COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

No. 49 **Spring 2004**

Contents

Editorial

This edition is mostly taken up with Frank Mullan's account of his time in Nigeria, up to the time of his escape. It was originally delivered as a talk and, as such, the style is more conversational. The talk was given at the beginning of the 1990s and Frank has made only a few corrections and changes to the original.

Our community in Cork suffered two losses in the past months with the deaths of Brian Magee and Bill Clarke and our sympathies are with the confreres, the people of the parish and the families. Both Brian and Bill were widely respected and we have included two appreciations from other sources. There are two other obituaries in this edition; of Brendan O'Dowd, who was for many years a member of the Irish Province, and another, of EW Said, by Michael Prior.

Finally, there is a further article by Michael on the challenge to the Churches posed by the situation in the Holy Land.

Some Thoughts on the Nigerian Mission

Frank Mullan CM

Background

To put the whole missionary thing in perspective, it is well to remember that the year was 1960, and it was before the Vatican Council. The Province had long felt the need for a foreign mission, especially after the expulsion of our men from China. The numbers were quite good in the Province and it was thought that expansion should take place on the foreign missions. It would be a help towards getting vocations, too, it was thought. Also, the intrinsic worth of being on the missions and, especially, to go as the result of an invitation. It would have pleased St Vincent, I suppose, not to go until we were asked. We were asked by Bishop Moynagh of Calabar in Nigeria, West Africa, through the Bishop's intermediary Fr Matt McGrath. We were to go very specifically for the purpose of giving missions and retreats throughout the parishes and mission stations, recollection days for priests, and retreats for priests and communities of sisters. We would want to have a base, a parish, and the parish was to be Ikot Ekpene, a little township about 65 miles from the coast town and port of Port Harcourt.

For me, I think it all began on Pentecost weekend 1960, when I went over to the Provincial's house in Blackrock on a purely mundane, routine quest. When that was dealt with I said to Fr O'Leary, more for the want of something to say than anything else: "I believe you were out in Nigeria at Easter time, Father. I believe you are starting a mission there, and I always meant to say that, if you are really badly stuck for somebody you might put my name down". Father O'Leary seemed stunned and asked: "Has someone been talking?" I said: "No, I heard you were starting a mission, if you would like to consider me". He said: "You have already been appointed". They were obviously the days before consultation! Anyway, he took out a map of Nigeria and he explained the whole business. We were going to Ikot Ekpene, in the Diocese of Calabar.

So far, the story simply was that Bishop Moynagh of Calabar had often expressed a wish to have a community presence in Nigeria, and a great confidant of his was Fr Matt McGrath, whose father lived in Arklow. Fr Matt had been studying for the Dublin Diocese, but joined Kiltegan. He was always an emissary for Bishop Moynagh. He said to Fr Matt: "The next time you are home in Ireland, you could call over to see the Vins – you know them well in Glenart – get talking to somebody

there, and then get to the Provincial". So, that's how it worked out, apparently. I don't know the details of that, but it was Fr McGrath who was the in-between man. Fr McGrath saw whoever it was who was in Glenart at the time – Fr McCullen or Fr Cahalan, I suppose – and they went to Fr O'Leary.

Father O'Leary had gone out to Nigeria in Easter time 1960, had returned, and I saw him in June. So, the idea was that Bishop Moynagh and Fr Matt McGrath both felt that a developing diocese in Nigeria would seem to have the same needs as a diocese at home and would benefit by the presence of a religious community.

There were just Kiltegan men there and the beginnings of Nigerian native priests for the Diocese. Bishop Dominic Ekandem, an Auxiliary Bishop, was already in place. It had been a very far seeing move of Bishop Moynagh to appoint Fr Ekandem as Bishop, and this was before there was any bishop in the Holy Ghost territory, apart from Bishop John Anyogu in Enugu.

Time passed and eventually, on 19th July 1960, the appointments came out. Harry Morrin, Father Paddy Hughes and myself were duly appointed to Nigeria. I remember that day going in to see Harry Morrin in Phibsboro. He was much senior to me, and I hardly knew the man. He was in his room, lying on top of the bed, with his glasses on his nose, and reading a book on health hazards in a tropical climate. It was a good introduction to Harry, who loved to know the worst – the more wild animals, snakes, reptiles etc there were, the better would he be pleased! Harry seemed to regard the appointment as a tremendous fulfilment of a life's ambition. He was approaching it like a real boy scout. I wouldn't say that Paddy Hughes and myself were feeling exactly the same about it, but we were appointed and there was the usual frantic preparation over the next couple of months getting a lot of things together for the mission. We felt we certainly had the backing of the Province. There was a great interest, I think, in the mission.

Departure

We set sail from Dublin on the evening of 10th October 1960 from the North Wall on a boat to Liverpool. There was a great crowd of people down at the boat to see us off. Before that, we were all three of us over in St Joseph's Blackrock, and there was Solemn Benediction, a meal afterwards, and an escort down to the boat. I remember that evening, Paddy Hughes came into me and said: "Did Father O'Leary make you make a will?" I said: "No!" and he said: "Well, he conned me into making one." Paddy had obviously been caught by Fr Bill Sullivan and Fr O'Leary and made make a will. I don't know whether Paddy had untold millions, but I wasn't asked to make one. I don't know about Harry Morrin. The

three of us went down to the boat that evening and got a tremendous send-off from priests, relatives and friends. I remember a number of boys from St Paul's were there. I had been in St Paul's for the previous ten years. It was a terrible journey – you can get bad crossings on the Irish Sea and this was one of them. I was just deathly sick the whole blessed night, and it didn't help to think that I was getting on another boat in Liverpool the very next day – for a three-week sailing.

Morning came and we went to the Sisters' house for the Blind and said Mass. I then went to my aunt, who lived in Liverpool, after which we all met in the Adelphi Hotel. I remember Frs Dunning, John Carroll, Eddie McGlinchey and Ed McDonagh were there for a meal with us, and they escorted us down to the boat – *The Tamele* (Elder Dempester Line). It was one of its last voyages, and I am not surprised at that. It was a real old tug. The *Tarkwa* and the *Tamele* were the two boats that most of the missionaries had gone out in. We travelled by boat in the first place because we had about 34 or 35 packing cases about the size of tea chests. It seemed the obvious thing to do, to break ourselves in gradually and everybody said we would enjoy the trip. So I did, though conditions were very, very cramped. But at least until we reached the shores of Africa it wasn't too hot.

The Voyage

The voyage lasted exactly three weeks, during which time we were regaled daily by Harry who kept a diary. Not alone did he write the diary, but he insisted on reading out the day's entries to Paddy and myself at evening time as we lay on the bunks (because the three of us couldn't stand at the one time in the cabin, it was so small). One night Paddy Hughes started snoring before Harry had got to the second page of his entries for that particular day. It was a great diary and Harry continued to keep it after we reached Nigeria. I believe it was read in 'The Rock' at breakfast time over a period. Three days' journey out, and nothing very eventful. We were frightened as we neared the Bay of Biscay, especially having experienced seasickness on the night crossing from Dublin to Liverpool. But in the event everything went OK.

The first stop was the Canary Islands, at Las Palmas. The Islands weren't in the news then as they are now, as people didn't go from here on their holidays there. It was a lovely morning in Las Palmas, with the sun shining, and temperatures in the 70s. The Captain said at 9.00 am that he would be back on the boat at 8.00 pm, and that we were free for the day in Las Palmas. So the three of us got off the boat and I said to Harry and Paddy. "Where are we going to go?" Harry said: "To the cemetery". I said: "To the cemetery?" He said: "One of my brothers is buried here." It seems that a brother, whom, I think, Harry had never

seen, had been buried there as a young lad. He had been to Castleknock, I think, and got TB, was sent out to the Canary Islands at about the age of 12 or 13, and he died there. We had trouble finding the little slot in the wall of the cemetery, and I doubt that we actually found his particular slot, but we said a prayer for Harry's brother, and strolled around the place for the rest of the day. I can remember for the first time seeing bananas growing and camels strolling. We got back to the boat and it was getting warmer and warmer. The ship's crew changed into their whites.

We used to play Bridge at night sometimes with the Captain and a couple of the others. The time passed agreeably. We stopped at Freetown in Sierra Leone for a night. I remember people describing it to me as a town of smells and bells. There were so many churches in the place, and certainly a lot of smells. It was an awful night anchored in all that terrible noxious heat of the tropics.

Next day, we went to the Holy Ghost mission. A Holy Ghost Father, who was very, very good to us (I have forgotten his name) brought us out to Lumley Beach and it was lovely. Such a relief to get out of Freetown! We set sail again that evening, sailed further down the coast and began to experience these terrific lightning storms. The sky was wonderful to behold. For hours on end at night in the darkness one could see blue, green, purple and red flashes. Terrific! We were to see more of that in Nigeria when we arrived. This was getting on towards the end of October. With the change of season in the tropics one experiences these electric storms.

We docked at Lagos for a day or so, and went to see Archbishop Leo Taylor, who had been, I think, in Glenart and had certainly met Fr McCullen. He was a very whimsical English SMA, who was Archbishop of Lagos. We thought he would know us very well, and know all about us coming out, but he preferred a more distant stance. I think we had a meal there with him – I have forgotten. We also met some of the other SMA men there.

We bypassed Port Harcourt, which was our port of disembarkation, because there was some cargo on the boat for the Cameroons, the next stop below Nigeria on the coast. There it took on a number of what were called 'deckers', i.e. people who join the boat in Victoria for transport back to Nigeria. They just squatted on the decks, exposed to all the sun and heat. It took a day, or less, to go from Victoria in the Cameroons back to Port Harcourt.

Arrival

At Port Harcourt we docked at about 3.00 pm or 4.00 pm. Bishop Moynagh and Matt McGrath were down on the dockside to welcome

us. They brought us to the Holy Ghost mission in Port Harcourt, where we had a meal. Then we were packed into two cars and driven about 65 miles from Port Harcourt to Ikot Ekpene. It was dark then – it gets dark about 6.30 pm every evening of the year there – and it must have been about 6.30 pm when we left Port Harcourt. All I can remember is more of this thunder and lightning, and the whole countryside being illuminated by these vicious lightning flashes – a terrific kaleidoscope of colour. We got to the mission at Ifuho, a very famous old place. It was the parish that James Moynagh went to when he arrived in Nigeria in 1930. It had grown to become practically a diocese. Ifuho, among its other claims to fame, was the first place in all of Africa where the Legion of Mary was introduced. The incumbent in Ifuho was Fr Ben Hughes, a very hospitable, welcoming, quiet, shy man from Co Cavan. Ben would have been in his forties, I suppose. With him was Des Perry, a young Kiltegan man, ordained a couple of years previously. It was an old ramshackle house, with not very much in the way of concessions to modernity.

There was no running water, inside loos etc, but it was all very wonderful to us. This was the night of 1st November 1960. We had left Liverpool on l0th October and here we were finally in Nigeria on 1st November. I remember that because next morning was All Souls' Day and everybody said three Masses. It was all very weird and wonderful. Waking up the next morning we said our Masses and then we were separated, Paddy, Harry and myself.

Harry Morrin was taken away to Anua and Uyo. Uyo is a town; Anua is a village about a mile or two from Uyo. Anua was famous because the Medical Missionaries had a splendid, wonderful hospital there and there was a flourishing mission in that area. Fr Morrin was taken over there to a priest called Fr Pat Laffey, a wonderful Kiltegan missionary. Harry was to learn a bit of the language, and generally learn the ropes from Pat Laffey for two or three months.

Paddy Hughes was taken up to a village called Ututu in Arochukwu, a most famous area in Calabar, the only part of Calabar Diocese where Igbo was spoken as the native language. I never got to know that place. Ben Hughes had been there before. Paddy went up to Fr Paddy Hanley and Fr Billy Fitzsimmons, and he got on wonderfully. They were great to him, as were all the Kiltegan priests to us, always. One thing which was borne in on us at a very early stage was the character and calibre of St Patrick's Kiltegan Missionary Fathers. They could not have been more helpful to us. They had a wonderful spirit among themselves, a zest for missionary work, and a very friendly approach. I couldn't praise them highly enough.

Myself, well, I was left at Ifuho. Across the road in Ifuho was the big

teacher training college for girls, run by the Holy Child nuns. I became chaplain there. But the idea was that we were to start a little parish in the township of Ikot Ekpene, a town about a mile from Ifuho. They usually refer to it as a township – a cluster of little shanties and shacks, thousands of them. The market place is the centre of the hub of activity. We were to split off Ikot Ekpene from Ifuho and have the little township as our parish, with perhaps two or three small outlying stations. But, by and large, our territory was to be just this little township.

Mission Begins:
I must say at this stage that we didn't go out to man a parish. Our work was supposed to be missions to all the different parishes and mission stations- and, remember, a parish might have 20, 30 or 40 mission stations. They would have a central mission, where a priest, if there was a priest, lived, and perhaps a church. So the field was ripe for retreats (they were usually called 'retreats', not missions). Retreats had been heard of before we arrived. They were a natural way of building up and consolidating the faith in parishes and in mission stations and there were two or three men who had a charism for the giving of missions and retreats. One particular man, Alo Dempsey, a Holy Ghost man whose fame was far and wide, used travel around his own Igbo Diocese. I don't know if any Kiltegan priest was specially designated for retreat work, but several would do it of course. The idea was that one, two or three of us would be free to devote ourselves to this work.

We were also expected to give days of recollection for priests, as well as retreats for priests, not only in our own diocese there but in all the different dioceses. In retrospect, it was all very wonderful to me that, within a matter of weeks of our arrival in the place, Harry Morrin was already bent on giving some of these parish missions and retreats, and he and I were giving these days of recollection for the priests. Also, retreats for Sisters – Holy Rosary Sisters, Medical Missionaries – were being sought. I remember giving one just immediately after Christmas, only a short time after our arrival.

Anyway, I think Harry, Paddy and I all enjoyed ourselves. We did not like being separated on that very first morning without much ceremony, before we got our bearings. But separated we were; we met on Christmas Day, I remember. Tradition was in the Diocese that the priests of all that area met in the big hospital in Anua for Christmas Dinner on Christmas evening and for a sing-song, music etc afterwards.

Shortly after Christmas, Bishop Moynagh came to me one day with word that there was a little vacant house outside the town of Ikot Ekpene and asked if we would care to move in – the three of us. Now, the plan had been that we were to move into a new house which was currently

being built in Ifuho, beside the old mission house. But, as we discovered before long in Nigeria, the place was riddled with half-begun, half-built buildings. The fact that building had begun in 1957 didn't necessarily mean that it was going to be built by 1970. The house was, in fact, being built in Ifuho but there was no sign of it being finished. Obviously, it was good that the three of us would come together and start whatever we were supposed to be starting. So, when Bishop Moynagh came to me and said that there was a little house available outside Ikot Ekpene he didn't say how little it was. At any rate, he brought us out to see it. It was a mud house, which had belonged to the Handmaids of the Holy Child, an indigenous community founded by the Holy Child nuns. A few sisters had been living there and had vacated the house. While it did not completely depress me, neither did it give me any great uplift of spirit to see the place. At least it was out in the country, with a primary school opposite.

We got this house and moved into it. It was sparse, and very, very spartan, perhaps a good thing for us. I remember some of the Kiltegan men not being very complimentary to the Bishop and saying that he had a neck to ask us to go into the place. There was no luxury in any priests' houses, but everyone was improving their accommodation, naturally enough, at this stage, regarding running water, bathrooms, toilets etc. There were none of those in this house, and we had these tilly lamps – kerosene lamps. I don't think I ever got to master this tilly lamp business. There seemed to be an art in it. You could spend up to half an hour trying to pump the thing and generally get it going. It got dark every night about 6.00 p.m., so it was a gloomy house alright. The trouble with these particular lamps was the heat of them, adding to the oppressive heat we were experiencing, and they brought hoards of insects around the light at night.

We got started in there and we had a little chapel for the Blessed Sacrament. I remember Harry was very exercised by the fact that here we were supposed to be giving missions, recollection days etc, and he considered that Paddy Hughes didn't know very much about these things, and that I knew less, never having given one in my life, anywhere in the world. Harry used to come into my room and tell me all about missions, what he preached about on the missions, and would give me a little plan for each of the mission sermons. Harry simply walked up and down the room smoking his pipe, literally preaching these mission sermons at me, and I was supposed to be dutifully taking them down, or at least the bones of them. Harry noticed at one time that I was not writing it all down, and he asked why. I responded by saying that I didn't need to write it all down if I got the main thrust of the thing. Harry shook his head sorrowfully and said: "Well, you might, but I have to have every

single word written down, and always had to have, before I could preach mission sermons!" So much for the mission sermons. I can't remember Paddy being put through the mill. Perhaps he knew more about mission sermons than Harry and I thought he did.

Paddy was bursar in the house, I was Superior, and Harry was the roving missioner. Paddy and I were supposed to get to work at the parish of Ikot Ekpene. All of us were called upon, right from the very beginning, to do the things which we had originally been called out to do – parish missions, retreats for the Sisters, and, more especially, retreats and days of recollection for the priests.

Time passed, and we got used to things – used to the weather etc. We had arrived on 1st November, which was the beginning of the very hot, dry season. As Bishop Moynagh used to say, we were to expect the next change of season around St Patrick's Day, when we would have the wet season. Weeks and months passed and it was 1961. The next big excitement was wondering if anybody else would be appointed to join Paddy, Harry and myself. As it happened, Father Sean Johnston, who was ordained that year, I think, and Father Harry Smyth, who had been ordained in 1948, were appointed to Nigeria. So we were anxiously awaiting their arrival in October.

At this time there was another development. Bishop Moynagh had asked me a short time before if we would take on another little parish of Ikpe, about seven or eight miles from Ikot Ekpene, in the bush. This was the parish of a famous character, Fr Patsy Kivlehan, a fairly elderly Kiltegan Father, who had wonderful devotion to Our Blessed Lady, and was adored and revered by all the people, who referred to him as 'the one who is next to God'. An old Hausa man (one of the tribes from the north who came down to the south selling vegetables and things) said that to me. Fr Kivlehan was supposed to be building a little bungalow. Harry Morrin took it over, and this was into his barrow. He had a wonderful time putting it into ship-shape order.

First of all, Sean Johnston was sent down to Oban, way up in the hinterland of Calabar, among the rubber plantations, to Father Liam MacWey, who since died suddenly a few years ago – a big strong man from Laois or Carlow, I think. Harry Smyth was sent down to Calabar to the Bishop's house. So, when they had done their noviciate in Oban and Calabar respectively, Sean came back and joined Harry Morrin in Ikpe. Harry Smyth joined Paddy Hughes and myself in the house in Abiakpo, outside Ikot Ekpene, the motherhouse where we got ourselves established. We must have been in this place in Abiakpo during all of 1961 and 1962, because I know it was in 1963 we finally got the house built.

Let's go back. In 1961 and 1962, Paddy and myself were running the parish in Ikot Ekpene, and Harry Smyth was doing missions and

retreats, and so was Harry Morrin. Harry Morrin had an old motor bike, and became a famous character around the countryside, smoking his pipe, wearing his hat, on the motor bike.

Towards building a church and house

We were looking for a site for a church and a house, about half a mile up the road from the village of Ikot Ekpene, and there was a site there of a couple of acres, full of huge palm trees. The unfortunate thing was that there were about 17 or 18 owners, and one had to get the consent of each of the owners before one could get the whole plot squared off. All the owners had to come to the DO's (District Officer's) office, who was a Northern Ireland man – Carson, I think, was his name. One by one, they were all supposed to come in and put their thumbprints on the document in the DO's office. One of them said to me one day that it was no use. I asked why, and he said, "because one of the nineteen of us is mad!"

So, I said, "Maybe he is not the only one, but where is he?" This was a terrible thing, but we finally found him in a hut away out in the bush, literally chained up like a dog. His wrists were tied to his ankles, and he was squatting in the comer of an old hut. It was like a large dog kennel. I remember I cut the bonds. Terrible! He came down to the District Office, where there was matting on the floor, and he had never seen anything so comfortable or so wonderful as that matting on the floor. He lay down there and didn't want to get up again. He was prepared to sign anything, or put his thumb print on anything, and he finally signed for us. At any rate, we got the site. How do you proceed to clear a site of one and a half acres that has hundreds of palm trees growing on it? It was like a wilderness. In the absence of modern machinery and JCBs etc, what you do is to get a village to do the communal work of knocking down the trees and clearing the land. It is an incredible sight to see them knocking down the trees and then clearing them by hand, pretty well levelling the site. They didn't do it for nothing but it did not cost an awful lot. We got the site cleared for our church and house – our house first of all.

As regards the building of the house, we always admired the Kiltegan men, who seemed to be expert in any number of fields. When they weren't running parishes and running schools, teacher training colleges etc, they were building them. When I say building them, I mean literally building them. I didn't feel that I (or any of us) had this kind of expertise. By this time, however, Bishop Moynagh had got out a man called John O'Hare to supervise construction work, in order to give priests time to do their proper work, I suppose. John O'Hare lived with his wife and child in Uyo and he undertook to supervise the building of

our house. We were to try to collect some money locally, because people would obviously have more of an interest in the place if they worked towards raising funds to build it. They were delighted that they were going to have priests of their own in that little township of Ikot Ekpene, where we were operating out of a school building, week after week, after week. It was one of these open buildings, half wall, stanchions and aluminium roof. That was the type of school all over the place at the time.

We started building in 1962, and it was a house designed by Pearse McKenna, a Dublin architect who had worked at one time in Nigeria with Bishop Moynagh and Bishop McGettrick of Ogoja. Pearse was a wonderful character, and he designed a splendid mission house. Numbers of them had been erected, and, in our case, he had added three rooms above and below, keeping the original design. It was a nice design of a house.

