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SPECIAL EDITION APRIL 2009



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A Tribute to Canon Francis Kelly R.I.P.



Canon Frank Kelly R.I.P.



*The Chairman of CPSMA,
V. Rev. Frank Kelly (Ardagh
& Clonmacnois) with
Mr David Meredith, Church
of Ireland Board of
Education (left) and Mr John
Dennehy, Assistant Secretary,
Department of Education.*

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Canon Frank Kelly

Bishop Leo O'Reilly, Chairman of Episcopal Commission for Education

It was with a sense of great loss and sadness that we learned early in the new year of the death of Canon Frank Kelly, P.P. Granard and National Chairman of CPSMA. Canon Kelly was full of life, energy and characteristic good humour at last year's AGM of the Association. He was so much part of the organisation and for so long that it is hard to imagine the annual gathering without him. His presence will be sorely missed.

Canon Kelly was born in Columcille, Co. Longford on 27 April 1939. He attended Molly national school and St. Mel's College, Longford. From there he went to St. Patrick's College, Maynooth to study for the priesthood in the diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. He was ordained priest on 21 June 1964. His first appointment was to the staff of St. Mel's College where he taught religion and history from 1964 to 1974. In that year he was appointed to the parish of Banagher where he served as curate until 1986. He had a further brief spell as a curate in Legan before being appointed Parish Priest of Granard and Vicar Forane in 1988. He was made a Canon of the Cathedral Chapter in 2002.

Canon Kelly was a dedicated and hard-working priest, much loved by the parishioners of every parish he served in. After twenty years in Granard he was on first-name terms with all in the parish and far beyond it as well. He had endeared himself to all sections of the community through his hard work, his unstinting service, and his ability to meet and treat everybody the same. The enormous crowds at his removal from St. Joseph's Hospital, Longford, at the vigil service, and at the funeral Mass in St. Mary's, Granard, on 12 January were a fitting tribute to a generous and much-loved priest.

As well as his parish duties Canon Kelly had important responsibilities at diocesan level. He was the diocesan Secretary for Ecumenism for many



Monsignor Dan O'Connor, Canon Francis Kelly, Minister for Education Mary Hanafin T.D. Sr. Geraldine Costello

years and enjoyed very good relationships with his colleagues in the Church of Ireland and the other Churches. He was Diocesan Education Secretary for more than thirty years and during that time he became an expert in all matters relating to Catholic primary schools. He served on several boards of management simultaneously and was also a member of the VEC committee in Longford where his counsel was greatly valued. He was always ready and willing to act as trouble-shooter in difficult school situations, to serve on interview boards, appeal boards and on the many other bodies that called for someone with expertise, experience and good judgment.

It was inevitable that when Canon Frank joined the executive of CPSMA his leadership qualities would be quickly recognised. He became the National Chairman of the Association in 1995 and was re-elected for a second term in 1998. The constitution did not allow him to serve more than two terms consecutively, but he was re-elected in 2005 for a four year term which was to conclude at the AGM of this year.

Canon Kelly brought all his expertise, experience and good judgement in educational matters to his role as National Chairman and he discharged that role with distinction. He was at the helm of the Association during a time of great changes in education and his wise leadership was very

important in enabling the CPSMA to respond to those changes and meet the new challenges that they posed. He was a formidable figure in debate and negotiation and his professional abilities were complemented by his personal skills in relating to those in all the different educational spheres that he moved in. His speeches on major occasions were anticipated not only for the important messages that he delivered but also for the liberal peppering of quotations in Latin, Irish and other languages they invariably contained.

He was someone of whom you could truly say that he was larger than life: colourful, entertaining and always interesting. He was a big man in every way but above all in his generosity and in living out his vocation. He was first and last a priest, a dedicated, devoted servant of God and of God's people. He was a man of deep faith and that was nowhere more evident than in his final, relatively brief, illness. He was able to face death with courage and dignity, and with a degree of serenity was both moving and edifying. He died peacefully, surrounded by his family, at St. Joseph's Hospital, Longford on 9th January 2009.

