Liturgy at the National Centre (for Liturgy). On completing his diploma he headed to the USA, to California, where he attended courses on Spirituality and Religious Formation for religious at Berkley University. He very much enjoyed this period of his life and was enthused and energised by the programmes and time to study.

On his return to SA he was appointed Director of Postulants and Novices. His superiors were anxious to develop and encourage vocations and it was a big responsibility for Matt. This was a ministry he was very interested in and enjoyed. He enjoyed the interaction with the young men leading and guiding them in the ways of St Francis. He again, after his time

as Director of Novices and Postulants, was appointed to Langa. He spent three more years there.

Matt was a man with energy and talent. He was always obedient to his superiors and was ever willing to serve the Order in any capacity that was asked of him. Putting it another way, he was a man who was always available and never afraid to embark on new ministries or go to new places.

He spent time in Joan of Arc parish as pastor; in Pietermaritzburg working with students; Pretoria, again with students and finally to Port Elizabeth where he engaged in multiple ministries. He was an "all-round man". He gave parish missions, retreats and spiritual direction to religious and lay people, and was involved with the charismatic movement and helping trafficked women and children.

Throughout his long life he was not just an active hardworking disciple of Jesus bringing the Gospel to people. He was above all a man of prayer. He was truly a son of St Francis. He loved the Capuchin Order and the Church and was totally committed to serving people. He had above all a great devotion to holy Mass and the Eucharist. During his final months at the Care Home, - Home Sweet Home - it was his pleasure and joy to have the scriptures read to him and receive holy Communion. It was his love for Jesus that sustained him over the years, especially when he had to endure so much sickness. Over twenty years ago he underwent major heart surgery. He bounced back from that and continued his lifelong work as a friar.

Matt too had many interests, in particular the theatre, gadgets and music. He also had a gift for friendship and was loyal to his friends. He was patient in suffering and not one to complain.

Fr Florence was called to St George's hospital last week to anoint Matt. He was alert, able to answer the prayers, and when Father asked him how he was, he answered, "I'm fine". It was typical of the man. It was on Monday last, the 21st of June that the Lord called him to himself. It was a peaceful gentle passing from death to life, eternal life. He was only a few weeks short of his 80th birthday.