In February or March of 1963, the house was finished. I know that because I went home on leave in April. I wasn't really due for leave. We were supposed to do a tour of three years at a time before getting home on leave. But there was a Provincial Assembly to be held in St Joseph's, Blackrock, in Easter Week I think it was, and I was invited to be present at that- Harry Morrin and Sean Johnston were in Ikpe at this time. So we had the opening of the house in Ikot Ekpene, which extended over three or four nights. We invited half the bishops and half the priests one night, and the other half of the priests, bishops and other invitees the second night.

It was marvellous to move from the old mud house in Abiakpo into the comparative luxury of this new house. It was a lovely house, nicely painted, with a nice oratory. On the bottom floor there was the dining room, hallway, an office, the equivalent of two rooms as an oratory and then an office, waiting room, and five bedrooms at the bottom, and a smaller room which could be used as a bedroom. Well, we wanted to have our house not only for the two or three who might be living in it, but to be a rallying centre for the Kiltegan priests. It should be said that during these two years, even when we were out in Abiakpo, that it was wonderful the way priests dropped in. There was tremendous companionship, and fellows like Father Alfie Byrne, Father Gerry Brady, who lived not far away, and hosts of others would come and perhaps spend a night. They used to come in for an evening meal and perhaps would have a game of cards with us. The recreation in Nigeria in these days, especially due to the initiative and enthusiasm of Bishop Moynagh himself was Bridge. Lots of the Kiltegan priests played Bridge, and a great occupation on a Sunday evening was to go to one another's houses for a game. James Moynagh was a formidable opponent and an even

more formidable partner in Bridge. It was better to be his opponent than his partner, because being his partner you were blamed for everything. He had a great post mortem after each hand. He was tremendously enthusiastic for the game himself. It was a wonderful thing to have. I don't think Harry Morrin played much of it, but Paddy and I certainly did. In the Diocese at this time – the Diocese was still all of Calabar – we weren't widely separated. There were perhaps a dozen Kiltegan priests within a radius of 20 miles or so, in different colleges and missions. At any rate, Bridge was a great occupation and a great hobby to have.

In 1963, I went home on leave, and was away the whole summer, not returning until October. And, again, the excitement of speculating on whether there would be any further appointments to Nigeria. When at home, Father O'Leary rang me one day in St Paul's, where I was staying, and asked if I would like to get my hands on a suitable companion to return with me to Nigeria. I forget who suggested, whether it was himself of myself, the name Rod Crowley. Rod was minding his own business; I think he was away on holiday with Des McGinley up in the Highlands of Scotland at the time and didn't get back until after the 19th July when suddenly he found himself appointed to Nigeria. So, Rod was to be the next out here.

Apart from Rod's momentous entry into the country in 1963, the year was also remarkable for other things. The Diocese of Calabar was divided, and Bishop Ekandem, of the Ibibio tribe, who was an Auxiliary Bishop, was given an Annang diocese, called Ikot Ekpene. It was quite small, with about 11 parishes in it. Apparently, that wasn't a good start. Not that I knew all these nuances at the time. So, Bishop Moynagh was a little bit embarrassed in a sense, because I remember he came to me and said that it was he who had invited us out, and now we weren't even in his Diocese. It didn't make any great difference to me or to any of us. But that was the point anyway. We were no longer in Bishop Moynagh's Diocese. He was still in Calabar, and Bishop Ekandem had taken over the newly created Diocese of Ikot Ekpene.

Arrival of the Daughters of Charity.

Another important event in 1963 was the arrival of the Daughters of Charity. I don't know how long this had been mooted, but obviously it was something to be seriously desired that the Daughters of Charity would come out, and they did. Sr Gabriel Hughes (Lord have mercy on her now), Sr Catherine Gaynor and Sr Xavier Daly. When I was at home in the Summer time, I was over in Scotland and I went to see Sr Gabriel Hughes, who was a wonderful person, as indeed they all were. They came out to Nigeria in September or October 1963, and I hadn't

yet returned from leave, unfortunately. I got back in a matter of weeks of their arrival in the country. They were staying with the Holy Child Sisters in a secondary school in Uyo and they themselves were to start a secondary school near Anua, between Uyo and Anua. Somebody was building a little house for them, and until that was ready they were housed with the Holy Child Sisters. It was wonderful to have them, and right from the beginning they brought a completely new dimension to everything. They became great friends with the Medical Missionaries, with the Holy Child Sisters, and with the Handmaids of the Holy Child, this indigenous congregation founded by the Holy Child Sisters.

The next thing, from our own point of view, was the beginning of the building of a church. Pearse McKenna designed the church, too, but the problem was who would we get to build it. So many of the Kiltegan men, to my great admiration and, indeed, envy and jealousy, were able to build the blessed thing practically by themselves, being engineers, construction builders, and mixers of mortar and what not. But in any case, there was an Italian firm in the country called Guffanti Bonniger, and I forget what the tie up with them was, but we got in touch with them, and they said they would build the church for £12,000, to hold about 600-700 people. That didn't seem excessive, so Father O'Leary and Father Kevin O'Kane started a huge fund raising business in Phibsboro' to raise money to help us to build the house and the church. I should have said that in 1962, Fr O'Leary and Fr Kevin O'Kane came out to visit us. They stayed with us in the old house in Abiakpo and saw the need we had for a house and church. I think they stayed a week or ten days. It didn't do Fr O'Leary's health much good. He got some kind of infection in his eye, from which I think he never fully recovered. But Kevin O'Kane had a great old time. I remember one time he borrowed the car and went out on a little sight-seeing tour of his own, and was mighty glad to get back in one piece that night. I think he got really frightened when he lost himself out in the bush somewhere. But all's well that ends well, and he had a great time, swapping yarns and reminiscences with Harry Morrin out in Ikpe. They were both camera enthusiasts, so they had a lot to talk about, and Kevin had wonderful pictures, for some of which he got medals at home afterwards. So he told me, anyway!

So, the position at the end of 1963 was that three Daughters of Charity had arrived in the country and of ourselves the following were present; Frs Paddy Hughes, Harry Morrin, Sean Johnston, Harry Smyth, Rod Crowley and myself. Paddy Hughes went home in November or December 1963. He didn't ever come back to Nigeria. But it was great the times we had together out there. I would like to thank Paddy for all he did.

Further Reinforcements.

1964 dawned and there were rumours that somebody was to come out that year. It turned out that the two who were to come were Father Kevin Scallon, who had been ordained with Father Sean Johnston in 1961, and Father Denis Corkery, a seasoned missionary. They came out by mail boat – a much better craft than the one Harry Morrin, Paddy and I had travelled in. They enjoyed the trip very much, and stopped off in the Ivory Coast for a day or two. I can remember them talking a lot about that. They added a new dimension to our local scene, and there was room for us all in the new house in Umuahia Road, Ikot Ekpene, just about half a mile outside the little town of Ikot Ekpene. We were all very gainfully employed. Remember at this stage we had still two parishes, Ikot Ekpene itself, and Ikpe out in the bush, and hordes of requests for missions and retreats of one kind of another, especially in the parishes and mission stations.

1965 came along and the church was nearly finished, and was to be opened in May 1965. That was a great ceremony indeed, with Archbishop Heerey of Onitsha, most of the bishops of the Eastern Region, and perhaps over a hundred priests, over a hundred Sisters, and all the local population. The Irish Ambassador was there. We had a meal in the Holy Child Convent grounds after the ceremony. The church was lovely, very airy and bright. One of the features in it was the huge stained glass window in the sanctuary made out of chunky concrete slabs, all the way, if you don't mind, from Chartres. There is a story behind that. When I was at home on leave in 1963 Fr Kevin Cronin told me about Gabriel Loire, who was in charge of all the stained glass in the famous Cathedral of Chartres, and that he was doing a lot of stained glass windows in this new medium for the new chapel in Strawberry Hill, that he, Kevin Cronin, was going out to Paris to see Gabriel Loire in a day or two, and would I like to come. I did like to come, so I went with Kevin to Paris and we met Gabriel Loire. He said his son was down somewhere on the West Coast of Africa. He was very interested when he heard that I was in Nigeria and that I would like a huge window for the church. When it subsequently came out in crates – the thick chunky stained glass is set in concrete and it comes in about thirty slabs forming the huge window in the sanctuary – it was to cause me a lot of heartbreak. It was a beautiful window, and thankfully it is still there, but when it came out we had to pay duty on it, even though we had been assured that, being for the church, it would be free of duty. I think we paid something like £800 – an absolute fortune – and I really felt sick the morning I had to go to Port Harcourt. There was nothing I could do about it; I had to pay the blessed money. It is a beautiful window, and it escaped the ravages of war. It was partly damaged, but very little.

Death of Fr Morrin.

Then tragedy struck. Father Harry Morrin had finally been prevailed upon to go home on leave, at the end of 1963 or 1964, and when he had come back he was limping a bit. It was clear that he wasn't well, but he would not admit to anything. I remember asking him the day he came back, at the Airport at Port Harcourt, what was wrong. He dismissed it and said: "There is no fool like an old fool. I was playing tennis with my nephews (or grand-nephews probably) at home in Baltinglass". In any case, Harry struggled on, but it was apparent that he wasn't well, and he was finally prevailed on to go home, shortly after the opening of our church. He was Deacon at the ceremony, at the High Mass for the opening. He was in Anua Hospital preparatory to going home, and a Medical Missionary was to go with him, to give him a couple of injections. I took him down to Port Harcourt the night before his flight and we stayed in the house of a man called John Balfe, a very nice English man, a dentist who had been attached to Anua Hospital. We discovered that John Balfe, like Harry, was a motor bike enthusiast. The two of them talked for ages that night about motor bikes. I could hardly get Harry to go to bed, and he was supposed to be a sick man and had to have his injection that night. So, when he finally went to bed – Harry was in the same room as myself – I laid out the Mass box the night before, so as to have Mass before Harry's departure. The little set of reversible vestments which came out of the Mass box was black. The next morning, I got up. I heard Harry up during the night, and I think he smoked a cigarette. He went back to bed and to sleep again. I went out to the bathroom in the morning in time to shave and said to Harry, "Wait until I come back. I'll be back in a few moments, and I'll help you to dress". So I came back within seven or eight minutes, and I just noticed the stillness of the room, and looked over and saw that Harry was dead, with his head just to one side. So, I called John Balfe. As a matter of fact a doctor had been staying with him that night, and I didn't even know about that. So he came in and said that Harry was dead alright. I didn't know what exactly to do.

We went out to the airport to meet this Medical Missionary who was to travel home with Harry and told her what had happened. Mother de Montfort, the head of the Medical Missionaries in Anua, came down with me. She was a very practical and wonderful person, and the first thing she did when she came into the room, apart from saying a prayer for Harry, was to get his teeth, which were on the mantelpiece or somewhere, and put them into his mouth. It appears that Harry had said in Anua a day or two before that: "Remember to put in my teeth. There is nothing I dislike more than looking at a gummy corpse!" This sounded very macabre under the circumstances. We wrapped Harry up in the

sheet on the bed and put him into the back of the estate car that Mother de Montfort had, to drive him back to Anua, from where he had come just the night before. His last words to the Sisters and priests who were there before he left were: "Don't worry, I'll be back".

So his body was brought back the sixty-five miles to Anua. We stopped en route to make a few phone calls to let people know, because the funeral had to be next day as you don't keep people long in the tropics. Harry used to joke about that too, with his peculiar morbid sense of humour, as some would have thought. The funeral was next day, with a large cortege of cars from Anua Hospital to the church in Ikot Ekpene, a distance of about 20 miles. I remember the church had been opened just a few weeks, and now the next major occasion was his funeral.

1965 continued. We had to get the pieces together again after the terrible shock of Harry's death. The missions were going on all over the place. Fr Kevin Scallon, Fr Harry Smyth and Fr Denis Corkery were very busy indeed, with priests' retreats and days of recollection all over the diocese. We had come to know by this time not only all the Kiltegan men who were working in the Calabar and Ikot Ekpene dioceses but a lot of the Holy Ghost men who were in the big dioceses of Onitsha, Owerri, the newly constituted diocese of Port Harcourt and the diocese of Umuahia. Frs Morrin, Smyth, Scallon and myself were over in the western region, and up in the northern region. I remember going up to Jos Plateau, the place in Nigeria where it's comfortable to live, being much cooler – a lovely place – where I gave a priests' retreat. And I know that Harry had been over in Benin, in the west.

The January Coup:

The next big happening was in January 1966. The country had got its independence on 1st October 1960 – the month we went out there. It had a civilian government, but there was a lot of trouble brewing, which came to a head in January with the famous January Coup. Five young Majors in the army seized power, and I was to get to know the leader very well indeed. The young man who was in charge of that Coup, Chukwuma Nzeogwu (he was baptised Patrick, because in the old days they used have to take a Saint's name, and the place was full of Patricks, of course) was only 28 or 29 years of age. It reminded me of Easter Week and the Civil War here in Ireland. The Coup did not really succeed and he handed over power, after that speech which was relayed over the Radio about making a new deal and wiping out corruption etc. Chukwuma meant it. He was an extraordinary fellow, as I was to find out later. But he handed over power to a General who hadn't been involved in the Coup – Brigadier General Ironsi – and there was a very uneasy state over the next year or so, and war did finally break

out in June 1967. I remember being over in the western region during the time of the January Coup, and the whole country was in a seething state at the time. In June 1966 I was home on leave but war clouds were beginning to gather. I went to Fordham University to a Summer School. Fr Cahalan got me in there for about six or seven weeks. He was to send Frs Peter McKenna, Rod Crowley, Tom Dougan and Seamus O'Neill there in the autumn. So, Roderic was leaving Nigeria for one, if not two, years in Fordham in 1966.

I went home in June 1966, and when I returned in the autumn time Fr Tom Devine came back with me. It was a dangerous time in a sense, anybody new to be coming back to the country, but Tom was very keen. We had a great night in Strawberry Hill the night before our departure. Tom spent some time with us in Ikot Ekpene and then went up to Ogoja Diocese, the diocese bordering the old Calabar Diocese of Bishop McGettrick. I don't think he was related to Fr Devine but he used talk about Fr Devine's uncle – a Rates Collector – whom he remembered with cordial dislike from his youthful days over in the West of Ireland. Tom McGettrick and James Moynagh had both been ordained in Maynooth in 1930 for their respective dioceses of Achonry and Ardagh. They had volunteered for a five-year spell in 1930 and here they still were, both as bishops in 1967.

In 1967 things got worse and worse, politically speaking. Under the military government of Ironsi, the country had been divided into four regions, with a military government in each region, headed in the eastern region by Lt Col Ojukwu. The eastern region was mainly, but far from being altogether, Igbo-speaking people and there had been a lot of trouble and a lot of massacres of Igbo people away up in the north and in the west, but especially in the north. The Igbo people were widely-scattered. They were the people in Nigeria who had taken to trade and commerce and the early benefits of education. They had always earned the dislike, if not hatred, of a lot of the other people, because, when Independence came, having had the better education, they got the top jobs, and were hated for this. They tended to be in the north and west. If you were looking for a p1umber, electrician, carpenter etc you would find an Igbo. After the massacres in the north, they became scared, and a lot of them came flocking back to the homeland, which became swollen with people, and the country couldn't contain them. So, Ojukwu said they would proclaim an independent republic of Biafra. They were warned by the Nigerian Federal Government that if they did there would be a war. They would not allow them to succeed. But succeed they did, under the name of Biafra, which became a very famous name throughout the world.

Civil War:
War did finally break out in June 1967. The federal troops crossed the borders in the north, part of the eastern region around Ogoja Diocese, Bishop McGettrick's area. That war should have been over in a week or two, for the simple reason that they had no ammunition, guns, or even soldiers. It was a prime example for anyone who cares to look at the thing of how much to blame the arms dealers are in all the different countries. They saw this was their chance. In the event, it lasted for two and a half years. There weren't enough guns or ammunition. There wasn't such a thing as a jet plane. The Red Cross put a figure of one and half to two million deaths, most of them from starvation, most in our region – the eastern region – known as Biafra. One couldn't really agree with that secession for the simple reason that they included in Biafra the other peoples like Efiks, Ibibios, and the Rivers people around Port Harcourt. They cordially hated the Igbos as much as other people in the country did. Ikot Ekpene was not actually an Igbo place but, like all places, they had more than their complement of Igbo people, especially in the trades. We were in this delicate position. The Igbos in the parish took it for granted that we, as self-respecting Irish priests, would favour the Independence of Biafra and be cordially on their side. The Efik native people were just as cordially convinced that we sided with them. It was very difficult at Mass on Sundays. I remember once giving a homily on the Pharisee and the Publican and the Igbos and the Efiks took it up in a very peculiar way with me afterwards. Each of them, fortunately, thought I was on their side, so my skin was saved.

So the war broke out in 1967, in June, and this man, Nzeogwu, the leader of the original Coup, had a peculiar relationship with Ojukwu, the Governor, and the head of the whole Biafran Government. Ojukwu was afraid of Nzeogwu and was envious and jealous of him, because he was one of these young fellows with tremendous charisma. He was actually locked up, it was said for his own safety. But it was all very hush-hush, and nobody was to know where he was. But didn't we find out that he was in Ikot Ekpene in the prison. He was referred to as "our visitor" by the Prison Governor. I got down to see him, and I think he was the most remarkable Nigerian I had ever met. He talked to me very openly and in a very friendly way. He had been baptised a Catholic and was educated in a Catholic school run by the SMAs in Kaduna, and took the middle name "Kaduna" from the northern territory. He was Igbo, from the west, but born and raised in the north, and he was very popular with the northerners and with everybody.

Nzeogwu had a friend called Jacob, whom I had got to know earlier, and the two of them came to our house in Ikot Ekpene one night in June 1967. I remember that well, because he was a very intelligent and very

well-educated fellow and we talked about Latin in the liturgy – to be, or not to be. Nzeogwu kept saying: "It's a terrible pity, the Church has made a terrible mistake by abandoning Latin". We talked that issue back and forward and then he said: "Not that it's going to make any difference to me anyway". Jacob, who was a very laid back sort of person and was reading the paper, put down the paper, looked across and asked: "Why doesn't it make any difference to you?" He said: "Because I'll be dead before the end of this year". He was dead within two months, aged 28.

We didn't know it as we were talking that night in our house, but it was probably on that night that the troops first crossed the border up in the north and that war started. Nzeogwu rallied the troops, led a raid up in the north and was killed. The northern Nigerians, in a war that wasn't given to the compliments or the decorations of war, gave him a great funeral, broadcast on the Northern Radio Station, with a tribute to Nzeogwu as a kind of a misguided figure but a tremendous soldier and a real Nigerian. I was very, very sad to learn of it, having got to know him and having had him in our house. Later, I was to meet his sister who was in a teacher-training college. His old father came to me later still looking for help. Everybody was looking for help at that time, because Biafra was becoming more and more overcrowded and it was becoming land-locked. Starvation had set in, but that's another story, I suppose.

Well, everything was in a state of chaos, varying states of chaos, I suppose, for the rest of 1967. I don't remember it very well at this stage, because nothing very much happened in a military sense, near us anyway. The fighting was in the north and it wasn't until a few months later that we discovered the Nigerians had made an entry from the sea on our south flank, and were capturing places like Port Harcourt, which had oil installations, and Calabar. So now we realised we were caught up in the movement, and we knew there would be much action nearer us. All the schools and colleges were closed, and in the early part of the war Enugu, where the Bigard seminary was, had fallen.

Things fall apart;

In 1968, I felt I would have to face up to things not being normal. Fr Scallon, Fr Corkery and Fr Smyth all went back home. I forget the exact date, but it was probably around Easter time, perhaps March, April, or May. I can certainly remember leaving Tom Devine down to the Airport in Port Harcourt. I'll not forget it. There were no such things as lights allowed along the road, and when you were getting near the Airport, such as it was, you weren't allowed to have any car lights on. It was a very eerie, ominous, frightening business treading our way, and of course there were soldiers challenging us, jumping out of the ditches at

us with guns every few yards we passed. The exit at that time was by special plane; no such thing at that time as Nigerian Airways operating out of Port Harcourt. We were a self-contained entity in Biafra and any flights going out or coming in were strictly illegal. Fr Devine went out on a flight, not a jet flight or anything like that, to Lisbon. I know it was a flight of about thirteen or fourteen hours' duration. President Azikiwe, a very famous Igbo political figure, was on that flight, and they entertained each other with reminiscences of one kind or another.

Early in 1968, Kevin Scallon was due to go to Washington University that year, I think, and Harry Smyth and Denis Corkery were to go, of all places, to Alaska. That left Sean Johnston and myself and we were still in Ikot Ekpene. The war clouds were certainly threatening here after the capture of Calabar. An Italian doctor called Andreotti, who had come out to Ikot Ekpene a few years before, had become very friendly with us. He used to come in and out of the house. I was amazed that he stayed on, because white people had been advised to clear out, much, much earlier than this, and most had done so, except for the likes of ourselves and the Sisters. But Andreotti was still serving in the little local hospital in Ikot Ekpene, living in a house in the little reservation area. But, as I say he spent a lot of time with us.

Goodbye to Ikot Ekpene:
There were still the few Kiltegan men around. Two of them, Johnny Flanagan and Paddy Finnerty, often came in to us for a game of Bridge. Bridge was a tremendous hobby to have at this stage, I can tell you. One day, I remember it well (Andreotti had said to me previously that if any of us got word that the troops were arriving or that it was time to get out of Ikot Ekpene, he was to tell me or I was to tell him) the four of us, Sean Johnston, Johnny Flanagan, Paddy Finnerty and myself were having a game of Bridge when who burst in the door but Dr Andreotti and he said to me: "Father Mullan, the time has come!" I asked: "For what?" and he replied: "To clear out. The government offices are all being evacuated, and the Nigerian troops are not too far away". And he looked at us and asked: "What is going on here?" I said something jokingly like "Johnny Flanagan was trying to get three no trumps, but hasn't got a chance." Andreotti, for the first time in his life, got very annoyed indeed, and practically scattered the table of cards. We pacified him, anyway.