To his devoted family, his brother Michael, his sister-in-law Carmel, his nephew and nieces and to all his friends we extend our deepest sympathy and the assurance of our prayers. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

Canon Frank Kelly P.P. Granard

Chairperson C.P.S.M.A.

Monsignor Dan O'Connor

Before Canon Kelly's remains were removed from St. Joseph's Hospital, Longford where he had been cared for by such a dedicated staff, there was a very simple but moving evening prayer – the psalms, the scripture readings, the intercessions of the Prayers of the Church were prayed by thousands of people who had come to pay their last respects to a giant of a man.

In the middle of the evening prayer there was a Liturgy of Remembrance that we prayed and we said:

*For all the good that he has done,
For the wisdom and guidance he imparted,
For the faith and hope he shared,
For his belief in the Resurrection
We remember Him.*

The people whose lives Frank touched, as a brother, a brother-in-law, as an uncle, a cousin, a neighbour's child from Molly, a Priest of the Dioceses of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, the Chairperson of C.P.S.M.A., the V.E.C. Committee member and above all as Parish Priest of Granard, prayed that Litany of Remembrance in thanksgiving for Frank Kelly being part of our lives and showing us the face of Jesus Christ.

All of us who gathered in that hospital Chapel had benefitted from Frank's goodness, wisdom, guidance in his life of service as an Educator and a Priest. He led C.P.S.M.A. during difficult times – his wisdom steered the C.P.S.M.A. during the severe education cut backs in 1987. He encouraged and supported the advancement of the



Mr. Joe Gatins, Canon Kelly, Bishop Leo O'Reilly, Minister Mary Hanafin, Fr. Sean McGraw and Mgr Dan O'Connor AGM 2007

services for children with special needs and was an avid supporter of the establishment of the National Council for the Education of Persons with special needs.

Fr. Frank was a tough but honest negotiator with the other education partners. His aim in all education negotiations was for the good of the primary school pupil. He was very aware of the need to support the parents, the local B.O.M., principal, teachers and staff of the local school because in giving the best education to the pupils they were laying the foundations for the future of the young students as members of the Catholic Church and citizens of Ireland. The good of the child was always the centre of Frank's leadership of C.P.S.M.A.

On a personal level I will never forget the support, help and guidance he gave me during my time as General Secretary of C.P.S.M.A. He was always ready to listen, to help me see situations from all sides and his words always were "Sleep on it! In the morning the Lord will give you guidance".

Fr. Frank was a very committed supporter of post primary education.

He taught on the staff of St. Mel's Longford and was a member of the Offaly V.E.C. and later the Longford V.E.C. As his funeral left St. Joseph's for Granard, the INTO members from Longford and Offaly formed a guard of honour at one side of the hospital road and the T.U.I. members formed the guard of honour on the other side of the hospital road. So even in death Frank was laying the foundation for union amalgamations! The attendance of the Vice President of the INTO, Máire Ní Chuinneagáin, the General Secretary of the INTO John Carr, the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science Bridget McManus, the local National Parents Council representatives and the C.E.O.'s and officials of the Longford V.E.C. and the Offaly V.E.C. was a real sign of Frank's commitment to education.

In St. Mary's Granard Bishop Colm O'Reilly and Cardinal Sean Brady (Frank's ordination classmate) led the people of Granard in prayer for Frank's soul.

Bishop Colm O'Reilly in his homily spoke of Frank's great service to the Diocese and to education. The Bishop spoke of the love Frank had

for the people of Granard and his living out of his ordination promise to preach the Gospel in season and out of season.

But it was in the last weeks of his life Bishop O'Reilly reminded us, that Fr. Frank give his greatest lesson – he taught us how to face pain, suffering and death in the in the sure and certain hope of the power of the Risen Christ.

That was Canon Frank Kelly's last and best homily. He approached his illness with faith in the Lord. When he was told early in December that he was terminally ill he again left all in the Lord's hands.

