

Reflection from Fr. Colm on the fourth Sunday of Easter

Audio posted to the Parish Website on Sunday 3rd May 2020

Good morning everybody. Lockdown has been for many of us a bit of a nostalgic journey hasn't it? If like me, you've been having a bit of a clear out you'll be coming across old photos etc, for some this can bring both joyful and sad memories.

A joyful memory was rekindled this week when I received a YouTube link to a hymn that was really bread and butter during this month of May in our Catholic devotions - Flowers of the rarest - and sung by its finest interpreter and believe you me I have heard some of the rarest interpretations of this hymn.

It was of course Canon Sydney Macewan. Sydney Macewan was from the Scottish Highlands and was discovered by none other than Sir Compton Mackenzie and John McCormack. A lucrative professional singing career awaited but he chose priesthood. You can link this hymn on the website, our parish website, after this reflection.

And so back to the hymn, every first of May indeed the late, great broadcaster Gay Byrne played it on his radio program on this day. So you can see how this month of May, lockdown and memories all come together for me anyhow.

That nostalgic journey continued on another level last week with the passing of my vocations director in Dublin Father Philip O'Driscoll. And we remember these individuals who played an important role in whatever vocation or career choices we make don't we?

Philip died age 86, not COVID related, thank God.

Our links continued when he was appointed as PP to my own parish church. He was an intelligent, humorous, at times complex, but very holy and with a strong devotion to Our Lady, St Joseph and Thérèse of Lisieux. However, there's one abiding memory of Father Philip that I often recount.

As a young priest he was appointed to a poor parish in the centre of Dublin. He had recently been educated at Calva college and Minuet and so feeling armed with the knowledge of Canon Law, he couldn't wait for

his first confession. And then in she walked. An elderly poor woman from the centre of Dublin who took an age to kneel down in the confessional because of her arthritic joints, plus she had about six plastic bags full of all sorts which she slowly put on the ground beside her. She confessed and Father Philip had the textbook answers and feeling proud of himself he gave her absolution and slowly she arose. And as she departed, she halted, turned round and said "*Ah'sh you're doing your best Father.*" That elderly poor woman had challenged his sense of certainty, his sense of superiority. It was a powerful lesson that even in latter years he most certainly never forgot.

Today we listen to the Good Shepherd Gospel, this is Good Shepherd Sunday, reminding us of the necessity of being wary of wolves in sheep's clothing and that Christ is both gate and shepherd but question is of course, what if we at times are and could be like Father Philip, wolves in sheep's clothing to leading others astray through our own blindness, our own prejudices, our own certainties. We can unnoticed to ourselves be the ones who cause others to stray and we might even do it with the best of intentions.

The wise words of that other great Scottish troubadour Robbie Burns ring home. "*Oh, would some Power give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us! It would from many blunder free us, And foolish notion: what airs in dress and gait would leave us, and even devotion!*"

Have a lovely Sunday everybody, God bless.