On the move:
I forget whether we left that evening or not, but I said I would see him the next day. Bishop Ekandem lived in the town of Ikot Ekpene and he called us and said it was time to go, everyone was moving out, there wouldn't be a sinner left – and it was a hugely populated area. It was

weird to find the whole place deserted. The bishop told us where he was going and suggested that Sean and I, who were the only two confreres left at this stage, should go out to a place called Urua Akpan, a village about seven or eight miles from us, but it was at the other side of the river, which had a bridge across it. There was a strong mission there, with a church, and two Kiltegan men, whom we were to get to know very, very well. The Medical Missionaries had a hospital there. So, we were to go there and see what happened, because the Bishop said that Ikot Ekpene would be bombed and stormed, and there was nobody left there. We simply put a few things into a suitcase or two. I think we buried chalices, ciboria etc in Urua Akpan when we got there. I can't remember what we did with baptismal registers, marriage registers etc. The filing cabinets were left just as they were. There was a cloth on the kitchen table, with HP Sauce etc – absolutely everything normal – and we closed the door on that house, never to see it again, this side of the Deluge anyway.

So, Sean and I went out to Urua Akpan, across the river – the bridge was still standing. It took us only about half an hour. We were housed in a little bungalow beside the hospital. A couple of nurses from Ireland, who used to serve in the hospital had been living there and had long since gone home. There were four Sisters in the Medical Missionary hospital, and Fr Gus Frawley and Fr Tony Cronin, both young Kiltegan priests, in the mission there.

I should say that, before we left Ikot Ekpene, there had been a number of bombing raids. To be ushered into the era of jet bombings was an experience for us, and especially for Nigerians, most of whom had never seen a plane in their lives. We had a big bunker – a huge big hole dug outside the back door – in Ikot Ekpene. I never once had a chance to get into the bunker, because by the time you heard the jet plane it had already passed over. Bombs had been dropped down the road in Ikot Ekpene, and there were certainly bombs dropped in Urua Akpan, the village we were going to, because the house and the hospital were partially hit. The Nigerian jet planes seemed to spot hospitals from miles away.

In any event, Sean and I had a bizarre time for the next two or three months. This was probably March/April/May/June time. We played maybe seven or eight hours of Bridge every day. Sean and I were, I think, partners. I forget whether we changed partners or not, but the idea was that you were to keep a tally of all the points. I always prided myself (I never considered myself much of a Bridge player) on having about 17,000 to 20,000 amassed, by dint of playing in the morning time, in the evening time, every day.

There was one terrific happening in the hospital while we were

there. The Nigerian troops had come in the meantime, had invaded Ikot Ekpene and had come out as far as that bridge I was talking about that was laid between Ikot Ekpene and us in Urua Akpan. The bridge had been blown up or knocked down before they got to it, but the extraordinary thing was that they could easily have got over the river – it was a very narrow river – but they simply camped on the other side and were to be there for the best part of a year, enjoying themselves no doubt, as I discovered, because I got down to the range of their guns one time with a Biafran soldier, and actually saw, for the first time during the Nigerian war, a Nigerian soldier. It didn't encourage me, because I said to the Biafran who was with me: "Are there really Nigerian soldiers at the other side of that river?" He took out a rifle and fired a shot in the air, saying: "We will find out". And there was answering fire from the other side of the river. I remember throwing myself down on the ground in the long grass. Not a wise thing to have asked your man if there really were Nigerian soldiers on the other side!

Life went on in Urua Akpan. People just vanished – you wouldn't know where they had gone to, and there was nothing in the way of regular church services. There were four priests there, and the four Medical Missionaries in the hospital. There were some patients in the hospital, including some soldiers. And one day there was panic. People said the Nigerian soldiers had crossed the river and were on their way. Everybody in the hospital fled – and I mean everybody. There were fellows with one leg and no legs, with two legs and one arm, and with no arms jumping out of the hospital, and people with drips attached to them. A crowd of them came over to Sean and myself. I forget whether we had one car, or two cars, but it ended up with about ten of them piling into each car, and they asked us to drive them back into Igbo country. Another ten or twelve miles out the road brought them into what was strictly Igbo country. It wasn't Igbo heartland, but they said they wanted to die in Igbo country. We went out to the road in the car, but the road was black – it was like some of the ghastly scenes you see on TV – with refugees, with their little goods and belongings, goats, sheep, dogs etc. You couldn't possibly get through on the road but we knew short cuts through the bush and we took those. My car-load were praying and praying. I remember there was a girl – I think she was a nurse in the hospital – and she kept praying and they were all answering her. There were prayers to St Joseph, there were prayers to Our Lady, and litanies. It was extraordinary. We got them to Igbo territory, and I will never forget the look on their faces when they asked me where I was going now and when I said I was going back again, they couldn't believe it. Well, I had nowhere else to go, I suppose.

So, Sean and I – we each took different roads, I think – headed back

to Urua Akpan and spent about eight weeks there. It was an extraordinary kind of existence. I wouldn't have liked to have spent much longer there. One day Fr Donal O'Sullivan, the Holy Ghost Regional Superior, came down with a message from the Bishop of Owerri – Bishop Joe Whelan – asking one or two of us to go up and take over an Igbo parish near Owerri. It was decided from home that Sean should go to join Kevin Scallon on his course on Catechetics in Washington and that there was no need for the two of us to be there. But Sean was still with me in Urua Akpan and we said we would go up to this parish, which was called Uzoagba, ten or eleven miles from Owerri. The man who had been the previous incumbent had gone home and there was nobody there. It was a typical big Igbo parish, bursting at the seams, never more than now because all the Igbos who belonged to that area had flocked back there from the west and north of Nigeria.

Move to Uzoagba;

We said goodbye to Tony Cronin and to Gus Frawley, our Bridge partners, and I said I would come back and see them some time. I think I did, perhaps once or twice. Sean and I went to Uzoagba that day, and Fr Pat Doran who was a great friend of ours, a Holy Ghost man, joined us. I forget now what the circumstances were. He and I were in one car and Sean was in another car behind. Biafra, at this stage, was full of improvised barriers wherever you went along the road, with fellows pointing guns at you, roaring abuse, and searching you, even though we were supposed to be on the Army's side. After all, we had stayed in the blessed country. But everybody was mad at this stage, including ourselves, and never more than on that day. I remember it was on that day that Bobby Kennedy was killed. We had a mad journey up to Uzoagba, driving through these roadblocks, with fellows threatening to fire guns at us, and chasing us. But we got there, anyway. There was a big party of people in the yard of the house in Uzoagba. They were delighted to see us but they were giving out because the priest had left before the previous Sunday which had been Pentecost Sunday, and they said it was the first time in their history that they had no Mass on Pentecost Sunday. They were obviously adamant about Sunday Mass, even when their country was falling about their ears!

The awful thing was that Sean was not to stay with me. When Sean saw the parish he said he would love to be there with me. I suppose when we were in Ikot Ekpene and travelling around on missions, each of us had a dream to have a spell in an Igbo parish, because there were big numbers, vitality, the singing on Sundays and the participation of the people. We had experienced it, but only on a travelling basis. The idea of having a parish of one's own with this going on every Sunday

was a dream, and it was to be mine fulfilled over the next year or so.

I had the unpleasant job of taking Sean to the famous Uli Airstrip to get him out of the country. At this time an airlift had started and the airlift went on for over a year and a half. It meant anything from 20 to 30 flights a night coming in with foodstuffs for the stricken Biafran people, from Sao Tome, about 300 miles out in the Atlantic. That's where all the food and stuff was stockpiled. There were French, British, South African, American pilots – who did it for money of course.

They each did at least two flights per night. They could only travel by night as they would be attacked during the day but Nigeria didn't seem to have any night fighters. So, this must have been easily the most long-sustained relief operation in all of history. Uli was the little village on the road between Onitsha and Owerri – just a strip of road. I had often travelled, indeed we all had, that road. They used to call it Enugu Airport, because the Biafrans would never admit that Enugu, their Capital, had been captured in the first month or two of the war. And Uli became Enugu International Airport. But it was weird. There was no airport building. There were no lights, except for a string of improvised bush lanterns along the side of the road, which would be kept on for a couple of minutes if a plane were coming in or departing. These planes came in every night, as I say, and each pilot tried to make two runs – to make more money. They had the advantage, of course, of bringing in more food and medical supplies. I drove up in the dark – the place shrouded in complete darkness – not knowing where I was going, but treading my way through lanes and roads, with Sean Johnston, to get him out on one of these planes, back to Ireland, preparatory to going to America. It is literally true that I was going about five miles an hour, and picking my way through the darkness. Suddenly, something told me to stop, and I stopped the car and found myself under the wing of a big four-engined plane. I didn't even know where I was.

Sean got on the plane and it went out, and I went back to the parish of Uzoagba, and began to pick up the threads. It was a great challenge. There was a church again. Half the buildings in Nigeria were uncompleted, and St Joseph's Church in Uzoagba was no exception. But it had walls and a roof. It hadn't got doors or windows, but nobody minded that too much. There was a big crowd of people there, and I tried to get into things. I suppose I was nominally parish priest, but the lady who was really parish priest was Mother Labouré, a wonderful Holy Rosary Sister, who was the Mother Theresa of her time and place, no doubt about that. What she did by way of relief was to organise it and cook meals on a vast, vast scale. You are not likely to come across it very often. She died shortly after the war ended, shortly after we were all home, because I remember being at her funeral up in Killishandra, and

I could hardly believe it when I saw on her coffin on that day that she was only 56.

In a way, I felt out of things in that parish, because Mother Labouré and her helpers were doing all the work. But it was great to be there. I was on my own for quite a while. As I mentioned earlier, I found that the Seminary, two or three hundred strong, had moved to a place called Amakohia, which was about 6 or 7 miles away. During the war the seminary staff and students kept moving from place to place as the Nigerian Army advanced towards them. They set up shop in different places, ending up in Amlamo. That they did have a certain amount of staff difficulties may be gleaned from the fact that they actually gave me a job in the seminary – for a while! I used to go there on my Honda 50, over well-nigh impossible bush paths. One day I fell off and twisted my knee. The next morning when I awoke I found I could hardly get out of the bed, and so did not turn up for Mass, which was at 5.30 am. At about 5.40 am, I found the redoubtable Mother Labouré standing over me demanding to know why I hadn't turned up for Mass. It was a weird and wonderful time.

After a while I was joined by two Holy Ghost men, who would share my life for the next number of months. One was Fr Pat Flynn from Co Meath, and the other Fr Dermot Kavanagh from Rathnew, Co Wicklow. They were both men in their forties, typical Holy Ghost men, with a lot of pastoral work behind them in Port Harcourt Diocese. They had fled from their own parishes when everybody was retreating from the war front. Everybody was fleeing and Biafra was getting smaller and smaller. We were being caught like rats in a trap. The population explosion was terrible in the smaller and smaller Biafra that was coming into being every day. These two men had left everything – their parishes and everything they had – and arrived with a few bundles.

Dermot Kavanagh arrived accompanied by a crowd known as the Bosco Boys. Apparently, he had a very successful club in Port Harcourt, and he brought all these lads with him. The Biafran Army were looking for them because they were recruiting youngsters all over the place; out morning, noon and night searching for them in the bush, putting ropes around them and dragging them off in the backs of lorries for the Biafran Army. But we succeeded in getting exemption for these fellows because they had a lorry and a couple of them were mechanics. It meant that they were able to bring food to outlying places. They spent their time feeding Mother Labouré's people. They used to prepare thick soup in scores of 40-gallon drums, with hordes and hordes of poor little kids lined up for hours, fenced in and wending their forward to wherever the food was.

At this time the refugees in each parish were beyond numbering. About 20,000 refugees came to our parish, and that's not an exaggera-

tion or loose figure, because the Igbos were very exact and, as long as they had a sheet of paper, they would put down facts and figures on it. The refugee camps were the schools, which were closed – the schools were half open buildings anyway. Thankfully, the climate was such that the people did not freeze to death. So we had about 20 of these camps with about 1,000 in each, men, women and children, in all stages of decay, especially the children. Everybody at home saw the effect of this awful Kwashiokor – the extended tummies, the ancient looking faces. It was a terrible sight to behold, and there were thousands and thousands of these. There's no way but they would all have died had it not been for this massive relief that had been initiated by Catholic Aid in America, the Biafra Famine Appeal that was instituted here at home and later became Africa Concern, and, more lately still, Concern.

There was a central clearing depot in a place called Iheoma, which was near this famous Uli airstrip, and lorries would go up there and take deliveries of all the food stocks, dried fish, grain, Complan etc. They would take that every night from all these different plane loads which came in, and stockpile them in Iheoma, and from there they would bring them out to appointed centres throughout the length and breadth of the country the very next day. It was all highly organised. The man I got to know best was Fr Jack Finnucane, a Holy Ghost man who was in charge of that. Fr Con Courtney, also a Holy Ghost man, had been in charge just before I got to these parts.

This went on for days, weeks and months. By the nature of things, it was something which couldn't last forever, nor did it. But, in any case, it saved thousands and thousands of lives, and, contrary to some reports that were being put around home at the time, every ounce of all those foodstuffs that arrived certainly went to the starving and poor people. I have no doubt about that.

It was a weird kind of existence all the time and something which really couldn't last but last it did for a total of two and a half years, when it shouldn't have lasted for more than a fortnight.

So, 1968 passed, and I remember we had a great Christmas dinner. I feel a bit guilty, but there was food brought in anyway, and we had Christmas dinner with the Holy Rosary Sisters, Bishop Whelan, Fr Kavanagh, and Fr Pat Flynn and myself at the Bishop's place. I suppose there was a group of about nine or ten of us. What I remember about that particular Christmas was that each of us said three Masses, one at Midnight in different parts of the parish, and two Masses in the morning time. Thousands and thousands of people attended. I remember at the Midnight Mass, and at each of the morning Masses, I spent over one hour on each occasion giving out Holy Communion – shades of the Eucharistic ministers (there weren't any of these in those days).

Night flight to Uli:
Our parish of Uzoagba became quite famous, because Dermot Kavanagh and Pat Flynn were mighty men, and Mother Labouré was a wonderful woman. Her Regional Superior was living with her in the little house too. We were really in the thick of things. To crown it all, *Radharc*, the Dublin Diocesan filmmaking crew came out to do a film which became famous called "*The Night Flight to Uli*". The film crew – Dermod McCarthy, Des Forristal, Peter Lemass and two or three others – stayed in our house, and a lot of the action was filmed around our place, and at Uli Airport, of course. If you ever watch the film, you will see on the first consignment of tea chests, boxes etc that came tumbling out of a plane, that my name is on one of the first to come out – upside down, but it was there. One particularly poignant part of that film "Night Flight to Uli" was shot in our little church of St Joseph's, Uzoagba. A number of very lucky kids were being flown out to Gabon, formerly a French Dependency, and now supposed, at any rate, to be a free country down south of the Cameroons, about a hundred miles south of Nigeria. The capital of that was Libreville, and arrangements were made there to look after them. It meant that their lives were going to be saved. But the poor little ones were all handed over our altar rail into the Sanctuary, each with a little identification bracelet, tiny little mites who looked as if they wouldn't last a journey down the road, never mind to Gabon. But they were all flown out, and they would all be men and women in their twenties now. Very, very few of them died. Well, they wouldn't have brought out anybody who wasn't going to survive the journey. It was so touching to see them being handed over the altar rails by their parents or others who were with them.

We used to go around all these refugee camps which were housed, as I say, in our schools. You would get a rapturous welcome, and I had great fun with the kids, kicking football with them and chasing them. Around Christmas 1968, kids were coming up and tugging at me, pulling at me, and dragging me here, there, and everywhere. I didn't know where they wanted me to go this day, but I followed them, anyway, and they brought me around a few bush roads into a little hay barn.

In it was a new-born infant, and this was Christmas time. The extraordinary thing about the new-born infants was that they looked very healthy. I remember baptising a number of them, and they were the only ones who looked in any way healthy and strong, with shiny little faces. When a black person loses the shine from the skin it means he/she is in very bad health, and this was the condition of about everyone you met, except these infants.

We had a great time with Des Forristal and Peter Lemass, Lord have mercy on him now, and Dermod McCarthy the camera man. It was a

great experience watching them making this film, which I have often watched since.

James Cahalan and Rod Crowley come to visit;
Next thing I remember was around St Patrick's Day time in 1969, when no less personages than Fr James Cahalan and Fr Rod Crowley were coming out to visit us in Nigeria (well, visit me) and see the scene for themselves. They, like everybody else at the time, had to use the relief flights. The flights went from Lisbon (Portugal seemed to favour Biafra and there were links with Portugal anyway) right down to Sao Tomé, which was a Portuguese possession, this island in the Atlantic. You take a great risk going in and out, for reasons before stated, since Uli wasn't an airport at all, but simply a road. During the war, five planes crashed and five crews were buried up around Uli. As a matter of fact, to anticipate things a little, when the war finally ended the Nigerians seemed to concentrate a lot of their hatred on Uli and all that it stood for, and one of the things the invading Nigerian Army did (we had actually got graves and headstones for the people who died in those planes) was to get bulldozers or tanks and simply flatten those headstones and grind them into the dirt, beside Uli Church. It was an awful thing. I remember we wrote to the relatives, as far as we could at any rate, of the dead crews at the time – we got a little memorial card – but this is what happened to their mortal remains and their headstones way back in Biafra where they met their end.

A decision is made
But it was wonderful having Rod and James and they stayed about a week. They saw life as it was like, as they were staying in the house in Uzoagba, with Dermot Kavanagh, Pat Flynn and myself. It was a wonderful experience for them, as it was for us. I remember Rod writing to me from Sao Tome on his way home, and said he would like to come back again to Nigeria after he had finished in Fordham University. I can remember Rod and myself trying to sort out the situation and make some kind of plans for the future – not an easy thing to do in the prevailing Armageddon! We were both convinced that we must now, or at least after the war, make it our aim to set up an indigenous Nigerian Province. Roderic now saw that, in spite of previous doubts, he must make a commitment to returning to Nigeria. Unlike the rest of us he would be 'clean' not having been involved in Biafra. He was back on the staff of St Patrick's, Drumcondra, and had done wonderful work in organising relief and in sending out clothes, pills and all kinds of stuff to us. Of course Fr Cahalan was fantastically interested in the whole wellbeing of the entire scene in Nigeria. It was great having the two of them, and

I was very lonely and sad when they took themselves off again. But that was March or April 1969.

First fruits:
After Rod's departure I began to see that there was no time like the present. In that I was greatly helped by Fr Kevin Doheny CSSp, head of Okpala Junior Seminary in Owerri. One day he told me he had two seminarians whom I should invite to join us, viz., Anthony and Timothy Njoku. I remember saying to him, "What would Bishop Whelan of Owerri say if he thought we were pinching some of his seminarians?" Kevin replied that Bishop Whelan had plenty and wouldn't miss a few! He also told me that the two Njokus were, in many ways, the pick of the bunch in Okpala Seminary. I tried to keep close to Timothy and Anthony during the war. They were now officially studying in the Major Seminary. Here a remarkable story was unfolding. The Major Seminary was called the Bigard Seminary and was in Enugu. But Enugu fell to the Federal Army very early in the Biafran War, so what was to be done with the seminary? Easy! Just pack up everything and become mobile, follow the retreating populace from Enugu and set up shop somewhere en route (emulating, whether they knew it or not, the early migrant universities in Europe in the Middle Ages). This was quite a feat and serves as a good example of the astonishing versatility and adaptability displayed in these remarkable times. One staging post in the Seminary odyssey was, I think, Amakohia. It was a place not too far from Uzoagba where I lived. Seminary staff must have been in short supply as I was drafted in at some stage to help out by travelling by autocycle through the bush to take scripture classes.

The next item of interest for me was going home on leave. The idea was to go home on leave every three years. I had been home in 1963 and 1966, and now it was 1969. In a way, I didn't like going. I thought I wouldn't get back again and, having seen so much of the action, I wanted to be there for the end. At the same time, it was a wonderful relief to get home.

A happening at Uli;
I remember very clearly the circumstances of my going. There were a couple of Presentation Sisters and a couple of Holy Rosary Sisters travelling with me. It was a Globemaster plane, and we had to climb up an improvised rope ladder to get into the cockpit area. It was a kind of a double-decker plane. We just squatted on the top of this trap door arrangement inside in this huge big empty plane that had come in with about 10,000 dried fish on board which had been duly emptied out. There were no seats, you just squatted on the floor. The pilots were

always in a hurry, because when they were on the ground they were sitting ducks, and were always frightened that there might be an attack from flight fighters, but there never had been ... at least not until this night.

The pilot started the plane off, and we were heading off down the road, when all of a sudden we heard deafening, ear-splitting noises outside. I didn't know what on earth had happened. I thought maybe lorries had got in the way, because everything was in darkness, and I thought the plane had driven straight into them. But the Captain shouted back at us: "Abandon ship", and the plane grounded to a standstill, swerving all over the road. Abandoning ship meant that you had to go down through the trap-door, lowering yourself down a rope ladder, and (gentleman that I was) I let the Sisters go first. I remember one of them tried to get back up the rope ladder again for her handbag! We had to make the final jump from the plane down on to the ground, and one of the Sisters, as we all remember, hit an ant heap and was very, very uncomfortable for the next few hours. We then lay cowering in the bush. What had happened was that the Nigerians had acquired night fighter jets and, for the first time ever, had attacked the relief planes. The awful noise I had heard was that of cannon shells being fired from those jet planes. I think four men were killed, the people who had taken all the foodstuffs off the planes. The fighter planes disappeared in a matter of seconds, of course, but we were waiting for them to come back again, but I don't think they did.