The last time Florence Conroy and I saw Frank was in St. Joseph's. Frank, Fr. Seamus Connell and I celebrated Mass together and Frank's family, Josie his housekeeper and Sr. Carmel his cousin were with us at the Mass. You could feel the power, faith and peace Frank had as he celebrated Mass that day.

A great friend, a great educator and a great Priest – Frank Kelly P.P. Granard.

May his patron Saints, Francis of Assisi, Patrick, Bridget, Colmcille and Guasach with Mary Our Mother lead Canon Frank Kelly rejoicing to the Throne of his God and his King whom he served as a faithful Priest.



Bishop Leo O'Reilly, Florence Conroy, Sheila Nunan, INTO, Maria Spring, Aine Lynch, NPC, John Carr, INTO, Mgr. Dan O'Connor, Canon Kelly, 2008 AGM



Mgr. Dan O'Connor, Canon Francis Kelly, Florence Conroy



Minister Mary Hanafin T.D. with Canon Kelly



Mgr. Dan O'Connor and Canon Kelly

Canon Frank Kelly

Sr Geraldine Costello

Gifted with a keen intellect and an enquiring mind, Canon Frank Kelly steered the affairs of CPSMA, as Chairperson for a period of ten years, a position he held with great dignity, interest and dedication. He was held in high esteem by all with whom he came in contact.

He was deeply interested in all branches of education but especially in Catholic Primary Education as promoted by C.P.S.M.A., the association whose ethos is to guide and assist over 3,000 Catholic Primary Schools throughout the length and breadth of our country.

His knowledge of the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education and Science was comprehensive and freely shared with all members.

He ably defended the tenets of our Association and excelled himself in all debates concerning the rights of Catholic Schools.

It was my privilege to have served as Vice Chairperson with him for the past four years. He was a genial companion with a deeply held Christian outlook, fully alive and conscious of his duties and responsibilities.

Is mór linn a chaillúint agus guímid solus na bhFlaitheas dá anam uasal.



Canon Frank Kelly and Sr. Geraldine Costello



Mgr. Dan, Brigid McManus, Minister Mary Hanafin, Sr. Geraldine and Canon Kelly



Sr. Geraldine Costello, Canon Kelly and Mgr. Dan O'Connor



Sr. Geraldine Costello, Canon Frank Kelly and Minister Mary Hanafin T.D.

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Canon Frank Kelly

Mrs. Maria Spring



Mrs. Maria Spring and Canon Frank Kelly

I am privileged to have been asked to write a few words of tribute to the late Canon Francis Kelly PP, Chairperson CPSMA.

The untimely death of Canon Francis Kelly on 9th January 2009 has left a void and a great sense of loss in those who were privileged to have known him and worked with him in CPSMA. During his time in CPSMA he made an invaluable contribution. As in everything he did, he was very committed – motivated and moti-

vating. A man of strong convictions, he had great respect for tradition.

Always generous with his talents and time, Canon Frank was there to support new members of the Standing Committee and longer serving colleagues relied on his insight and wisdom. His sense of fairness and honesty permeated his every judgement. Canon Frank had unquenchable optimism and faith in the human spirit, a great sense of fun, yet he never compromised the

great values of love, justice, respect and truth. He understood the greatness of the human person. It was a privilege to have known him and worked with him.

Canon Frank's great qualities were dedication, loyalty, integrity and friendliness. The delegates at the annual CPSMA AGM will miss his presence. He touched the lives of so many in his own unique way. Truly we say: "We shall never see his like again". May God rest his gentle soul.

The Father Kelly that I knew

Micheál Mac a'Bháird



Canon Frank Kelly, left, Michael Ward, right, with Ardagh & Clonmacnois Delegates, 2007 AGM

***“Behold a great priest who in his days pleased God and was found just.....There was not found the like to him*” (Book of Ecclesiasticus, 44.16-17)**

For those of us who remember the rubrics of Pre-Vatican Two, the Epistle of the Mass of a Confessor commenced with the above quotation and aptly sums up the life of our late C.P.S.M.A. Chairman and Chairman of a great number of Boards of Management of Primary Schools – Canon Frank Kelly.