After a while the pilot came over to us cowering in the bush and said we were going to try again. So, we got on to the plane, and this time we got off without incident. I will never forget the relief we felt after flying across 300 miles to come over this little island of Sao Tome and to look down on it. It was like a jewel in paradise, all lit up. It was just an ordinary scene, but we hadn't seen any of that in Biafra. To see the place laid out below, not only the lights, but to see the runway and all the lights on the runway, was just like Heaven. Everything looked so beautiful and so inviting.

There was a crowd at the Airport because they had heard that night that our plane had been attacked before leaving. I remember people saying to us that night that it was the end of the relief scheme, that planes couldn't continue to go in at night if they were going to be attacked. I don't think they were attacked again. Certainly, the relief planes kept going.

We had a great night in Sao Tome and the next day, or perhaps it was the day following, we flew to Amsterdam. It wasn't a regular airline, just a relief plane – a big four engine plane – and we were about twelve or thirteen hours in the air. We touched down in some arid desert place

– Tripoli or Tunisia perhaps – for a couple of hours, and back on to the plane again. When we arrived at Amsterdam Airport, I remember ringing Strawberry Hill to announce my imminent arrival. I took a plane from Amsterdam to London. I don't know where we got the money. We didn't pay for the flights out from Nigeria on these relief planes, but presumably we had to pay from Amsterdam to London on these scheduled British Airlines. Kevin Cronin very kindly met me. After all the trouble in Nigeria it was great to avail of all the hospitality in Strawberry Hill. Fr Cronin and the confreres were wonderful, as usual.

A plan is formed:
I then went over to Dublin and got a great reception there, too. I stayed in St Pat's, Drumcondra. Fr Cregan was away – I think there was an assembly in Rome that year – 1969 – and himself, Tom Lane and James Cahalan attended. But Father Philip Walshe played marvellous host to me in St Pat's. One of the first things I did was to have a meeting with Rod Crowley and Kevin Scallon, because it was clear to me at this stage that the war was going to come to an end, and there was no confrere left in Ikot Ekpene. I remember getting in touch with James Cahalan in Rome to tell him of my arrival home and what we were trying to do. We decided that it would be a good idea if Roderic Crowley went back to Nigeria, but to go back on the Nigerian side – in other words, legally. He could keep in touch with Ikot Ekpene, because I felt the war wasn't going to last forever, and it would be good to have somebody there for the sake of continuity. I would be no good at the end of the war, whatever happened me. So Rod Crowley decided to do that. Now, Kevin Scallon decided he would like to go back also, and he would go back to my side, and so he did. Rod and himself went back to Nigeria in September or October 1969; Rod legitimately, to the Nigerian side, and Kevin illegitimately, like myself, not exactly to Uzoaghba, but to a little parish called Atta, a few miles away.

Denis Corkery and Eamonn Raftery return with me:
So, I had my holiday at home and went back in October 1969. At this time Denis Corkery and Eamonn Raftery came with me. This was marvellous, but, in a way, at this juncture, I can't figure out why we all did go back. I went back because I had been there all the time during the war, and I wanted to be there at the finish. Eamonn Raftery had actually been appointed in 1967 when he was in St Paul's, Raheny, but I had written home to the then Provincial, Christy O'Leary, to say that there wasn't much point in anyone else coming out at this stage, so Eamonn didn't come. Now he came, with Denis, who had been out before. We took off from Dublin to Amsterdam, and we were supposed

to be getting one of these relief planes carrying medical supplies etc, on which we would travel for nothing, and on which they might have a few seats for the likes of us. When we arrived in Amsterdam we discovered the plane wasn't going from there, but from Frankfurt. We had to take digs in Amsterdam, I remember, and we spent the night there. I remember the Holy Ghost Father, Pat Doran, was with us too. I got into trouble because I saw, when we got to Frankfurt, that there was a film on the Battle of Britain on some place, and I liked these old war films. but the others thought it extremely dull. But it was funny, to be seeing it in German and in a German city, portraying the Germans as all bad fellows and the English all good fellows.

We left Frankfurt and flew to Sao Tome. Eamonn and Denis came with me then, by the old approved method, into Uli airstrip. Eamonn and Denis went to Uzoagba, my old place. I was very sorry not to get back there, because I had loved my time there. It had meant an awful lot to me. I thought it was my greatest hour in Nigeria. You couldn't exactly call it a happy time, because of all the misery, starvation and all that, but it was a wonderful experience to be there, with the like of Mother Labouré, Dermot Kavanagh, and Pat Flynn. I always remember those months spent there. However, things don't last forever, and Eamonn and Denis went there while I went out to join Kevin in Atta.

Just an interesting little side-line. Kevin was very well established in Atta, and he gently made it clear to me that he was parish priest, not me. Well, I had a roving commission, anyway. As it happened, we had only a couple of months together, because I was on the move quite a bit, and he was the anchor man in that little parish. It wasn't a very big parish, but it certainly was worthwhile being there, and we were in touch with Denis and Eamonn.

It was great to see them working in Uzoagba, and I should mention how Eamonn Raftery dug himself in. He had the distinction of being the only new priest to come in to Biafra during the whole two and half years of the Biafran war. The traffic was all the other way. At the end of the war over 200 Holy Ghost men had gone home, never to return. And here was Eamonn coming in, never having been in the country in his life, and he had dug himself into things, including the whole *Caritas* food operation in Uzoagba, as if to the manner born!

Bishop Okoye of Port Harcourt was in exile because his Diocese had fallen and he was up around this Iheoma place. He asked me to be "Minister of Information" for the whole of Caritas, which was the great universal Catholic charity organisation, with its Headquarters in Rome. The food became known as 'Caritas' and people were coming looking for 'caritas'. It was a wonderful tribute, and Ireland played a very big part too in the relief of this famine. I was to travel around to see to the

allocation of food supplies, that all the camps and parishes were getting proper supplies, that there were no hitches, and so on. A brand new dark green Volkswagen, with the Caritas logo stencilled on the side of it, was flown out for my use. I was given the keys of the car, and a driver named Gabriel.

Extraordinary, sophisticated things were happening, even though in one sense we were hanging on the edge of destruction. There were no such things as petrol stations anywhere, but the Biafran RAP (Research and Production) team manufactured their own fuel. It used to evaporate after a few days, and I remember going to a Lt General of the Biafran Army, looking for petrol. I gave him a bottle of whiskey which had come in to me from somewhere, for about 6 gallons of petrol. I think his whiskey evaporated just as quickly as the petrol he gave me! Petrol was actually flown in on the planes. What a hazardous operation: 40 or 50 gallon drums of petrol on a plane. If anything had happened to a plane! This was stock piled at Iheoma and I remember getting my car filled when I wanted it, because I was an important person, being information officer, and Jack Finnucane gave me petrol anytime I needed it. I also had a photographer, too, a big fellow from Onitsha called Dominic Okoye. When I was back in Nigeria twenty years later, didn't I meet Dominic Okoye, who is a big-time photographer now, and he gave me an absolutely rapturous reception, and well he might, because the Caritas people had bought a very expensive camera and we had the use of it – he took the pictures. I let him keep it when everything blew up in our faces and the war came to an end. It was the only thing which he had in this life. He is now married with six or seven kids, a wonderful, wonderful big man. It was marvellous to meet him in Onitsha. He does all the Church photography for the bishops, so he is obviously well off.

Oslo – Caritas Conference.

The next big item for me was that there was going to be a big Caritas conference in, of all places, Oslo, in December, for all the organisations involved in the relief scheme, and I was asked to go. Scandinavia was a very big force in providing food for the starving people in Biafra. They were instrumental in getting these planes and paying for a lot of them. There was another Holy Ghost man, Fr Doran (not Pat) who seemed to spend his life commuting between the States (Catholic Aid) and Lisbon. He was a kind of Scarlet Pimpernel, with the two Doheny brothers, behind the scenes organising these airlifts.

I should say here that the man in charge of the whole operation was Fr Tony Byrne, even more so than the Doheny brothers and Fr Doran. He it was who had been instrumental in organising the whole relief scheme, including planes. He had an office in Sao Tome, and he asked

me to come and spend two days with him and to prepare a report, which I was to give to the assembled brethren at the big conference in Oslo. After all, we were coming from the field itself, the Caritas representatives, and other representatives from different organisations to take part in that conference. Most of them hadn't any real life acquaintance with Biafra itself.

I had a great couple of days in Sao Tome, and Fr Tony Butler, another Holy Ghost man there, a lower key man than Tony Byrne, but a great PR man and very, very helpful indeed, and a very pleasant man to be with, organised a trip for me out on a speed boat to Equator Beach, on my second day there. It was marvellous. The temperature was about 100 degrees, and we spent most of the day in the sea. I remember on our way back to the harbour of Sao Tome, I was sitting on the prow, with my legs dangling in the water, and the spray from the fast boat dashing on to my face.

Then I got on a plane with Tony Byrne for the thirteen hour flight to Amsterdam, in temperatures of 100 degrees during the course of the day and, then, onward to Oslo, with a sudden drop in temperature. And, here I was going to Oslo without even a coat or a jacket. In Oslo the temperature was Zero. We stayed in a hotel, and hardly put our noses outside the door. However, the next morning, being a Sunday morning, Tony and I got a lift to the Cathedral to say Mass. Being daring, we decided to walk back. It was all of 300 yards, but after about 100 yards we nearly collapsed with the cold, and we got a taxi. The taxi man couldn't get it into his head that where we wanted to go was to the hotel, which we could see in front of us, just down the road. He thought we were joking, but then he got the message and when he drove us down he drove right up on the footpath, and practically drove through the front door of the hotel, laughing and joking at us.

Return to London:

So, we had the conference, and I was able to get in a few phone calls to home, to Fr Cahalan etc, to let people know what was happening. The idea was that before I went back to Nigeria, I was to go to London to report. I did that and was met at the Airport by Fr Paddy O'Donoghue, I think it was. I went over the Strawberry Hill, and then to Mill Hill, where I stayed with James Cahalan. Unfortunately, I then proceeded to get London 'flu or something. I was very anxious to get back to Biafra before Christmas, but I had no option but to stay m London. Kevin O'Kane very nicely invited me up to Dunstable to spend Christmas. So I spent Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and St Stephen's Day up in Dunstable, not knowing that 20 years further on I would be going there myself.

Last Hurrah:
Then, I finally got a flight over to Amsterdam, or Frankfurt, and got on one of these relief planes for Sao Tome and Biafra. With me was a man called Raymond Smyth, a correspondent for the Sunday and Irish Independent, who has written a few books since then, a very well known journalist, who was very anxious to come out to Biafra to see things for himself. He and I were to spend some stirring days together, as it happened. I was very glad to get back to the island of Sao Tome, with its heat and warmth, the next morning. That was the 31st December. I was very annoyed, I remember, because the pilots refused to fly in any relief supplies that night, because they were having a huge binge for New Year's Eve. Perhaps it was just as well, considering the state they were in. But they went in the following night, and Raymond Smyth and myself got into Biafra. He thought he was on another planet; the next few days were the most weird in his life and, in some ways, they were the most weird in my life, too.

We got off the plane, with all the dried fish, medical and other stuff, at Uli airstrip, and were met by a couple of Holy Ghost men. One of them asked me if I had taken my belongings off the plane, and I said, "I did of course, but why?" He said I shouldn't have, because the war would be over in three days and I would lose all the stuff. I went back to Atta. Kevin Scallon wasn't there, as he had been invalided home via Sao Tome, as he had become very ill. So, I had to manage on my own in Atta over the next few days, but there were only a few days to go. We landed on the morning of 2nd January and, had we but known it, the war was going to end on 10th January.

I went to Uzoagba and saw Denis and Eamonn and soon was travelling around with my friend, the photographer Dominic, and the driver Gabriel, doing my job and looking after the parish.

One of the weirdest days of my life was when I went back to Uzoagba, as the "Bosco Boys", this famous team of workers, were taking the lorry into Owerri (Owerri had fallen to the Nigerians, but had been recaptured by the Biafrans). We had been told that there were some supplies there for the taking, and we went in with the lorry. It was really 'No Man's Land': it had been recaptured in a kind of a way by the Biafrans but the Nigerians were not too far away. At any rate, we went in and took as much stuff as would fit on to the lorry, to take back to our parish. Just as we had loaded it up and were heading out of the town, shells started to fall. We were in what seemed like a wilderness, or a cemetery. People had left and had not returned. With the shells falling all around us, it was beginning to look more and more like a cemetery. Then – it had to happen of course – the lorry broke down. It was a long ordeal (I don't know how long it lasted) and we were under the lorry but a couple of the

Bosco Boys got to work and actually got the lorry going again. It was nerve-racking to be lying there with shells whistling around you. But we got back through the bush to our parish. I was never more relieved to get out of anywhere in my whole life. But we got back safely to Uzoagba, anyway, and here was another one of those curious things that happened during that time in Biafra. We could hardly believe it.

We had been within the jaws of death but we got back, and I went to Mother Labouré's place, and there was tremendous silence all round. Then I discovered that there were about 100 girls inside sitting some kind of a school examination, a preparatory entrance exam. The world was toppling around us, and there they were pretending that things were going to be normal. I suppose that's what kept the people alive and going at all, pretending that the reality didn't exist. I think there is some point in that, in spite of what we are told. But the place was unbelievable, and the silence of the place you could cut with a knife. They had still got some supplies of paper and ink.

It was true that, during this time, in all kinds of hideouts, away out in the bush, places like banks (the Bank of West Africa for example, which had been in Ikot Ekpene) were to be found and nothing was happening: they hadn't got any money, and they kept the outward semblance of things going. I discovered, by accident, this Bank of West Africa, the branch which had once existed in Ikot Ekpene. It was an old school building and a fellow told me it was the present home of the Bank. For a joke, I asked him how much was in our account. He disappeared through a door and came back again and said that they hadn't yet had their call-over today. Incredible! You would find fellows from the Department of Finance or the Department of Education and they would be sitting behind typewriters with precious paper, in little hideouts like this school building, in different parts of the bush. I was convinced that, as long as there was carbon paper, white paper and typewriters, it would be business as usual, although there was no real business. Talk about the Emperor's new clothes!

Beginning of the End:

In the beginning of January 1970, I remember going over to Uzoagba, again to see Eamonn and Denis. When we were there, the thing I had been dreading, or shall we say looking forward to, in a sense, for a year or so, happened. We heard the sounds of war approaching. The Nigerian Army had broken through and was on the march. There was absolute panic in the village of Uzoagba. The point was that I wanted to be back in Atta. We had been told that we should be captured in our own place, in our own parish. Maybe it was hoped that we would be able to stay – we were in our own parish. I had to shout goodbye very

quickly to Eamonn and Denis and head back on the old reliable 403 which we had for two and a half years, all during the war, when there were no filling stations open and no mechanics. The Bosco Boys used to do some kind of a servicing job on it. But I headed through a bush path that I knew from Uzoagba to Atta – I think it was only about 10 miles. On my way back through the bush, I passed a Nigerian Sisters' convent of the Immaculate Heart. They were all fleeing. They were out on the pathway running, having closed the door behind them. I said to them that they should go back, stay there, that nothing would happen them, that they would be alright. There was no place to flee to. The point was that over the last two years people were fleeing at the approach of the Nigerian Army, but now we had reached the point where there was no place else to go. I said: "Go back, go back, you will be allowed to stay. It will be alright". They were terrified, but they did go back and nothing did happen to them, and they are still there to this day.

Anyway, I got back to Atta. I should tell you that at this time – just a few days before – a Holy Ghost man, Fr Sean Broderick, had fled from wherever he was and here he was taking refuge with me. I got back – I wanted to be with him – and I remember we were sitting down and I told him what was happening, and what was coming, and we decided we had better have our dinner. We had a couple of lads, as usual, a houseboy and cook, and they made us something to eat. We were having a beer, if you don't mind, which was in some of these parcels which came in from Sao Tome, when the firing started (the unmistakable sounds of shelling and machine gun fire). It was a sickening feeling, because I knew this was the end at last. After all the months of waiting, knowing in our hearts it would happen, here it was.

Capture:

So we went down to the bottom floor of the house and sat on the floor – an ordinary concrete floor – and we were surrounded by tea chests and packing cases, mostly full of medical supplies, not yet opened. In came Christian, our catechist, a young man in his twenties, his wife and little baby girl of about a couple of months old, and they sat on the floor. There were also a couple of Igbo seminarians out in the yard with the cook and houseboys, and the noise was appalling. But of course there was no Biafran army; there was no real opposition but the Nigerians just wanted to make sure, I suppose. They shot their way up the village, met no opposition, and saw this house with the little drive up to it. All of a sudden there was absolute silence, and the one thing that would get you down in Nigeria is silence, because there was a background of noise to everything. This silence was appalling, and we were lying crouched on the floor.

Then we heard footsteps, the soldiers running up the little pathway up to the door, and beating on the door with the carbine butts. I, I suppose as householder, had to go out and introduce myself. There was a shout, "Open the door", and a fellow stuck a gun into my ribs. Mercifully, he didn't pull the trigger. We had often wondered what would happen when the soldier and rifle made their appearance. But the soldiers were shouting at me: "Igbos, Igbos?" In other words, were there any Igbos in the house? I said we had one little Igbo in here and brought him in and showed him the little infant a couple of months old. Of course, the father and mother were Igbos, it's true, but they obviously weren't doing any harm. But they shouted and shouted, and then one went through the house, lifting things as he went. They went upstairs, and I had some ordinary clothes – shirts and things. They lifted these up, stuck their bayonets into packing cases, and one fellow went to the fridge (an old kerosene operated model) where there was some kind of lard, into which he put his hand and gorged himself with a lot of this, but spat it all out again. All this didn't do me any good. If he had even liked what he got out of the fridge, it might have been better for me. I remembered what Sister Gabriel Hughes, Lord have mercy on her, had told me when the army invaded them in Uvo a couple of years before that. She said the thing is to ask them to do some thing for you. Then they can't very well shoot you, she said. So I bethought myself of this one, and I begged my soldier for a cigarette. He dropped his rifle and my shirts and fished out a dirty looking cigarette. I was loath to put it into my mouth, but I had to, seeing that I had asked for it. He picked up the rifle and the shirts again. So I said to him: "We are here in this country of Biafra and we haven't even a match". So, he put them all down again and gave me a light from his own cigarette. Then I asked him where he was from, and he was from the Guari tribe away up north. I racked my brains to see if I knew anything about the Guari tribe, and I remembered someone had told me once that the Guari tribe were the only tribe in all of Nigeria where the women did not carry things on their heads. They made a crook on their shoulder and carried jars and baskets between the neck and the shoulder. And I said I knew about his people – he could speak English after a fashion – and he could hardly believe me, but when I told him this he felt that I did know something about it. I discovered then that he was very lonely. He felt he was at the ends of the earth, being 500-700 miles away from the Guari people at this stage. I suppose he wondered what he was doing in the South East of the country. I was establishing a relationship with him, and they didn't do any harm to Christian, his wife or little baby, or the boys in the yard.

But then I was frog-marched out to the yard. I had a Honda, which had come out from the Mountjoy Cycle Co, in a place off Berkeley

Road Church, near Phibsboro in Dublin, for my use. The soldier had the bike, looked at me and said "key". I couldn't find the key – I had other things to think about. He thought I had it and wouldn't give it to him, so he poked me in the ribs with the rifle again and said "key!" I said, "If you find it you can have it. Search me, search the house for the key" and I emptied my pockets. Unfortunately, out of my pockets came some Biafran coins. They were perfectly useless in Biafra but out they came anyway. When he saw the coins he threw them down on the ground, stamped his foot on them, dug them into the earth and shouted "Rebels, rebels", meaning that we were actively supporting the Biafran regime by having Biafran coins in our pockets.

I thought to myself "what am I going to do? This fellow is going to kill me. Would you be a martyr if you were shot for not handing over the key of your Honda?" Then I bethought me of the Volkswagen, and I had the keys of it, so I threw him the keys of the Volkswagen and said it was better than the Honda. He took the keys of the Volkswagen, dashed into it and roared away in first gear, doing about 40 or 50 miles an hour, and came back again with smoke billowing all over the nice new engine of a new Volkswagen – the last I ever saw of it, of course. He didn't give me back the keys, but he was still looking for the keys of the Honda. Finally, I convinced him that we would go and search the house and would give him the keys of the Honda.

Fr Broderick and myself were then packed into a car. They said they were taking us away for interrogation. I pleaded with him on behalf of the few others, cook, Christian, his wife and infant. He said that they, the seminarians in the yard and the houseboy would come to no harm and that we would be brought back that night. They brought us away, and, of course, I never saw the place again. Everything we had was in the house. The Blessed Sacrament was in the Tabernacle of the little chapel.

Incarceration in Aba;

That night we were brought down to Owerri, and then to a place called Aba, about 40 miles from there, and only about 74 miles from my old place in Ikot Ekpene. That was a weird kind of a journey. At one stage they had a couple of Igbo women in the van with us. They were Biafran policewomen and they were very subdued, but they didn't harm them. In places where the bridges had been knocked down over rivers and ravines we were dumped out of the car and made walk across the girders. Finally, we got to Aba, to what used to have been the English European quarter of the town, with nice houses where English people who had worked in one way or another out in Nigeria had lived. They had club premises there and we had often gone to a film there on a Sunday evening. They even had a swimming pool. So, we knew that

area, and it was like coming back home. But all these houses were now occupied by units of the Nigerian Army. We were brought to a house that was occupied by no less a person than the Provost Marshal of the Nigerian Forces. I don't think I ever saw so much beer in all my life. Every room in the house, every corridor, lobby and landing seemed to be packed with Star and Heineken beer. It was quite extraordinary to have been brought in here. They didn't do us any harm – in fact, we were allowed to sit down, and they got us some rice or something to eat after a while. I suppose we put on the poor mouth and said we were grateful for the rice, so they even gave us beer. Of course, we hadn't had this for months and months now.

I was wondering what the heck was going to happen. They gave us a bed for the night. It was a Saturday night, and the next morning, Sunday, we got up and we were allowed out to the garden at the back. Sean Broderick and I were walking, and I suddenly discovered in my pocket little name cards that the Caritas crowd had printed for me. On them was printed "Caritas Information Service". Information only meant spying to the Nigerians. I was terrified they would find these things, so as we were walking in the long grass out in the garden I tore these cards into tiny, tiny pieces and dropped them in the undergrowth.

Sunday was a long, long day (talk about the longest day!). There was nothing to do all day. There was a little radio there and, of all things, we heard an account of something that Paul VI had said that day and I think he had been very ill-advised because he used the word "genocide"; as if the Nigerians were going to slaughter the Igbo people. In fact, he used the word in the sense of "far be it from a civilised nation like Nigeria to commit the awful sin of genocide". But the genocide thing had been bandied about for months and months beforehand, and had been a very potent weapon in the hands of the Biafran media people. They said there was no alternative to keeping up the struggle with Nigeria, because they are going to be guilty of genocide and kill the whole lot of us. Most Biafrans firmly believed that – that every man, woman and child would be slaughtered at the end of the war. This did no good at all for Pope Paul VI, who had used the word, even though he meant well. I was scared stiff when I heard it and I was hoping that our Provost Marshal and his cronies weren't listening in to it. But Sunday passed, a long, long day, as I said. I think we slept the night before and that night, too.

Detention in Port Harcourt.

The next day we were brought over for questioning to the Red Cross. Some of the soldiers were friendly enough, and they were saying: "Tell them that you are Red Cross and you will be alright". We said that the only difficulty was that we weren't Red Cross. I suppose they

thought we were stupid. We were interrogated shortly enough that day, I think. Then we were packed into another jeep and driven down to Port Harcourt, about 40 miles away. We were put out there on a grassy knoll. That was the typical scene portrayed on television at the end of the war, of captives sitting down with their hands behind their heads in an attitude of abject surrender We actually saw three or four fellows whom we knew and we rushed over to them, but were hounded back again and told that this was unlawful assembly; that we weren't allowed to meet them.

We were later brought into a house where we were lodged, I think for the next couple of weeks. It was a house quite near the house where John Balfe, the dentist, used to live and in which Harry Morrin had died. I don't think it was the same house, but it was in that area behind the Presidential Hotel in Port Harcourt. As far as we could make out, it was a detention centre, a kind of a prison or custodial place for refractory soldiers or officers, because there were some of them around and they seemed to be temporarily, shall we say, out of the war. I think there were about ten of us. Sean Broderick, of course, who had been with me in Atta and who had been captured with me, was there, with about eight others; Fr Leo Horkin, an Englishman but an 'Irish' Holy Ghost Father, Fr Joe Carter, a man who had been years and years in Nigeria.

These were remarkable days. I should say one very fortunate thing was we were able to say Mass every day. I discovered that the orderly for the Nigerian Catholic army chaplains was a fellow from my part of the country, around Ikot Ekpene. I did not know very much about the local language, but I knew a couple of words, and I tried them out on him and he responded and made sure we were able to say Mass – I don't think we missed a single day. He had his master's Mass box and we made arrangements and met somewhere in the building, I suppose. We didn't ever get out, I think. So, one day a Sister of Charity came down to visit us, and I went out in a truck with them. I was hauled over the coals for it when I came back again, but nobody had stopped me going out. At any rate, it was the only time I went out.

A prominent visitor one day was no less a person than Roderic Crowley. Remember, I told you we had asked him to go back to Nigeria in October 1969, so as to be there, some place near Ikot Ekpene, when the war would end in order to establish continuity with the past, and not to lose the church and house in Ikot Ekpene. Rod had done just that and he had heard what had happened at the end of the war. He was a free agent, of course, and could drive wherever he wanted to, and didn't he come down to Port Harcourt and saw us in our place of captivity. I think he was taken away again after a while, because we were accused of unlawful assembly. But Rod did get a couple of books for us and, more

important still, a pack of cards with which to play Bridge. Of course, I had all the practice in the earlier period of captivity, or semi-captivity, up in Urua Akpan. Leo Harkin, Joe Carter, a couple of others and myself played a lot of Bridge during the day. We were given meals – not very much – but we were kept alive, anyway.

I forget what the sleeping arrangements were like. I had never noticed until then how important a pillow is if you want to be comfortable. I could sleep on the floor alright, just spread a few clothes out and lie on top of them. But, without a headrest of some kind, it was very awkward. The great trouble was that Sean Broderick and I, who were taken away at a moment's notice, had no clothes or anything with us. We had no change of clothes and you badly need that in the tropics. But a couple of the other fellows we were in captivity with now had brought something with them, so we all shared.

I remember one evening when we were playing Bridge, as usual, a whole crowd of people came in. They were all press correspondents from Britain and different countries in Europe. One was a man called Michael Wolfers, a correspondent for the London *Times*. They were brought out by some of the army to get a story for their papers. And here they were landed in on top of us. We were the first white people they had seen and they were intrigued. Michael Wolfers sat beside me as we were playing but we weren't supposed to talk to them; we had been told not to. I said this to Wolfers and he said: "Just keep playing the Bridge and you can talk to me out of the side of your mouth, while pretending you are bidding at the game". So we continued playing Bridge and I spoke, as he said, out of the side of my mouth to give him some details he was looking for. He said: ""Look, you people are crazy. What are you doing here? What need is there for you to be here?" I asked why wouldn't we be there? And he said we could be at home. Cardinal Heenan, or whoever was Cardinal at Westminster, could make one a chaplain or a Monsignor. I said I preferred to be where I was and that we hadn't anticipated this in our Nigerian sojourn. Michael was very impressed, apparently, by the fact that we had stayed for two and a half years, all during the Biafran war. He said that any time I came back to London to look him up, or if I knew when I was coming home to let him know and he would come out to meet us at the airport. He lived in Richmond or Kingston (some place near Strawberry Hill, I remember). I never saw him again, though I often saw his articles in the London *Time*s.

Interrogations:

We were taken away for questioning a number of times and this was very hard. I can understand how people lose their morale, especially if they are dirty and unkempt as I was. They keep you hours waiting and,

when you go in, they start a whole rigmarole. They wanted me to start at a point when I was four or five years of age. You find yourself saying when asked what school you went to: "I went to St John's School". Then: "How do you spell 'John'?"- "How do you spell 'school' for that matter?" Then they grew tired of that. But it was very demoralising – the bad food, or lack of food, unkempt, unclean conditions in which we were living. I can understand how people could sign confessions, I can tell you.

One of my interrogators, I remember well, said his name was Captain Titus, a Captain in the Nigerian Army, and he said he had been a Roman Catholic, but now he was ashamed to be such because they considered that many of the Igbos were Catholic and Biafra was largely Catholic. It wasn't really the case but they had this impression. He said that these Biafran people were criss-crossing the American Continent telling lies about the situation in Nigeria and Biafra and he mentioned the Reverend Fathers – he meant the Holy Ghost Fathers. I said: "Name three – I never heard this". I said I didn't cross the American Continent. He said he would bring me in proof in the way of newspaper cuttings the next day but I was shunted on to somebody else the next day and never saw him again.

One day, I was sitting outside waiting to go in for interrogation and there was a fellow there whom I thought was for interrogation; a Nigerian lad and he seemed to know my part of the country – Ikot Ekpene- so, I was chatting to him and, among other things, I said to him that, even if I did get back to that parish, most of the people were dead. We chatted for a bit and I went in for interrogation. In the middle of the interrogation a man burst in and said: "This man has said that the Nigerian soldiers had killed most of his people in his parish". The man with whom I had been talking was a 'plant'. He wasn't for interrogation, that was for sure, but was on the other side, and reported me for having said that most of my parishioners had been killed by Nigerian soldiers. Of course, I denied that but you would be wasting your time.

Then, one day, instead of being brought to the usual place for interrogation, wherever that was, we were brought to, of all places, the prison in Port Harcourt. When we arrived there, I saw a fellow walking around with a ball and chain and I said to myself that we were in for a really bad time. My heart fell. I heard the clanking of this big ball and chain which the fellow was carrying. We were brought, not exactly into the prison itself, but into the warders' quarters, as far as I could make out. There we met a number of the other Holy Ghost men who had been brought along – John Daly who was Rector of the Bigard Seminary in Enugu, Peadar Gallagher (whom I was to get to know even better than I did), and, I forget how many others – perhaps 10 or 20 – two or three of the

Sisters, Presentation and Holy Rosary, I think. We spent a whole night in this big assembly room, and there were no beds or anything. We sat and talked through the night. There may have been a couple of old iron bedsteads, but there were no mattresses or anything. I don't know what I said to Peadar Gallagher that night, but I know he got quite annoyed, and he was chasing me around one of these old iron bedsteads. Then, we were told that a Mr Joe Small, who was attached to the Irish Embassy in Lagos, had heard about us and he was outside this stockade. They wouldn't let him in or us out. But Joe was saying he would do what he could for us. We never saw him again until I came home and had an interview with him.

Court Appearance;

At any rate, the night passed, slowly, and the next morning we were given food. Then we were brought down to the Court in Port Harcourt. I think there were about 30 of us altogether, and there we were the whole blessed day practically. The heat was terrible. The situation was a bit grim alright, but quickly the pattern established itself. Everybody was getting "six months hard labour", I think the judge said. He used to say: "Put him away for six months", and the next man would be brought out into the dock – a very cursory business – and "Put him away for six months", then the next, and the next, with similar sentences.

They had our passports, and they knew that I had been in Gabon, in this awful place called Libreville. They knew that it was from Libreville in Gabon that the hardware, guns and supplies were coming for the Biafrans – from this former French dependency. I was thinking that Libreville was on my passport, unfortunately, as it was one of the dirtiest words in the language (Ojukwu, the leader of the whole Biafran army, being the dirtiest word). If the others were getting six months, I thought, I would probably get two or three years. I was idly wondering how much remission you would get for good conduct, and how many summers would pass before I saw Ireland again.

So, my time duly came, and I went into the dock. The prosecutor stood up, flourished my passport and said, in a silent, hushed court: "This man was in Libreville". It was like a death sentence. And the judge looked down to me and said: "What were you doing in Libreville?" I said what was true, that I had gone out there one time when I had fever. I had had 'low fever' which had been hanging over me for weeks, and finally I was told to get out. I had thought the night I was going, again on one of these relief mission planes, that I was heading back to Sao Tome with them, but as it happened the plane brought me down to Gabon. There were some Igbo people, members of the Biafran Government, on the plane that night; they were always sending emissaries via these relief

planes to try to make contact with the other governments in Africa, and indeed governments in Europe too, to try to get recognition for Biafra. Four countries recognised Biafra, two on the East Coast and two on the West; Tanzania was one, and Ivory Coast another, and I suppose, Gabon. At some stage we heard that Haiti had recognised Biafra, and I think we all knew that this was the death knell – to be recognised by a crowd like Haiti. It was the end of us.

But, back to Libreville on my passport – the prosecutor flourished my passport and announced to all and sundry that I had been in this terrible place. I told the judge that I had been out on recuperation after fever. "Convalescence", he said, and I said that that was right. And he said: "Whoever heard of convalescence lasting only five days. You went out on 26th October, and you came back on 31st October".

So I said I had to get back again because 1st November was a big Feast Day in our mission, and I had to be back for Mass, services and all kinds of things. He looked at me – he was sitting under a fan in comfort on his high dais, in the judgement seat – then he took a completely new turn, because he started asking me questions, the like of which he hadn't asked anybody else. He said: "You were in this place, Ikot Ekpene", and I said: "Yes!" He asked: "Which was your church – the old one or the new one?" I said we got the new one built soon after we went there, and he asked: "Who was your Bishop?" So, I told him that he was Bishop Dominic Ekandem. He then asked me if I had known him, to which I replied: "Of course I knew him, he was my boss". I couldn't believe what was happening. Then he said: "What happened in the church in 1963?" This was exactly seven years before, and I couldn't think. The only thing I could think of was that I had gone home on leave for the first time. So I said: "Oh, I went home on leave that year", and he looked al me in disgust and said: "We are not talking about personal matters, we are talking about the church". So I was desperately trying to think what had happened in the church in 1963, when a Holy Ghost Father prompted me, and whispered "Bishop Ekandem became bishop". So I said: "Yes, yes, the diocese was divided. Ikot Ekpene Diocese was carved off from Calabar and Bishop Dominic Ekandem became the first Nigerian residential bishop". And he said: "And he was your bishop". I answered that he was. I remember him well looking up at the ceiling and, instead of saying the mandatory words "Put him away for six months", he said: "Your case is different – a fine of £20, £10 for illegal entry to the country in these planes and £10 fine for staying in Nigeria without a Nigerian work permit". I couldn't believe it, and neither could anybody else, I think. I hadn't got £20, and who arrived that day but Roderic Crowley again, and Rod paid the fine for me, and we were able to talk to him for a bit before he disappeared again. It was marvellous

how he came that day. So typical of Rod, to appear as he did!

Peadar Gallagher looked very venerable and I think that was why he was let off. They didn't put him into prison, anyway. We were sent to a place called the Cedar Palace Hotel (we used call it 'Seedy' Palace), which was run by Lebanese. The others were put in jail proper. In retrospect now, I have to admit I was sorry I didn't go to jail with all the others, because it looked as if I had chickened out, or something. The others, numbered about 20-25, and were practically all Holy Ghost men, with a few Marist Brothers (mostly Scottish) and great characters.

Peadar Gallagher and myself got the job of bringing up food to the prisoners every day, and we had to test it. Into one of the dishes that was prepared, somebody poured a bottle of whiskey, and we were told later that the prisoners inside had only taken the liquid and not the substance douched with the whiskey. I forget for how many days that went on. It was a joke in the beginning but soon it ceased to be a joke, and we wondered what was going to happen to us all, and if they were really going to stay in there six months. It was just as bad to be in the Cedar Palace; well, not quite. I think they had actually air-conditioning in it, which was marvellous. I can't remember if we felt particularly sorry for ourselves, or frightened. You just take one day after the other, I suppose. Anyway, it lasted about a week for the boys in prison. They had a great regime, because half the staff of the Seminary were there, and they did physical exercises and gymnastics for about half an hour or an hour every day and they would have a talk from their liturgy Professor, Gerry Tannham, and Scripture talks by Gerry Creedon. They contrived to pass the time agreeably and usefully, it would seem.

One day in the Cedar Palace, I thought I had better wash my one and only shirt. When it was in the wash we were told to get in line (for more interrogation, I thought, but it wasn't). Nobody told us where we were going, but the Sisters, Fr Gallagher and myself were bundled into a truck, and the next thing we knew we were down at the prison. The prisoners were told they were being released, and given a few minutes to collect all their effects. Then they all crowded into a couple of trucks. We didn't know where we were going. We made a 'courtesy' call at the Barracks of the local army Commander – known as 'The Black Scorpion'. He had expected us, and then we were driven to Port Harcourt Airport and bundled in there.

Lagos:

At the airport, Rod and a couple of the Sisters were there. It looked like we were going home in stages, to be flown first from Port Harcourt to Lagos, 400 or 500 miles to the West. We were put into the plane, and I remember two Nigerian soldiers sat with machine guns facing us. It

was only about an hour's journey to Lagos and, when we landed there, we were not allowed to go in or mix with anybody else. We were all brought to chalets at the back of the airport, and the place was ringed with policemen.

John Daly and myself shared a chalet. I remember him giving me a pair of pyjamas – he was one of the lucky ones who had had time to pack before he was abducted down to Port Harcourt. We had a good night's sleep that night and next morning we all concelebrated Mass with the Nigerian Archbishop of Lagos. I think Bishop Donal Murray of Makurdi was there too. Everybody, but ourselves, had freedom of movement. The Mass was in a big auditorium or hall in the Airport Hotel. At the Mass there was a whole ring of armed policemen, but it looked like a guard of honour, actually. We then got something to eat and were packed into vans which brought us to the Airport. I remember there were some BBC or ITV television crews outside – we were in closed vans with a little window slit. As we looked out the slits, they kept running around trying to get pictures of us or trying to talk to us but they weren't allowed. They were very unfortunate. Some Nigerians carried their camera equipment, and when the police and army started to chase them, the fellows dropped the precious equipment and fled. It was a comical sight which evoked much laughter from inside the van.

Departure:
We were brought out to the apron of the airport as we were not allowed into the airport building and were put into a little hut, where we waited for ages. Finally, a fellow came along and gave us back our passports, which was all we needed, or wanted. An official from the British Embassy came, and his only mission was to see his people, the Scottish Marist Brothers. But they told him, in no uncertain terms, what to do with himself, as it was the first time he had appeared, and they had got no help at all from the British Embassy. One of the more vocal Brothers pointed that out rather trenchantly to the rather dismayed British official but we never saw him again. He gave back the passports, anyway, to the Scottish Brothers.

Time passed, and we were still in this little hut on the runway. It was dreadfully hot. Finally, we were let out, taken by trucks across the tarmac of the airport. There was a lovely big plane there, a Swissair going to Geneva. I remember that morning when this was being planned by Fr Des Beirne, a Holy Ghost man who was a big noise in the Catholic Secretariat in Lagos. I think it was Caritas that was paying our fares home. We were going by Swissair to Geneva, and from thence to London, and Dublin. I remember saying to Des Beirne: "Is there no chance we can stay? Is there no chance I can get back to one of my

previous parishes?" I felt that, if we were booted out, we would never get back again. Somebody heard me saying that I wanted to stay and he shouted something unprintable at me and told me to get on that plane fast and have sense.

The people on the plane had been kept waiting – people do get impatient in a hot climate sitting in a plane that hasn't moved yet – and when they saw this crowd of ragamuffins boarding the plane, they didn't want us to sit down beside them, for obvious reasons. But it was wonderful to get on the plane. It was lovely and cool when the plane got airborne, and it was a marvellous morning flight over the Sahara. It took an hour or two to pass over the desert, at 600 miles an hour.

This was on 4th February and, some time later, we arrived in Geneva Airport. People had advance notice of our arrival because the Red Cross people were there with an enormous amount of clothes. It was February, and I hadn't even a pair of trousers, just a little pair of shorts and bush shirt. Some of us had more than others but none of us had very much. It was great to see all this stuff but my attention was distracted at by one of the BBC Television people, who turned out to be from Portadown. He engaged me in conversation, and I didn't know what was going on. It was only afterwards that I was looking and asking myself "What's that action like a rugby scrum going on over there at the corner of the building?" It was people diving in and trying to get trousers, pullovers, shirts and things. By the time I got over, there was practically nothing left. I should say that the enterprising TV people had lined up about 30 glasses of whiskey on the bar counter – to loosen up our tongues, I suppose. But we had been told not to give interviews or talk about the political situation, not to apportion blame, or to be critical of anybody, because it would make it impossible for all our missionaries still in Nigeria. That was sound advice, which I think we adhered to.

In Geneva, the next word we got was that we weren't going on to London or to Dublin, but that we were doubling back to Rome. The Pope wanted to see us, apparently.

The Holy Land and the Challenge to the Churches

Michael Prior CM

In addition to being one of the most explosive issues in international affairs, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict constitutes for the Christian Churches one of the most significant moral problems of our age. The conflict began when, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Theodor Herzl concluded that the only way in which Jews could live in dignity was in a separate nation state. European antisemitism, he was sure, was ineradicable, a disease for which there could never be a cure. Nobody – other than religious Jews, Orthodox and Reformed, who at the time ruled it out altogether on religious grounds – could object to the determination of the First Zionist Congress (1897) to lay the foundation stone for a home for the Jewish people, if it were not the case that the chosen location of the state for Jews, Palestine, was already inhabited.[1]

Herzl cared little, if at all, for the rights of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, who constituted 95 per cent of the population, and who would have to be got out of the 'state for Jews' (*Der Judenstaat*). He was careful in his public pronouncements, of course, to pretend that his project would not have any deleterious effect on the Arab population. On the contrary, he pretended, it would be to their benefit. An entry in his diary of 12 June 1895, however, signals Herzl's real plans. Moving on from his comments on constituting a Jewish *society* in the land, he got down to the question of forming a *state* for Jews. He wrote that, having occupied the land and expropriated the private property, 'We shall endeavour to expel the poor population across the border unnoticed, procuring employment for it in the transit countries, but denying it any employment in our own country.' He added that both 'the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly'.[2]

In seeking support for his project, Herzl reflected typical nineteenth-century European colonialist attitudes. His proposed state for Jews would be 'a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation [Herzl's term was *Kultur*] opposed to barbarism'.[3] Elsewhere he reflects the world-view of European racist superiority. He assured the Grand Duke of Baden that Jews returning to their 'historic fatherland' would do so as representatives of Western civilisation, bringing 'cleanliness, order and the well-established customs of the Occident to this plague-ridden, blighted corner of the Orient'.[4] In Joseph Conrad's terms, Herzl's state for Jews would be an 'outpost of progress' in 'the

heart of darkness'. Nor was Herzl alone in his determination to rid a land of its indigenous Arabs.