He was Chairman of C.P.S.M.A at the time of his death and prior to that had been in this position for a long number of years-having been the obvious choice for this important position. Through excellent

leadership he steered the C.P.S.M.A. through many critical decisions in keeping abreast of the various changes and challenges that presented themselves. His knowledge of matters educational and his skilful handling of the agenda captured the attention of all who attended the meetings.

He was endowed with excellent negotiation and communication skills and these he used with success in his dealings with the Department of Education and Science officials, Union officials and educational authorities.

He was a fearless defender of the Catholic ethos and continuously spoke out in response to the numerous attacks being made on our

beliefs and policies. But, while he defended the Catholic approach and principles, he very greatly respected the beliefs and systems of others with whom he communicated and collaborated all through his years of involvement in education.

Canon Kelly had a humane understanding of people's problems and difficulties. Down through the years he strove to solve the problem of job dissatisfaction and he put forward a plan to the DES to set up a system whereby teachers with their various talents could be deployed rather than be left in a position that did not appeal to them. Much work on this plan has been accomplished but everything in this regard has not been fully realised. On our many journeys to meetings

he revealed that this problem was ever on his mind.

His experience and counsel were much sought after, and he unselfishly gave his time and energy in the hope of achieving a win-win solution for all involved. In the middle of a certain problem where a solution seemed impossible he quipped “Durum, sed levius fit patientia.” (It is hard, but it becomes lighter by endurance!) Indeed he had countless Horace quotations to suit many occasions.

He did not allow national affairs to detract him from concerns on the home scene. He was Chairman of four Boards of Management in his own parish of Granard and took over the administration of others to give his support to their schools. During those years - especially during the era of the Celtic Tiger, he undertook extensions and reconstruction work of many of these schools, one of which was completed only recently. The work he commissioned on St. Mary's parish Church in Granard is a model of what is practical and tasteful and in keeping with the architecture of the original structure. Indeed the epitaph to that renowned

architect Sir Christopher Wren is relevant to Canon Frank- “If ye seek a monument, look around.”

Nor were his parishioners or their needs neglected. Fr. Kelly attended to all his people with a deep Christian sympathy. He rejoiced with them in good times and he empathised with them in adversity. This dedication was deeply appreciated by all and was demonstrated clearly by them when they came in countless numbers to express their concern for their beloved pastor. The tears ran freely as they shook his gentle hand and as his coffin was borne down the aisle to his resting place, the spontaneous applause was in appreciation of the life of selflessness and devotion of one great man.

It is often said that the greatest contribution a person can donate is TIME. In this regard Fr. Kelly could not say no to anyone who sought his help. He advised on the appointment of teachers and ancillary staff.

His favourite poem was “I see His blood upon the rose.” I’ve often heard him quote “An Gleann ‘nar tógadh mé”, and I have reflected on the lines “Rinne mé mórán, is fuair

mé fíos ar mhórán-ach níor sásaíodh mé” - so true of Canon Frank.

As he lay on his sick bed, terminally ill, one facet of his nature was very obvious - his big heart. The nurses and medical staff wanted him to have some rest. Outside, queues of people waited to see him and hold his hand. In a magnanimous utterance he announced to all “Come in, come in” Horace again comes to mind “Ibimus, Ibimus, utcumque praecedes, supremum carpere iter comites parati.” (We will go; we will go, wherever you lead the way, comrades ready to travel the final journey.)

My last visit to him was a memorable one. Despite his deteriorating physical condition, his voice was good, his mind fully alert. Notwithstanding his love of the classics, our own native teanga was nearest to his heart. On leaving the room I left him with a “slán.” I will never forget his reply - “Slán go fóill.” Slán leat a Athair Phroinsias - go fóill. Mar a dúirt Tomás O Criomhthain - ní bheidh do leithéid ann arís.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh d’anam uasal mánla.



CPDMA meet Minister Conor Lenihan L to R Maria Spring, Sr. Mary Collins, Canon Kelly, Minister Lenihan and Mgr. Dan O'Connor