Repeopling Palestine

If Queen Elizabeth I spoke of 'repeopling' Ireland, and establishing 'plantations', the Herzlian Zionists preferred the term 'population transfer'. In both cases, settlers were implanted, who brought with them different politico-historical loyalties, a new language, and a new religion or denomination. Combinations of these elements of group differentiation, allied with asymmetric power interrelations, contributed to profound political instability in both Ireland and Palestine, whose effects have been felt ever since. Moreover, in some circles in each context, religious affiliation not only provided distinctive social markers but also supplied some of the ideological support for the settlement projects.

The euphemism 'repeopling' is attested also in the case of Israel. Although many Palestinians were expelled from Galilee in 1948, some 60 per cent of Israel's Arab population still live there as citizens of Israel, and their presence has been a source of concern to the Israeli authorities ever since. For the goal of establishing a large Jewish majority in Galilee Israel had customarily used the term the 'Judaisation of Galilee' (*yehud hagalil*, in Hebrew) as its slogan. However, sensitive to the negative connotations of such a term, Israeli governments, particularly since Land Day (30 March 1976), have preferred the terms 'repeopling, or populating the Galilee' (*Ichloos hagalil,* in Hebrew) and 'developing the Galilee' (*petoah hagalil*).[5]

While Elizabeth's determination to implant new people into Ireland was a matter of public knowledge – she advertised her intention to have Munster 'repeopled and inhabited with civile loyal and dutifule subjects' who would 'live in the service of Almighty God'[6] – the Zionist leaders were determined to keep their plans secret. They did, however, leave behind not only the physical outcome in 1948 of their transfer enterprise, but also a considerable body of written material which indicates clearly their intentions.

There is a 'mountain' of evidence in the Zionist and Israeli archives tracing the consistency of the 'population transfer' line of thinking within the Jewish leadership in Palestine. This evidence has been systematically examined by Nur Masalha, and has been brought to public attention since the early 1990s.[7] One knew long before then, of course, that 80 per cent of the Arabs in what became the State of Israel were expelled, but the archival evidence shows systematically that the determination to rid the land of non-Jews was an integral part of the Zionist programme. The archival material, then, demonstrates that the expulsion

of the indigenous Arabs was foreseen as necessary, was systematically planned and was executed at the first opportunity, in 1948, both before and after the declaration of the State of Israel.

From the Zionist archives we learn in detail how prominent was the theme of the necessity of 'transfer' in the thinking of the Zionist leadership from the middle 1930s, at least. We read of the establishment and comportment of the two 'Population Transfer Committees' (1937 to 1944), and of the third 'Population Transfer Committee' established by the government of the State of Israel in August 1948. The damage done to the indigenous population in 1948, then, was neither accidental nor due to the unique pressures of war, but was at the heart of the Zionist enterprise from the beginning.

Masalha's studies, based on primary research in various Zionist archives, then, fundamentally undermine the hegemonic Zionist narrative that its intentions were altogether innocent, if not indeed altruistic. By uncovering such evidence Masalha demonstrates that the imperative to 'transfer' the indigenous Arab population was at the core of the Zionist enterprise from the beginning, and was pursued with determination at the levels of both planning and execution. His contribution to the discourse on 1948 is more complete than that of the Israeli 'New Historians', for he not only lets the Zionist evidence concerning 1948 speak for itself, but also shows how prominent was the necessity of 'transfer' in the thinking of the Zionist leadership from the beginning.

Challenge to Theology and Morality

Against that background, then, the State of Israel is a challenge to theology and morality for several reasons, to four of which, in particular, I draw attention:

1. The claim is made that the Bible is the 'Jews' sacrosanct title-deed to Palestine'. And consequently, since the Bible is of divine provenance, the rights of the indigenous population simply do not count. There are two major problems about appeal to the Bible. Firstly, the gift of the land to the Israelites in the biblical narrative is inextricably related to the divine mandate to exterminate the indigenous population. A naive reading of those texts portrays God as a militaristic, xenophobic and nationalistic genocidist, insufficiently moral even to conform to the demands of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Secondly, these biblical narratives are highly problematic in the light of the use to which they have been put to underpin the various enterprises of colonial destruction of indigenous peoples, in Latin America, South Africa, and Palestine.[8]

2. The existence of the State of Israel attracts a unique vocabulary of approval by (religious) Jews and Christians, e.g.

   A free Jewish State with Jerusalem as its capital represents the core of Jewish existence and aspirations (Rabbi A. James Rudin);

   The living reality of the State of Israel should evoke the respect and admiration of the Christian theologian. How could the renewal of the land be anything to the theologian but a wonder of love and vitality, and the reborn state be anything but a sign of God's concern for his people? (Monsignor John Oesterreicher);

   Christians should 'rejoice in the return of the Jewish people to a small sliver of their ancient homeland - if not from compassion and a sense of justice at least from a sense of guilt and repentance' (Father Edward Flannery);[9]

   The adulation of Zionism is no less striking in Father Robert F. Drinan, Dean of Boston College Law School. Drinan describes the Zionist visionary as having pursued his 'messianic pilgrimage' with a zeal 'infused with a compelling humanitarianism combined with traces of Jewish mysticism'. And now that Herzl has died, the 'mystery' and 'majesty' of Zionism appears in its glory from his tomb.[10]

3. Some (fundamentalist) Evangelical Christians associate the State of Israel with the fulfilment of biblical prophecy, and with the end-time. We shall allude later to the moral problematic of such a stance.

4. The Underside: It is, of course, the underside of the Zionist project that raises the moral problematic most profoundly. In the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948-49 the country was occupied by a foreign minority, emptied almost entirely of its indigenous people and more than 400 of its villages were destroyed. Despite the clear evidence for the intended and planned 'ethnic cleansing' of the indigenous population, the Zionist conquest is hailed by some as a miraculous act of God and a victory for freedom and civilised values. Indeed, the foreseen and planned forcible displacement of an indigenous people from its homeland continues to be supported from abroad, financially, politically, and even theologically. Frequently, the Palestinian Nakba is ignored, suppressed, or denied, and this tendency is clearly detectable in the mainstream Churches,

as well as in theological institutions and university academies. Indeed, the performance of the Churches is less reprehensible in these matters than is that of the universities and the media.

The establishment of the State of Israel, then, raises all sorts of questions, concerning not only issues of biblical interpretation, but of the very authority of some biblical traditions. Relationships between religious affiliation and 'nationalism', as well as between the relevant religions also surface. Nevertheless, the consistency with which the State of Israel is excused from having to conform to International Law and decent behaviour is one of the great eccentricities of twentieth- and early twenty-first-century political ethics and religious and theological discourse.

How do the Churches React?

The 'Holy Land' is of particular interest to Christians, not only in the land itself but universally. The Christians of the Holy Land have never been very appreciative of its intentions or of what Political Zionism has actually done to them. In 1948 some 50,000 Christians – some put the numbers much higher – were among the some 750,000 Palestinians expelled from what became the State of Israel. Since then, the remaining Christians live either as unequal citizens in Israel, or under Israeli occupation. While living as unequal citizens of Israel is not altogether agreeable, being under occupation has been particularly offensive: 'Occupation is always a corrupting situation both for occupier and occupied. A wooden cage or a golden cage is still a cage'. Today, they struggle on, hoping for a better future.

Christians outside also have their interests. They fall into a number of categories:

1. The most vociferous are those in the fundamentalist Evangelical Zionist wing. Although not nearly as numerous as mainstream Christians, they are much more ideologically committed, politically focused and influential, and in the US appear to have the ear of President George W Bush and his policy-makers. For them, what happened in 1948 and since is part of God's intention that the Children of Israel be gathered 'to Jerusalem'. Indeed, it will speed up the Second Coming of Christ. Rather than concentrate on Jesus' exhortations during his First Coming – e.g., to feed the hungry, heal the lame, give sight to the blind, clothe the naked, free the prisoners, etc. – such people are happier waiting for the Second Coming, with its Armageddon massacre. Meanwhile, they support a regime in Israel and the Occupied Territories that specialises in making the

poor poorer, in making those with perfect sight blind, in making the walking lame, etc.

That Palestine was already occupied by Arabs, who would have to be driven out to fulfil the 'ethnic-cleansing' intentions of Political Zionism, is of little moral concern for many such people. Why? Because of how they interpret the prophetic and apocalyptic biblical texts. Their interpretation is not only naïve but is fundamentally immoral. A god such as theirs is the Great Ethnic-Cleanser, a militaristic and xenophobic genocidist, who is not sufficiently moral even to conform to the requirements of the Fourth Geneva Convention, or of any of the Human Rights Protocols which attempt to set limits to barbarism. The grotesque views of such people, embracing an essentially ethnic-cleansing enterprise as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy, and clothing Political Zionism in the garment of piety, would not warrant serious attention were it not for the influence they have on the domestic and foreign policies of the USA. They are also, of course, easy targets for the liberal establishment in the Church, the Universities and the media, whose own performance has been scarcely better.

2. The performance of the mainstream Churches has not been a model of ethical engagement. It is one of the anomalies of recent history that, while Christians have supported oppressed peoples virtually everywhere else, there has been relatively little protest against the historic injustice perpetrated on the indigenous population of Palestine. Many Christians, of course, are sympathetic to the ideal of a state for Jews as compensation for the litany of European persecutions of Jews. That it is others who have to pay the price is all the better. Moreover, even when faced with compelling evidence about the damage done to the Palestinians, these people remain rather detached, preferring prudence to criticism. They cannot bring themselves to face the dark side of Political Zionism. In any case, taking a stand for Palestinian rights will not advance one's reputation, or help one's promotion prospects in the Church, the Universities or the media. The performance of the Universities on this question is much worse than that of the mainstream Churches. But one does look to the Churches for moral guidance. Their performance, one would hope, would not be compromised, as much as the universities are, by questions of funding and ideologically-tied philanthropy.

3. There are, of course, many Christians who approach the question of Palestine from a Human Rights perspective. They acknowledge the

> fundamental injustice done in 1948, and the atrocities associated with the occupation. Such people, typically, are not in positions of power or leadership within the Churches. The most the leaders of the Churches, by and large, appear able to bring themselves to is to subscribe to the 'fallacy of balance'. The conscience of the Church leadership is virtually paralysed by guilt, mostly about what was done to Jews in Europe in the past, for which they themselves are hardly responsible. Such is their guilt also that they leave unchallenged a Zionist reading of Jewish history and of recent events in Palestine.

The leaderships of the mainstream Churches offer no critique of the ideology of Political Zionism commensurate with that of *apartheid*, for example, an ideology of far less deleterious consequences than Zionism. To add to the Church's neglect, the evidence is abundant that the damage done to the indigenous population of Palestine was neither accidental nor due to the unique pressures of war, but was at the heart of the Zionist enterprise from the beginning. Yet, the Churches reflect little appetite to pursue these issues of justice and respect for historical truth. However inadequate, their performance is somewhat better than that of the Academy.

Clearly, the Churches are faced with a major moral challenge. They should give a lead in moral debate, rather than merely fall into line with ongoing political manoeuvres, which, in conforming to the demands of the powerful, reflect little contact with recognisable moral principles. For religious bodies in any way to accord legitimacy to the expulsion of an indigenous population, and the appropriation of their lands is, one would hope, highly problematic, even in the interests of promoting good relations between two religious traditions. Uncritical acceptance of a Zionist reading of Judaism and Jewish experience – however offensive to historical truth and questions of justice – appears to be a compulsory tenet for participants in the conventional Jewish-Christian dialogue. Interfaith dialogue is admirable and indeed necessary. It should not, however, compromise on questions of historical truth and contemporary justice.[11]

Does not the Church have a moral mission, to speak truth, however uncomfortable, to criticise systems of structural domination, and to work for a moral future for humanity? In order to retain its credibility the Church should engage in ongoing 'criticism' of our society and our culture, by way of weighing up and evaluating trends and developments. And in this matter the role of the leadership of the Church is critical, since it in particular is perceived to represent the teaching authority of the Church. Nothing is more reprehensible in a Church leader than

the avoidance of – that characteristic turning away from – a difficult and principled position which one knows to be right. A Church leader should not shy away from being 'too political' or 'controversial', in preference to being 'balanced, objective and moderate', reposing comfortably within the 'responsible mainstream'. These dispositions are not only reprehensible, but are altogether corrupting. Church leaders appear to have a particular problem in the matter of the toughest of all contemporary issues, Palestine, where fear of speaking out about one of the greatest injustices in modern history continues to hobble, blinker, and muzzle many who know the truth, and who are in a position to serve it. The Christian faithful looks to its leadership to give a lead, particularly in virtue of the leaders' vocation to speak the truth with determination and compassion.

I am not aware of any Church leader – dean, bishop, archbishop, cardinal, patriarch, minister, presbyter, *et al.* – who has dared in a public forum to offer a moral critique of the *ideology* of Political Zionism commensurate with that of, e.g., *apartheid*. Though we know that the damage done to the Palestinians was at the heart of the Zionist enterprise from the beginning, the Church leadership reflects little appetite to pursue the relevant issues of justice and respect for historical truth. The situation, of course, is even worse in the Universities. And as for the media…? But even if the Universities and the media have consistently abandoned any pretence to moral propriety on the issue, the Church, surely, should do better.

For a start, one might expect that the leaderships of the Christian Churches should be prepared to insist that Israel 'come clean' on its seminal injustice against the Palestinian Arabs, that it apologise for it, undo the damage it has perpetrated, as far as that is possible, honour its obligations with respect to the Palestinian right of return, make appropriate compensation for the damage done, and, on the basis of confession and restitution, move towards a less ethnocratic polity. Such exhortations would flow effortlessly from principles of Christian morality, and would be in conformity with elementary justice. What we get instead is the embrace of whatever proposal – the Oslo Accords, the 'Road Map', etc. – however jaded, and however lacking in principles of justice, the asymmetric parties to the dispute contrive, as though the Christian Church were content to act on the novel moral principle that the rights of the perpetrators of injustice and its victims are finely balanced.

Notes

1 I have traced elsewhere the metamorphosis of the religious estimation of Political Zionism, from being an anathema to occupying a position of virtual sacred significance within religious Jewish thinking. See 'From the Secular to the Sacred', in Michael Prior, *Zionism and the State of Israel: A Moral Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 1999) 67-102.

2 'Die arme Bevölkerung trachten wir unbemerkt über die Grenze zu schaffen, indem wir in den Durchzugsländern Arbeit verschaffen aber in unserem eigenen Lande jederlei Arbeit verweigern', Theodor Herzl, *Briefe und Autobiographische Notizen, 1886-1895*, vol. II, ed. Johannes Wachten et al., (Berlin: Propylaen Verlag, 1983) 117-18.

3 *The Jewish Stat*e. *An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*, the seventh edition, revised with a foreword by Israel Cohen (London: Henry Pordes, 1993), p. 30, being a translation of Herzl's *Der Judenstaat. Versuch einer Modernen Lösung der Judenfrage* (Leipzig und Wien: M. Breitenstein's Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1896). The German original was translated into English by Sylvie d'Avigdor as *A Jewish State*, and in 1946 as *The Jewish State*, and published by the American Zionist Emergency Council. *Der Judenstaat* might be translated more appropriately by 'The State for Jews', to distinguish it from the implications of a Jewish state (*Jüdischer Staat*). Herzl composed the first draft of *Der Judenstaat* between June and July 1895, and imparted his scheme in his address to a meeting of the Maccabean Club in London (24 November 1895), at which Israel Zangwill presided. A couple of months later, he summarised his scheme in London's *Jewish Chronicle* (17 January 1896), 'A "Solution of the Jewish Question"'. The paper's editorial was sceptical of 'a scheme which is the outcome of despair.' For several more years the editor continued to view Zionism as 'ill-considered, retrogressive, impracticable, even dangerous.'

4 *The Complete Diaries*, Vol. I: 343. Herzl began his Diaries in 1895, and continued until shortly before his death. Seven volumes of the Letters and Diaries have been published (Berlin: Propylaen Verlag), Vols. I-III edited by Johannes Wachten *et al* (1983-85), and Vols. IV-VII by Barbara Schäfer (1990-96). Raphael Patai edited an English translation of the diaries in five volumes (Herzl, Theodor. 1960. *The Complete Diaries of Theodore Herzl.* 5 vols., ed. Raphael Patai, trans. by Harry Zohn. New York: Herzl Press). In general, I quote from Patai's edition, which I have checked against the original in Wachten and Schäfer. Where I judge it to be important, I give the original language from the latter.

5 I am grateful to Dr Nur Masalha for this information (private correspondence, 11 April 2003).

6 Devon Record Office, Courtenay Papers, Articles for the plantation of Munster, 1586, in Philip S. Robinson, *The Plantation of Ulster. British Settlement in an Irish Landscape, 1600-1670* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1984) 57, 6.

7 See, in particular, Nur Masalha's *Expulsion of the Palestinians: the Concept of 'Transfer' in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948* (Washington, D.C.:

Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), and his *A Land without a People. Israel, Transfer and the Palestinians 1949-96* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997). Masalha's later book, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians: The Politics of Expansion, 1967-2000* (London: Pluto, 2000) is a comprehensive treatment of the imperial imperative within Herzlian Zionism. His most recent book, *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (London and Stirling VA: Pluto Press, 2003) exposes Israel's pretence to innocence on the question of the Palestinian expulsees.

8 I deal with these matters in Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism. A Moral Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, repr. 1999). The enquiry could easily be extended to the colonisation of North America and many of the African countries. I am currently extending the catalogue to include Ireland in a study in Gaelic, the indigenous language which the colonisers almost succeeded in obliterating (*An Bíobla agus an Leatrom* [The Bible and Oppression], Maigh Nuad: An Sagart, forthcoming 2004).

9 In *Twenty Years of Jewish-Catholic Relation*: Rudin, p. 17; Oesterreicher, p. 35; Flannery, p. 76, who also claims that Zionism is 'a sacred word' with an 'honourable history', and hence support for the state is a *sine qua non* of the dialogue ('the Jewish-Christian embrace', p. 79). For a fuller discussion of the proclivities of the Jewish-Christian dialogue see Prior, *Zionism and the State of Israel*, 123-31.

10 Robert F. Drinan, *Honor the Promise: America's Commitment to Israel* (Cape Town, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977) 32, 39.

11 See further, Michael Prior, 'Speaking Truth in the Jewish-Christian Dialogue', in *A Faithful Presence. Essays for Kenneth Cragg*, ed. David Thomas and Clare Amos (London: Melisende, 2003) 327-47.

At Peace, in the Place of Rest
An Appreciation of Edward W Said

Michael Prior CM

Edward W. Said was University Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York City. He was, by common affirmation, one of the great, and in my view the most versatile of, the intellectuals of the 20th century. He was a multi-talented 'renaissance man': literary critic, intellectual innovator, secular prophet, passionate advocate for truth and justice, and an accomplished pianist. His critique of the unacknowledged arrogance of the West in its approach to other cultures (*Orientalism*, 1978) established him as a champion of the dignity of indigenous cultures around the world. He might, indeed, be called the 'Father of Post-Colonialism'. In my last conversation with Professor Said – on the occasion of the launching in Jerusalem (1999) of *Holy Land, Hollow Jubilee*, which I co-edited – Edward was obviously delighted to communicate to me, an Irishman, his excitement on his then upcoming award of an honorary doctorate from University College, Galway. As a child of a country colonised by a 'Western people', Edward was being honoured by a university of a country which knew better than most what colonialism implied. I offer here a tribute to, and reflection on a person whom I was honoured to have known, and whom I consider to be an 'anonymous Vincentian'. In this world, it appears, we are surrounded by saints, secular as well as sacred.[1]

With the passing of Edward W. Said on 25 September 2003 humanity and human culture lost a great champion. One was aware for a number of years, of course, that he had a terminal illness – leukaemia – and that his periods of enthusiastic engagement had to accommodate also bouts of debility. He had 'come back from the dead' a number of times, but now that he was, finally, dead one had to come to terms with the fact that one would never see him on a lecture podium again, learn more and more from his scholarly writing, and be constantly stimulated by the freshness of his ongoing commentary on developments in Palestine, and by his theatrical humour. One would have to rest content with the legacy of his literary productions, which, thankfully, are voluminous.

I met Edward a number of times – in Jerusalem, Bethlehem University and London – and edited some of his conference speeches. His seminal

work, *Orientalism* (1978) had already established him as a major commentator, and normally it was he who was selected to give the Keynote Lecture at international conferences. By the 1990s he had achieved virtually cult status and in the conferences in which I participated the audience viewed his performance with that kind of reverence one detects in a liturgical setting. His discourse, too, engaged with some of the great themes of religion: truth, critique of power, liberation and justice. While by his own testimony his inspiration derived from altogether humanistic values, people of religious sensitivities saw in him also something of a priest, or, perhaps more accurately, a prophet – one who speaks on behalf of God.

People will have different reasons to bemoan his passing, and will point to a variety of characteristics of his person, as well as to the significance of his life's work. Two aspects stand out for me. His engagement as a fearless intellectual in real-life issues was a constant inspiration. This was all the more remarkable in that his engagement brought him away from his academic specialisation. On the other hand, I could never quite understand his apparent assumption that such engagement could come only from a secular, humanistic perspective. I take the view that such engagement should flow naturally from religious idealism, in my case from Christianity, the religion in which Edward was brought up and from which he lapsed.

The Intellectual as Moral Transformer of Society

University people seldom distinguish themselves by their commitment to transform the world morally. Usually whatever idealism they once may have had has been well drained out, not infrequently by the imperative of the improvement of their career prospects. They could never afford to speak their truth. Their doctoral studies invariably focus on some specialist and esoteric aspect of a sub-discipline, which could then be prepared for publication, a *sine qua non* for securing even a part-time lecturing post. Having eventually gained a university position by 'playing the academic game', then, they could in turn get down to the business of producing their own academic clones. In such manner the conventional university system goes along its very own emotionally-detached, intellectually-dispassionate and rationally value-neutral way. That, after all, is considered by the university academy and its powers to be the appropriate comportment for scholars, and is the surest way to climb the academic ladder.

Not so for Professor Said. For him intellectuals had a moral mission, to speak truth, however uncomfortable, to criticise systems of structural domination, and to work for a moral future for humanity. He understood the term 'criticism' to imply a weighing up and evaluation of things,

rather than a pretence to a much safer 'value-free' assessment. Nothing was more reprehensible in an intellectual, in his view, than the avoidance of a difficult and principled position which one knew to be right. One would opt instead not to be 'too political' or 'controversial', but to be 'balanced, objective and moderate', and to remain comfortably within the 'responsible mainstream'. These habits of mind, he urged, were not only reprehensible, but were altogether corrupting. The internalisation of such values, he warned, can 'denature, neutralise, and finally kill a passionate intellectual life'. While his admonitions have universal relevance, his own life experience made him aware of such dangers in 'the toughest of all contemporary issues, Palestine, where fear of speaking out about one of the greatest injustices in modern history has hobbled, blinkered, muzzled many who know the truth and are in a position to serve it.' Whatever vilification and abuse an outspoken supporter of Palestinian rights evokes, the truth deserves to be spoken, by an 'unafraid and compassionate intellectual.'

Jerusalem in London

And on the question of truth-speaking concerning Palestine there was so much to say. Not only were there many truths to tell, but the spell-binding and hegemonic narrative of half-truths and downright lies had to be challenged, and real people had to take up the challenge, and be prepared to face the consequences. Professor Said was in very lively form as he delivered the Keynote Lecture at the *International Conference on Jerusalem* in London in 1995. He elevated the discussion about Palestinian rights from the customary genre of lamentation to one geared towards mobilizing Palestinian energies in favour of promoting their just cause. He was critical of the PLO negotiators, and censorious also about a certain disposition of passivity among the Palestinian community, at home as well as in the diaspora.

He bemoaned the fact that to this day – he was speaking in 1995, of course – the story of Jerusalem's loss, both in 1948 and 1967, had not been told by the Palestinians themselves: in so far as it had been told at all it had been partially reconstructed either by Israelis, or by foreigners. He attributed that neglect not only to Palestinian powerlessness but also to its collective incompetence. Not only had the Palestinians failed to narrate their story of loss, but they had not created even a collective Palestinian strategy for Jerusalem, thereby depriving themselves of Jerusalem well *before* the fact. The Palestinians, he insisted, have a real historical and cultural claim to Jerusalem, and that claim must be strenuously made. Israel's plan for Jerusalem was an assault not only on geography, but also on culture, history, and religion, while throughout its history the city had been a seamless amalgam of cultures

and religions. To say that Jerusalem was the *eternal undivided capital* of the Jewish state was to exclude the city's present Palestinian population, and to renounce its multicultural past.

Yet the Arabs and Muslims together, and especially the Palestinians, had yet to mobilise their considerable resources to counteract Israel's behaviour in Jerusalem. The Arab League summit, scheduled as a response to Israel's announced expropriations, had been summarily cancelled. Why? And why, despite endless amounts of evidence proving Israel's bad faith, was the Palestine Authority supinely proceeding with its negotiations, while doing absolutely nothing either locally or internationally to mobilise Palestinians against Israel's continued assault on Jerusalem? Why in the *Declaration of Principles* itself was Jerusalem split off from the West Bank and Gaza, and effectively conceded to Israel from the outset of Oslo negotiations? There were two closely related reasons: powerful Israel, with full US backing, could do what it wished with Jerusalem and elsewhere, and the Palestinians were convinced that there was no alternative but to make that, as well as many other concessions. He accused the Palestinian leadership of 'prior moral capitulation', piling up one concession on another. The architect of the accords, the inglorious Abu Mazen, had assured Hanan Ashrawi not to worry about her reservations about the *Declaration of Principles*. 'We shall sign now', he assured her, adding chivalrously, 'you can bargain with them to try to get back the things we have conceded'.

The Palestine Authority, he reminded the audience, usually negotiated without consulting lawyers, with no experience in settling international disputes, and with no real conviction in winning anything at all, except what Israel might deign to throw its way. As if that were not enough, he added, 'The problem of Jerusalem in the peace process today is therefore largely a problem of the incompetence, the insouciance, the unacceptable negligence of the Palestinian leadership, which has in the first instance actually agreed to let Israel do what it wishes in Jerusalem, and in the second instance evinces not the slightest sign that it is capable of comprehending, let alone executing the truly Herculean task that is required before the battle for Jerusalem can really be joined.' And what could be done?

Palestinians needed a clear statement of purpose and principle to guide their way, and if this demanded rethinking and re-doing Oslo, then so be it. In the first place, they must insist that it was not Israel's right to dispose of, or to build in, or to exploit Jerusalem to the exclusion of Palestinians and others. The massive Palestinian-Muslim-Christian multi-cultural reality in Jerusalem should not be subverted by Israel. That, simply, must be inserted into the peace process. It was not sufficient that Mr Arafat merely say so periodically, 'like a schoolchild

repeating a lesson by rote, and pretty much without anybody listening'. The saying must be part of a general strategy of negotiating and winning the peace that Palestinians desire. And speaking of East Jerusalem was not enough. The whole city should be a place of co-existence and sharing between the Palestinians and the Israelis, with joint sovereignty and a co-operative vision.

It would never be sufficient merely to lament the facts of dispossession. Facts never speak for themselves, but must be articulated, disseminated, reiterated and re-circulated. And the then Palestine Authority was altogether incapable of ever conceiving, not to speak of doing that, since it had become the prisoner, if not the dutiful enforcer, of the Israeli occupation regime. Mr Arafat – with his chronic disabilities and incompetencies – and his immediate circle, who ran everything unilaterally and undemocratically, would do little more than 'provide Israel with security, leave the settlements alone, and then scramble around looking for development money.' Diaspora Palestinians, who constitute the majority of Palestinians in the world, therefore, must take the initiative on Jerusalem and on the other occupied territories, and do so in a co-ordinated fashion.

Not that Professor Said was arguing against peace. But *real* peace was possible only between equals, who together decide consciously and deliberately to share the land among each other decently and humanely. Israel, in his opinion, had used the peace process as a subterfuge; only to go on holding the land as if it were its sole proprietor, with concessions to Bantustan-like 'separation' and cantonization for the lesser race of human beings. Palestinians, on their part, had accepted Israel as a sovereign state entitled to peace and security. Was it the Palestinian destiny merely to capitulate and accept the dictates of the strong? Surely not. Rather, the Palestinians must redefine their goals, recognise that they are realisable, and work for them. And since the Palestine Authority was incapable the challenge should be taken up by the Palestinian diaspora, strategically organised, and working in collaboration with a gigantic Islamic and Arab constituency, a Western constituency, a Christian one, and other ones scarcely touched hitherto.

The situation, even in 1995, was desperate: 'The Palestinians are in a state of confusion and despair, caught as they are between the dictatorial whims of their leader on the one hand, and the merciless policies of occupation and humiliation by which Israel maintains its hold on their lives and land.' Diaspora Palestinians, however, were in a stronger position. The support of Palestinian resistance inside Jerusalem, of course, was vital. But, in the first place, speaking the truth was a *sine qua non.*

The Challenge of Peace in Bethlehem

Being neither a politician nor a diplomat, perhaps the most Professor Said could contribute was to speak the truth as he saw it. He was sure that people – even ordinary people – could change the world. He developed that thesis so close to his heart in his Keynote Address to the Third International Sabeel Conference (10-15 February 1998). The theme of the conference was 'The Challenge of Jubilee: What Does God Require?' Edward's slot came on Friday evening (13 February) – the order of the programme had to be changed due to the uncertain condition of his health. And he was so glad to be there, at the heart of a conference on Palestinian Liberation Theology.

The conference was structured around the biblical theme of Jubilee – the breaking of fetters that occurred every fifty years – and its possible relevance to current events in Palestine, fifty years after the Palestinian *Nakba* (catastrophe) of 1948. The earlier papers commented on the relevant biblical texts, reflecting the legacy of the past – my own contribution was on 'The Bible and Zionism' – and subsequent ones considered not only what happened, but how one can deal with the consequent wounds, discussing the interplay between memory, reconciliation and justice. The third batch of papers projected into the future and considered the political visions and spiritual resources for a lasting peace in Palestine.[2] The conference, of course, included more than lectures and workshops. Worship, song, and prayerful reflection were at its heart, and were given quality time at the beginning, during and at the close of each session. A *Worship Program* accompanied the *Conference Program*, and, in addition, Sabeel had prepared a booklet, *Contemporary Stations of the Cross* for a modern *Via Dolorosa* (commemorating Jesus' 'Way of the Cross'). Visiting places of significance, and listening to the testimonies of people who continued to bear the brunt of Zionist colonialism and the Israeli occupation were an integral part of the convention.

The venue was the theatre of Bethlehem University. The audience of some 900 conference participants packed the hall, while several hundred young Palestinians had to watch the proceedings, courtesy of closed-circuit television, in the basement. Earlier in the day, Professor Said had visited the former home of his family in West Jerusalem, which, ironically, was at that time the headquarters of the fundamentalist group, the 'International Christian Embassy'. The conference participants for their part had spent the afternoon traversing a contemporary *Via Dolorosa*, whether in a refugee camp or on a settlement. Edward had come at a price. He had 'had a session of chemotherapy last week and I did not think I could make it at all.' But he was so grateful 'for providing us all with the opportunity to be together and reflect on issues of

importance connected to truth, justice and liberation.' Edward had come into a showpiece of Palestinian Liberation Theology, and seemed very much at home. He relished the opportunity of addressing in particular the young Palestinian university students who were in the basement. The future was theirs.

He began by promising that he would speak freely, irrespective of what offence it might cause. Censorship of speech by the Arab regimes had been a constant cause of Arab impotence. He was now, in 1998, more resolute than ever in classifying the 'peace process' as a further stage in the capitulation of the Palestinians to the advances of Zionism. He was dismissive of the United States' 'even-handedness', and, again, scornful of the Palestinian leadership. The Palestinians were worse off in every respect now than they were before 'the *misery* of Oslo'.

Despite all the losses on the ground, however, there should never be an erasing of the historical truth that the existence of Israel was predicated upon the obliteration of the Palestinian people. The scars of the past and of recent times remained unhealed. But what of the future? How could the Palestinians co-exist peacefully with a state that had not even yet declared its boundaries, and that described itself as the state of the whole Jewish people alone? How could they live in peace with Israel as long as it washed its hands of any responsibility for their plight, and pretended to seek peace, while persisting in their exploitation? The oppressive policies of the Israeli government completed the original sin of the *Nakba*. Manifestly such actions were inimical to any real peace. But to aspire to remove Israel and its people was equally fanciful. The first challenge, indeed the moral mission, for the Palestinian people, and for each individual, then, was to extract acknowledgement from Israel of its continued injustice towards the Palestinians. History would never excuse the Palestinians for failing in that enterprise.

Moreover, there was an alternative to the then drastic condition of the Palestinians. Despite the odds, there was a way forward, but it required a resolute national will and a mass movement that was determined to resist injustice. Some form of co-existence could be achieved, whereby both Israelis and Palestinians could live a better life, free of ethnocentricity and religious intolerance. Showing no sympathy for the customary descent into the rhetoric of lament and abject passivity, Professor Said stressed the capacity of people to make their own history.

Thus he introduced the thought of two philosophers of history who had meant a great deal to him over the years, Ibn Khaldun and Giambattista Vico. Although separated from each other by well over 300 years, and the Mediterranean Sea – Ibn Khaldun, the Arab philosopher died in 1406, while Vico, the Neapolitan philosopher died in 1744 – they held astonishingly similar views of history, both of which had

great relevance today. Vico's *The New Science* was published a year after his death (1745), and it remained relatively unknown until the late eighteenth century, when it was discovered by the French historian Jules Michelet, who translated it from Italian into French.

Since that time, major figures in European thought – Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, James Joyce, Beckett, Crochet, and many others – were in some way indebted to Vico's profound insight, that *human beings make their own history*, a history that, therefore, can be understood by human beings scientifically, and according to laws of context, development, and understanding. Humankind, Vico said, begins in barbarism, moves to sociability when the family is invented, and then achieves social solidarity – what Ibn Khaldun in the *Muqadima* calls, '*Al-Asabiyeh*'. Said appears to have stumbled into Vico. It was not on the menu of his intellectual feast at Princeton or Harvard. During his doctoral studies at Harvard 'my own intellectual discoveries were made outside what the regimen required… such things as Vico's *The New Science*, Lukacs's *History and Class Consciousness,* Sartre, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, all of whom shaped my dissertation on Conrad' (*Out of Place* 1999: 290). The tragedy that the Palestinians suffered was, then, the result of human planning and endeavour. It was not a residue of magical forces. Equally, the way forward lay in self-reliance and active resistance – what the Irish nationalists called *Sinn Féin* ('Ourselves Alone'). Self-reliance, surely, but never in isolation.

The Palestinians, and their youth in particular, would have to win over international opinion. The reality of Israel challenged the Palestinians to marshal their resources single-mindedly. This would require a massive campaign, in the US and elsewhere, to dispel the Zionist nationalist myths, and undermine the morality of Israel's military occupation. Palestinians, like the ANC-inspired opposition to South African *apartheid*, would have to campaign in universities, churches, corporations and the media. History confirms that although the balance of power is unfavourable, the weaker side can overcome the stronger one, because of the *human* factor, the relentless will to resist injustice. If Palestinians made the case that they were prepared, with the Jews of Israel and Arab people in the surrounding region, to make a new kind of history, based on a new politics of integration and inclusion, they *could* carry the day. Such was Professor Said's unfailing utopian hope. It scarcely allowed for human depravity, and what theologians call sin.

The Challenge of Liberation Theology

Somebody, sometime, somewhere, perhaps, will turn to inquiring seriously into Edward's engagement with religion. Why was he not able to see in religious idealism a way out of misery? Why did he not confront

more explicitly the religious dimensions of the conflict which since 1967 at least virtually dominated his life? Was his 'sidelining' of religion part of the detritus of post-Enlightenment intellectuals for whom the abandonment of religious sensitivities was virtually a *rite de passage* into modernity? Not only had he lapsed from Anglican Christianity, but he found it necessary to publicise the fact, almost as if doing so were the passport into acceptability. Or was it just one more indication of how Edward Said had 'thrown over' much of his own past?

There may also have been some personal matters behind it. In his autobiography he speaks about how his divorce presented for his mother a dilemma: 'If things are so bad between you, then, yes, by all means you should divorce', but, 'On the other hand for us [Christians] marriage is permanent, a sacrament, holy. Our church will never recognize divorce.' Looking back, Edward commented, 'These were statements that often paralyzed me completely' (*Out of Place* 1999: 293) – an intriguing admission. But then, perhaps, his lapsing had more intellectual roots. Did the Church's alignment with power – and Edward showed little respect for any kind of power, except the power of truth – prevent it from speaking its own truth? Or was it that he considered religion's commitment to the overriding power of God to be destructive of his confidence that people could by their own determination make their own history, could bring about their own redemption? I would love to have had the opportunity of asking him such questions. I would love also to have had the opportunity of pointing out to him points of convergence between the secular and the religious prophet.

University culture, as Edward knew so well, typically isolates intellectuals from the poor and the powerless. Rather than becoming the voices of the poor, then, they opt to became servants of the powerful. The Latin American liberation theologians since the 1970s have made us aware of the problem. Prior to that period, the energies of the Christian leadership tended to express themselves in a form of Christianity that was dominated by the establishment Church, rather than by the idealism of Jesus. The liberation theologians were very critical of the kind of Theology and Biblical Studies – my own field – that were practised in the West. Conventionally the university departments and seminaries decided upon which questions were important, and what was the appropriate training required of practitioners. The poor, and the structural sin that kept them poor, were not high on the agenda.

The liberation theologians, however, complained that Western interpretation of the Bible would always be distorted, since the Bible's central message – they said rather naively – was that God was on the side of the oppressed, while interpreters from North America and Europe did not know the experience of being subject to economic, personal, or institu-

tional oppression, and, therefore, could do no better than interpret the Bible from their positions of power. Consequently, in reflecting on the hermeneutical and exegetical exercise, the liberation theologians insisted on the primacy of the scholar's own context or world-view (*lugar teológico*) and required scholars not merely to describe reality as they discovered it, but to deploy their scholarship as a transformative agent in the lives of the people. In Brazil, for example, biblical scholars trained in the methods and concerns of Western Biblical Studies were allowed enter the so-called Contextual Bible Study process only as servants, and participate only when invited by the people. Moreover, whether or not they had dazzling erudition in the biblical languages, they had to be committed to Biblical Studies from the perspective of the oppressed, and commit themselves to socio-political transformation.[3]

Edward Said had some things to say even about the biblical narrative. Were it his field of enquiry, he would have been scathing on biblical scholars who maintained an academic detachment from significant engagement in contemporary issues, and who continued to seek refuge by expending virtually all their intellectual energies on an unrecoverable past. This was all the more necessary when the biblical narratives had been manipulated by forces of oppression in the interests of various colonial enterprises.[4] Following the exhortation of Robert Allen Warrior, Edward considered that biblical scholars, Church people, and Western intellectuals should read the biblical narratives 'with the eyes of the Canaanites'.[5] Michael Walzer's exegetical appetite had been exhausted simply by his comments on 'the land of milk and honey'.[6] Walzer's mellifluous prose obscured the problem raised by the presence of the indigenous Canaanites, and the requirement of exterminating them in order to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (pp. 101-30). The Promised Land of the biblical narrative flowed, indeed, with milk and honey, but it would also, in the narrative, flow with the blood of the indigenous people, all in the name of piety.[7]

While the treatment of indigenous peoples of Latin America had presented the Iberian Church with a considerable moral challenge, and had developed the principles of a liberation theology already in the sixteenth century – with Bartolomé de Las Casas emerging as the champion of the indigenous peoples – it was not until the 1970s that such a theology sprang up again, and on that occasion also in Latin America. Up to then, Christian Theology was somewhat metahistorical, paying little attention to the social conditions of people and the economic structures that determined them. Doing theology among the poor changed all that.

Authentic Christian theology, according to the Jesuit Father, Ignacio Ellacuría, President of the University of Central America in San

Salvador, incorporated three elements: reflection, ethical option and action (*praxis*). Reflection was to be on the object of Christian faith, the Reign of God. Because it was immersed in 'the historical reality' (concrete situation) of the people of God, such reflection introduced a fundamental ethical option, one which properly leads to *praxis*. Rather than being considered as separate, or in temporal sequence, the three elements were completely integrated and almost simultaneously present in a dynamic tension in the richness of encountering the weight of reality.[8]

Ellacuría insisted that the *context* of theological reflection was vital to the discipline. His context was that of being among the poor people of Latin America whom he considered to be crucified on the cross of Latin America.[9] Just as Ignatius of Loyola, the Founder of the Jesuits, had exhorted his disciples to go on their knees at the foot of the cross and ask, 'What have I done, what am I doing, what will I do for Christ crucified?' so Christians today, Ellacuría urged, should reflect on the condition of the poor and ask, 'What have I done, what am I doing for the people on the cross, and what will I do to uncrucify them, and have them raised?'[10] Being among the crucified people was the pre-eminent place of theology, and might well exact a price.

Ellacuría, striving to bring the poor down from the cross, was put up there himself in a dramatic expression of his commitment to theological reflection, ethical option and *praxis*. On 16 November 1989, government soldiers murdered him and five other Jesuits of the university, together with a seminary cook and her daughter. For Jon Sobrino, another Jesuit of the university, who would have been murdered on that night had he not been out of the country at the time, the task of theology is to bring the poor of Latin America off the cross.[11] Both Ellacuría and Sobrino were theological advisors to Archbishop Oscar Romero, murdered while he was celebrating Mass (24 March 1980). Theologising with a commitment to social transformation could become a matter of the scholar's own life and death.

While Edward Said's death was from a terminal illness he was not spared opprobrium in his lifetime. In addition to being branded 'the Professor of Terror' in a respectable – so to speak – magazine, the President of his own people even banned his books in Palestine. Back in New York his office had been burned and ransacked, and he had had to install a safety button in his own house, which on pressing would bring the police.[12]

That he may have found his place

While he made much of his dual cultural identity – he was both an Arab and an American: if his surname was Arab, his Christian name was

British, in honour of the Prince of Wales, no less – Edward never quite felt at home in either role. It was not, as it was with Baudelaire, that he was permanently restless, 'always content to be in that place in which he was not';[13] he did have an existential sense of profound exile. Yet, he loved music, good food and wine, and smart dressing.

He had little admiration for politicians, either US or Arab, and was usually equally scathing on the foreign policies of the US and the domestic policies of the Arab states. The Arab states were despotic and tyrannical, while the US was determined to exercise global hegemony. Little wonder that he had never found his place: 'Better to wander out of place, not to own a house, and not ever to feel at home anywhere, especially in a city like New York, where I shall be until I die… With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place' (*Out of Place* 1999: 294-95). And again, 'I feel I have no place. I'm cut off from my origins. I live in exile. I am exiled… I don't own any real estate. The flat I live in is rented. I see myself as a wanderer. My position is that of a traveler, who is not interested in holding territory, who has no realm to protect.'[14]

This sense of not being at home, of course, is well attested in the Christian tradition, and in several other traditions as well. Edward, perhaps, might have appreciated the perspective of the anonymous Letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament. It is, at one level, a profound reflection on the journey to the Place of Rest. Those on the journey would have to be steadfast. They would be beset by all kinds of problems along the way, and at every turn. They would be tempted to revert to the security of their comfortable past. But they should keep on, never losing sight of the One who has gone before.

Notes

1 In writing this essay I recall with gratitude the encouragement I received from Fr Gearóid O'Sullivan, CM, in a letter written after he had read my 'Studying the Bible in the Land of the Bible' (*Colloque* No. 38[1998]: 122-44), and throughout the remainder of his life. Down the years I have been much encouraged also by Fr Bill Clarke, CM, who even in the Mercy Hospital, in late August 2003, managed to marshal his fragile body into a magisterial configuration, and proceeded to tell me in solemn tones, sensing probably that we would not speak again, how important he considered my work. They, and Fr Brian Magee, CM, the Parish Priest, who had died earlier in August, had provided for me in St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork, over many years, a place of refreshment, spiritual nourishment and the most agreeable companionship and *koinonia eis to euangelion*. They have all passed on to the Place of Rest, in all-too-quick succession. May I, in God's mercy, be admitted in time into their company forever, wherein, one hopes, even heavenly knowledge itself shall not altogether invalidate the excitement of human interchanges.

2 For the conference papers and other relevant information see Naim S. Ateek and Michael Prior (eds), *Holy Land - Hollow Jubilee: God, Justice and the Palestinians* (London: Melisende, 1999).

3 See L.E. Vaage, 'Text, Context, Conquest, Quest: The Bible and Social Struggle in Latin America', in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 30(1991): 357-65

4 See Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism. A Moral Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

5 See Edward W. Said, 'Michael Walzer's *Exodus and Revolution*: A Canaanite Reading', in Edward W. Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds), *Blaming the Victims. Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (London/New York: Verso, 1988) 161-78.

6 *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

7 See Michael Prior, *A Land flowing with Milk, Honey, and People* (The Lattey Lecture 1997) (Von Hügel Institute, St Edmund's College, Cambridge University, 1997), and in *Scripture Bulletin* 28(1998): 2-17.

8 See Ignacio Ellacuría, *Filosofia de la realidad histórica* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1990).

9 See Ignacio Ellacuría, 'Los pobres, "lugar teológico" en America Latina', in *Misión Abierta* (1981, no. 4-5): 225-40, and his 'El Pueblo crucificado. Ensayo de soterología histórico', in *Revista Latinoamerica de Teología* 18(1989): 305-33.

10 See Ignacio Ellacuría, 'Las Iglesias latinoamericanas interpelan a la Iglesia de España', *Sal Terra* (1982. no. 826) 230.

11 See Jon Sobrino, 'The Crucified Peoples: Yahweh's Suffering Servant Today', in Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (eds) *1492-1992 The Voice of the Victims* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), being *Concilium* 1990(6): 120-29, and his 'Human Rights and Oppressed Peoples: Historical-Theological Reflections', in Michael Hayes

and David Tombs (eds), *Truth and Memory. The Church and Human Rights in El Salvador and Guatemala* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2001) 134-58.

12 *Power, Politics, and Culture. Interviews with Edward W. Said, edited with an Introduction by Gauri Viswanathan* (New York : Pantheon Books 2001) 413-14.

13 'Il me semble que je serais toujours bien où je ne suis pas', 'Anywhere out of the World. N'importe où hors du Monde' (*Petits Poèmes en Prose. Le Spleen de Paris)* (Paris: Édition Garnier Frères, 1980) 211.

14 *Power, Politics, and Culture.* 456.

Fr Brendan O'Dowd

Down through the years the Vincentians in St. Peter's, Phibsborough have had an enormous influence over Phibsborians and, perhaps, never more so than during the 1940s and early post-war years. One street alone in Phibsborough, Shandon Drive, was to witness six Vincentian vocations – Fintan Briscoe, Noel Travers, John and Gerald Doyle and Dermot and Brendan O'Dowd. There were three O'Dowd brothers; Con the eldest, had already joined the Dublin diocese and Dermot, the Vincentians. When Brendan intimated to his parents that he was considering joining the Vincentians like his brother Dermot, they asked him to postpone entry and spend a year at University before making a final decision. At the completion of the year Brendan still felt the call to the priesthood and he entered the Vincentian noviciate in Blackrock.

Brendan was extremely clever and completed a brilliant first class honours BA Degree. Later, he took a Masters Degree, likewise with first class honours. His thesis was to be a definitive study of the life and work of a very prominent 19th century Vincentian. After his ordination in 1950, Brendan was appointed to Castleknock College. Confreres and pastmen alike remember Brendan as one for whom his priesthood was all-important, as an outstanding teacher, with a keen mind and, since he himself was prepared to work hard, as one who expected a like commitment from his students. The qualities were allied with a sharp and witty sense of humour and a fine understanding of rugby as a trainer and referee.

However, after eleven years – perhaps, too long a period teaching in school for one, who like his brothers, had always felt a strong calling to the parish apostolate – Brendan decided his vocation was elsewhere. With the consent of the Superior General, he left the Vincentian community (although it is said with some regrets) and joined the secular priesthood in California and became a curate in the parish of Fair Oaks, Sacramento. His pastor there was an Irishman, Fr Doheny, and, immediately, a deep friendship developed between the two priests which was to last a lifetime (Fr Doheny travelled over especially to Ireland for Brendan's funeral). Brendan's time in Fair Oaks were years of great happiness and fulfilment as a priest and he was popular with the parishioners. Eventually, he was appointed pastor of Carmichael and later of Weed. In both these parishes Brendan's dedication earned him the love and respect of the people and, when Dermot visited him, the beauty of the surroundings and the contentment of his brother were evident.

At seventy-five Brendan retired to Oregan and acted as an assistant

priest in Brooking. There his reputation proceeded him and he was invited to provide adult education for the parishioners which, as expected, he did successfully.

Mainly for health reasons, Brendan returned to Ireland in 2002. Shortly after his return, he suffered two strokes and when the end came in October 2003, I think he welcomed death. The day of his burial was his 80th birthday. His apostolic life was complete and surely earned him the welcome from the Master whom he served so well. Requiescat in Pace.

To his sister Moira, who in the last four years has suffered the pain of the death of her three brothers and, recently, the death of her beloved husband Sean, and to her daughters Ann and Emer, the whole Vincentian community offer their prayers and express their deepest sympathy.

John Doyle CM

MICHAEL BRENDAN O'DOWD

Born:	Phibsborough, Dublin, 14 October 1923
Entered the CM:	3 September 1942
Final Vows:	8 September 1944
Ordained priest;	29 May 1949 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, by John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

APPOINTMENTS:

1949-'60:	St Vincent's College, Castleknock
1960-'64:	St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill
1964-'69:	Study in Chicago
1969-'75:	All Hallows College, Drumcondra
1975-'82:	Leave of absence, serving in the Diocese of Sacramento
1982:	Incardination into the Diocese of Sacramento
2002	Returned to Dublin
Died:	10 October 2003, in Roebuck Nursing Home, Dublin
Buried:	Glasnevin, Dublin, in his parents' grave.

Fr Brian Magee CM

We kept vigil for several days, praying and waiting. Then, at the time of Vespers just after the Angelus, we were there, a few friends and parishioners, saying the Rosary when Brian commended his spirit into the hands of the Lord. It was on 4th August 2003, the feast of St. John Mary Vianney, heroic patron of parish clergy, that our confrere and Parish Priest went to receive the reward of his labours.

I was a Vincentian seminarian in our Theology College, Glenart, when I first met Brian Magee. He appeared youthful, strong, and competent, and had come to preside at Mass for a major feast. I was impressed by his readiness to listen to my directions, since I was MC for the occasion. Later, I was quite amazed, on learning about his liturgical proficiency. Our next meeting occurred when I received my first appointment after Ordination in 1964 to St Patrick's, Armagh. There, Brian had moved in 1959, having served in St Vincent's, Castleknock, and in St Paul's, Raheny.

In Armagh he exercised the role of prefecture among the students who benefitted from his zeal and concern.

In that period, when an unprecedented drive for liberty was asserted in student life, and all tradition was under threat, Brian was able to guide his charges with discretion, and calmly channel adolescent energies along productive ways of faith and responsibility.

In the early 1970s a fresh era opened up for him when he was asked to pursue religious studies at Catholic University, Washington. I remember driving Brian to Dublin Airport as he began this enterprise. He seemed happy, quietly determined, if a little apprehensive. He flew out into a new world, with which the post-Conciliar Church was coming to terms. His own role in that Church would be considerable during the three decades to follow.

Always a great reader, with wide literary and theological tastes, Brian found wonderful scope to extend his talents at the highest level. His application was crowned with honours and in due course, his expertise was sought and fully exercised in Ireland, Britain and further afield. Love of divine worship was an outstanding feature of his ministry for retreatants and young Church musicians at Blackrock.

Later, when on the staff of St Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra, Brian was deeply influential in the formation of future lay teachers in Ireland, and of many future priests through his lectures at Clonliffe, All Hallows, Mater Dei and Maynooth. This period of his life has been well chronicled elsewhere, so I move on to the next phase of his priesthood.

In Jubilee Year 2000, I came once more to work side by side with Brian. He was appointed Parish Priest of Sunday's Well, Cork, in 1997. It must not have been easy for him to enter the cut and thrust of parish life after so many years in the world of academe. However, as we saw throughout his time in the field of education and retreat work, he was always in touch with people and pastorally enthusiastic. It was no surprise then, that he sought to give to others (*aliis tradere*) his rich store of learning and tried modes of apostolate.

He felt a particular urge to bring forward the faithful to full sharing in the liturgy, outstandingly the Sunday Eucharist. Brian enhanced the existing great beauty of St Vincent's Church, rendering it more people-friendly. Unneeded confessionals were replaced by attractive shrines, and with artistic aptness the sanctuary has been left in splendid condition. Everyone speaks of the warm, prayerful atmosphere of Sundays Well Church.

Having negotiated successfully the sale of the original large community house to the Department of Music of UCC Brian went on to complete a fine Parish Centre, and provided an excellent presbytery for the confreres. He had a special sense of celebration. This was superbly shown at the altar, but continued outwards into parish events and Vincentian happenings. His veneration for the saints found visible results in pilgrimages with parishioners beyond our shores, but also, not least, to Ballyvourney for the honour of St Gobnait, and the Annual Pilgrimage in praise of Our Lady of Knock. At home among us in the community he loved to give that *aliquid maius*, the extra touch to our birthdays, feasts and other occasions. His generosity in material terms and with his time was remarkable, and visitors to the house were always happy recipients of these gifts. There we could see fulfilment of the Pauline precept, *Let hospitality be your special care.*

As a man of star ability, with a perfectionist temperament, he found it painful when others did not move at his pace. I could sometimes see his impatience at my *slow learning.* But his fairness and aristocracy of mind were crystal clear. A Northerner, from Portadown, he had lived in childhood through World War II. He then brought into adult life the toughness and direct manner of his fellow-countrymen, not over-tolerant of our southern easy-going tendencies.

Everyone could recognise his extraordinary capacity for work. Despite a busy schedule as Parish Priest, he continued to produce the acclaimed Irish Liturgical Calendar, so that this publication came from his pen for a full 25 years. He also maintained to the end his role as a national liturgical resource for the Bishops. Always a clear communicator, he set high store by the computer and Internet, thus to evangelize by the most modern means. St Vincent's call to us *to spread the Good News*

was not lost on him.

It could not have been palatable, humanly speaking, for such an active and brilliant priest to have been assailed by illness. For a few years Brian kept going fearlessly, steadfastly in spite of his gradual weakening. I never heard him utter a single word of discontent with this course of divine providence regarding himself. He would sometimes acknowledge quite plainly to me how he felt. Most often; he would not seek the slightest comfort or sympathy.

Over the months Brian's spirituality was refined in the crucible of the Cross. A quiet serenity became apparent; prayer accompanied our visits, and acceptance seemed more prevalent. Personal visits by Bishop Buckley of Cork and by Bishop Magee of Cloyne were like a hierarchic seal upon his ecclesial endeavours. At the joyful celebration of his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood, a great crowd of Brian's friends and family, confreres, and parishioners exulted with him. It was only some five weeks before his death. His fine singing voice could intone the *Nunc Dimittis*. I pray that God's peace, desired by Simeon in the canticle, may be enjoyed eternally by Fr Brian Magee.

Eamonn Flanagan CM

BRIAN MAGEE CM

Born**:**	Portadown, 28 June 1929
Entered the CM**:**	7 September 1946
Final Vows**:**	8 December 1948
Ordained Priest**:**	30 May 1953 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, by Bishop Patrick Dunne, Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin.

APPOINTMENTS:

1953-'55:	St Vincent's College, Castleknock
1955-'59:	St Paul's College, Raheny
1959-'71:	St Patrick's College, Armagh
1971-'80:	St Joseph's, Blackrock
1980-'97:	St Patrick's College, Drumcondra
1997 – 2003:	St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork

Died:	4 August 2003
Buried:	Cork

Brian Magee; An Apprecation

First published in The Irish Times*, 23 August 2003.*
Reprinted by kind permission of the author, Fr Paddy Jones

Father Brian Magee, CM, parish priest of St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork died on August 4th, aged 74. His 50 years as a priest were spoken of at the funeral by Father Kevin O'Shea, the provincial of the Vincentians.

Indeed Brian himself, at the parish celebrations of the golden jubilee of his ordination a the end of June, spoke of the privilege of his call and ministry. At that celebration too, Geraldine Murphy, chair of the parish council, paid tribute to his work as parish priest of Sunday's Well since September 1997. Now it is important to acknowledge Brian's enormous contribution to liturgical renewal in Ireland.

After 17 years teaching in Castleknock, St Paul's, Raheny, and St. Patrick's, Armagh, Brian was appointed to the retreat team and youth ministry in August 1971. Having studied religious studies at CUA, Washington DC, with a strong emphasis on liturgy, he returned to the US to study liturgy at Notre Dame. He began to put his expertise into action, working with the folk group in Dun Laoghaire parish - they will remember the Easter Vigils - and several folk music weekends at Gort Muire but also around the country, in meeting with priests and religious and in parishes. Well remembered is his promotion of the Divine Office of Liturgy of the Hours. He always hoped that parishes would include morning and evening prayer their schedules of worship.

In 1978, he began to edit the annual Liturgical Calendar. For 25 years under his editorship, the Calendar has been the guide for the daily celebration of Mass and the Hours. But, it is often remarked, he did much more. The Calender, with its abundant notes and reflections, formed people in the spirit of the liturgy. It has helped many a priest for daily reflection and homily.

The Irish saints were given a special place, not surprisingly as Brian had worked on the calendar of Irish saints. And, of course, Easter and Sunday always as the heart of the year. This was also very evident when Brian was appointed Chaplin at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, in 1980, and at the same time teaching liturgy at Mater Dei Institute as well as for some years at Clonliffe College and All Hallows. The Easter Vigils of the 1980s and 1990s were celebrations of colour and music, of powerful word and ritual, of faith and hope. Brian was an enthusiast for the Family Mass and a wonderful celebrant of those Sunday Masses at St Patrick's.

Working with *Veritas* Publications, he saw gaps in liturgical resources and filled them with books and booklets on blessings, psalms collects,

the readings for marriages and funerals. He was an early provider of video material – that on the sacrament of the sick reminds us of his pastoral care for the sick. Only some months ago, he gave the commentary on the stations of the cross on a video using the pieces of Sunday's Well.

Hospitality, an essential aspect of good worship, he understood. He was the obvious choice to take that duty when the international gathering of *Societas Liturgica* held its congress at St Patrick's in 1995. Brian was still hoping to attend this year's congress – it began a week after his death.

The last year was difficult. Brian had been diagnosed with a serious illness just before Holy Week 2002. That week, in his own words, he participated in the sufferings of the Body of Christ throughout the world. But he fought on bravely, in the parish but also in his usual round of liturgical commitments. Indeed, he gave a spirited input on the *et cum spiritu tuo* at the June meeting of the Bishops' Commission for Liturgy and their consultors.

Brian loved life and share it with family and Vincentian brothers and sisters, with those involved in liturgy and the National Centre for Liturgy, with young and old friends and with friends on the Greek island of Amargos (which he visited so many times).

We will miss him. May he rest in peace.

Fr Bill Clarke CM

As the nurses at Marymount Hospice, Cork, were turning their patient, Fr Bill Clarke, on his side, he said his last words: a snatch of Irish, 'Tá mé lán ar aon taobh, mar bhaile Fhear Muighe' ('I am all on one side, like the town of Fermoy'). The words took people's fancy, both for their expression of Bill's essential light-heartedness, and, at least in my case, because they seemed to catch something else entirely typical of him, his sureness about his place in the world. He radiated security. In an article he wrote on celibacy, he supposed that had he not been a priest he would have been a secondary school teacher 'with very good chances of promotion'. The teaching profession's loss was gain for many groups of people, whole populations in fact: people in Rivers State, Nigeria, immediately after the Civil War, parishioners and trainee catechists in Makurdi Diocese, Benue State, Nigeria, his many friends, and of course, the deaf, always the deaf.

Bill's intelligence and keenness to communicate led him to competence or better in many languages, but none more than in the sign language. It was among the deaf that he spent almost a third of his life and more than half of his priesthood, while he was living at St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork. He certainly could not have been more loved had he been married and a teacher than he was by them. His dedication to the deaf had plenty of feeling in it, but also practical good sense and an organisational ability that his confreres thought must have been a special gift of the Holy Spirit, so uncharacteristic did it seem. There were two achievements of which he was especially proud. The first was bringing together the team that established Cork Deaf Enterprises, a highly regarded and successful furniture-restoring business in Cork, employing and largely run by deaf people. The other was setting up a programme at UCC for the professional training of interpreters for the deaf. I am not sure though that the Holy Spirit would want Bill's ability as an organiser to be considered entirely supernatural. He was as practically minded as any confrere I know, though he did have difficulty working with people who were unable to see his point of view and meet him somewhere around half-way.

Many who knew him were impressed by his intelligence, his breadth of knowledge, and the aptness of his contributions to discussion. He had a cultivated mind, a tribute to the Christian Brothers School in Athy and to Castleknock, where he had his secondary education, but a tribute, most of all, to his parents, Gerard and Alice. He loved history and was good at it, he loved Irish and spoke it well, he loved music and sport and knew his stuff regarding them. He kept in touch with theology, and did an MA

at the Angelicum in the 1980s, though his religious interests were more spiritual and catechetical than theological or (least of all) philosophical. His Master's dissertation was entitled "*The Ecumenical Implications of the Ministry of St Justin de Jacobis in Ethiopia, 1839-1860*". He loved writing and wrote very well. His last publication, a sensitive and inspiring article on David Livingstone for the Kiltegan Fathers' magazine, *Africa*, was called 'Ending the Heartbreak' [of slavery]. (November 2002) He was devoted to the Priesthood, and this aspect of his character reached its clearest expression in his membership of the core group of the annual Intercession for Priests at All Hallows. His colleagues there liked him especially for his good humour and moderation. While far from being flamboyantly spiritual, he was deeply so. The last nine months of his life brought this to the fore. He spent long periods in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament at the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dun Laoghaire. In his letters and conversations with friends and chaplains he seemed, like St Stephen, so see the heavens opened and to sense the eternal joy to which he was being invited.

Go raibh dhá láimh Chríost anall thart, agus tharainn go léir.

Myles Rearden CM

WILLIAM CLARKE CM

Born:	Kanturk, Co Cork, 6 January 1941
Entered the CM:	7 September1958
Final Vows:	8 September 1963
Ordained Priest:	4 June 1966 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin.

APPOINTMENTS:

1966-'70	St Vincent's College, Castleknock
1970-'75	Port Harcourt, Nigeria
1975-'80	Ogobia, Nigeria
1980-'83	Damascus House, Mill Hill.
1983-'84	Angelicum, Rome
1984- 2003	St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork

Died:	19 October 2003
Buried:	Cork

In Our Thoughts; Fr Bill Clarke 1941-2003

Trudy Murphy
General Manager, Cork Deaf Enterprises

On the morning of Sunday 19th October, we were all saddened by the passing away of Fr Bill Clarke.

Fr Clarke had been Chaplain to the Deaf Community in Cork since 1984 and all his great work over that time will remain with us for many years to come. We all remember him with great admiration and affection. Anyone that had the good fortune to have met him will remember how he loved to work with the deaf community and how his dreams and hopes for the deaf were always close to his heart, even in his last few months of his life. I visited him regularly in hospital and each time I was amazed at the passion he showed as he discussed new projects and new ideas he had for the deaf. His love of working with the deaf was evident in everything he did and he showed great enthusiasm in the many projects he became involved with through the Cork Association for Deaf and Cork Deaf Enterprises.

And how can we forget his unique sense of humour and quirky ways which always brought a smile to our faces? I remember well how he would stroll into the Deaf Centre and out of his pockets he would take a small package of sandwiches which he would proceed to eat while he talked about music and travel and deaf issues or the latest film he had been to see. And how can we forget his enjoyment of social activities with the deaf… how many of you were caught out by his 'Train to France' game?

One of my last and fondest memories of Fr Clarke is an evening we had together at a Christmas gathering in the Deaf Centre last year. I remember well how he stood (wearing his hat – as he always did) amongst many of his friends, playing his guitar and singing Christmas carols.

May we all remember our happy moments we spent with Fr Clarke and know that he is never far away from our thoughts and I'm sure at this very moment he's teaching the angels in heaven how to sign!