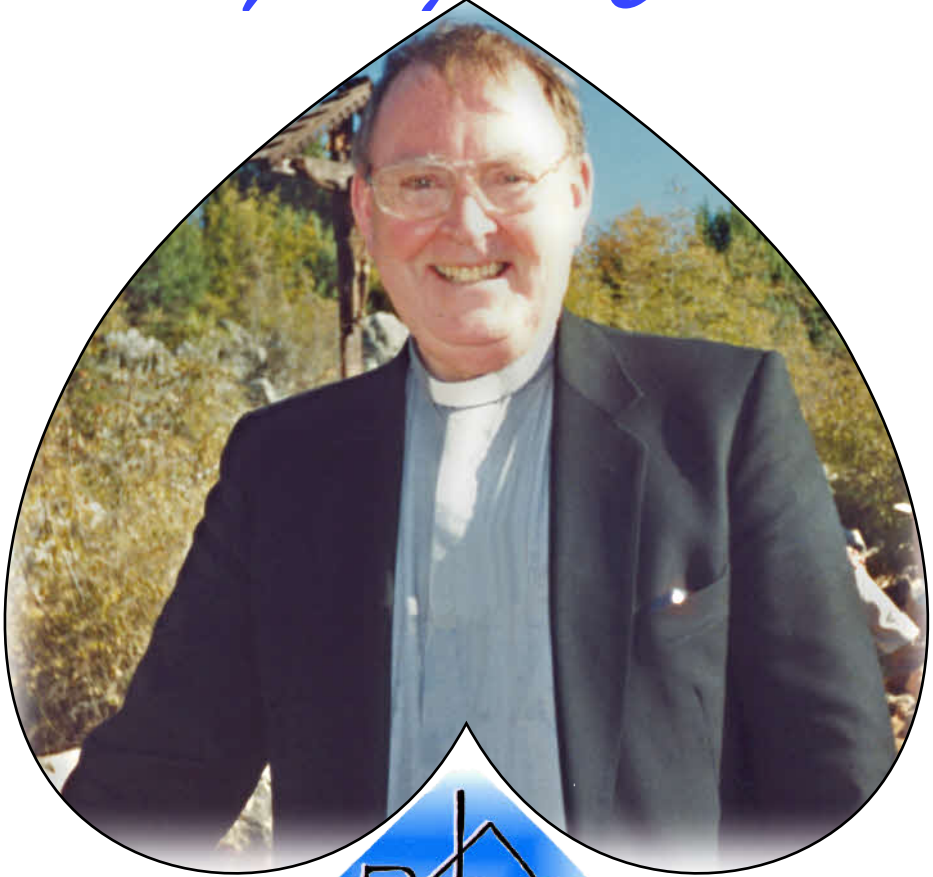


Augustinians of the Assumption

Thy Kingdom Come



Fr Brendan O'Malley a.a.

15 May 1934 - 7 September 2008

Brendan O'Malley a.a.

14th May 1934 – 7th September 2008

Born in Carne, County Mayo, Eire, in the Diocese of Killala on 14th May 1934, Brendan was the youngest child of Anthony and Mary Kate O'Malley. He began his education in Belmullet before moving on to St Maddock's, Ballina, in 1947 where he matriculated with honours. Soon after leaving school he left Ireland for the big smoke, London. This move was intriguing because he suffered from asthma and he was told the London smog would only aggravate the condition!! On the contrary, he said that after arriving in London he never suffered from asthma again!!

Brendan's older sister was already a member of the Oblates of the Assumption (*the sister Congregation to the Assumptionist Fathers*). She had taken the name, Sister Mary Peter, and, it was through her that Brendan came into contact with the Assumptionists and within the year Brendan decided to join the Novitiate in Capenor, Sussex, on the 31st October 1954, making his first vows the following year on 1st November. From the Novitiate he went to France to begin his studies for the priesthood beginning with philosophy at Layrac in the south of France. His academic ability was soon recognised so in 1958 he was sent to Rome to study Theology at the Angelicum, the Dominican Pontifical University. In the same year, on 21st November, he made his final profession and in the two years that followed he received all the minor orders in preparation for ordination to the priesthood. He was ordained Subdeacon and then Deacon in 1961, and, because his father was very ill, Brendan was granted permission to be

ordained in his home parish of Ballina, on 9th July 1961. This happened very rarely in those days.

The following year, 1962, Brendan asked to work on our Mission in Africa and was sent to the Congo (known then as the Belgian Congo) as a young missionary working in the bush at Mbaio where he stayed for three years. These were very happy years that saw him working among the pigmies and the lepers. He loved the people and often spoke about how he was enriched by the faith of the people he served. Because of an uprising in 1965, Brendan was forced to escape through the Bush. This was a hazardous journey and he only just escaped being caught before finally reaching the safety of Uganda. The lives of all missionaries were under threat by the insurgents and a number of them lost their lives.

Returning to England he went to our parish in Charlton, as assistant priest, for two years, before being appointed Superior of Foxholes in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. This was a formation community and housed boys thinking of the priesthood who were attending St Michael's College in Hitchin, a school run by the Assumptionists. This was to be a short appointment because in 1968 he returned to parish work this time at Brockley, as assistant priest to Fr Michael Lee. Brendan always loved parish work and was open and friendly to all from the least as well as to the top brass. His cheery smile and bonhomie were infectious. His homilies invigorated and inspired many.

Then, two years later (1970) he was moved once again; this time to Bethnal Green as Parish Priest and Superior of a large community including a couple of students. These were happy years and

very busy, as the parish had responsibility for three hospitals and a local infant school founded by the Chigwell Sisters. The parish had a thriving club which inspired numerous fund raising activities for which many charities were very grateful.

In 1978 Brendan was asked to move north to Nottingham to be the Novice Master of only one Novice. As no other candidates followed, Brendan moved yet again a year later to another of our parishes, Hitchin, where he spent less than a year as assistant priest before returning once again to Brockley where he joined Fr Aidan Furlong, the then parish priest.

In 1984 Brendan was granted a year's sabbatical which he decided to spend in Jerusalem. This he enjoyed immensely. He was able to study and reflect on the life and history of Jesus and visit the places associated with Jesus life; all of which made a profound impression on him. He often spoke about his time and experiences there and recounted some very funny stories. The following year he returned to Charlton parish once again and was appointed Superior of the community. But, he must have loved Brockley Parish, because, three years later, in 1988, he was appointed Superior and Parish priest there. It was during the 80s that Brendan encountered the charismatic movement which was a turning point in his life. He found there an energy and faith that inspired him. I believe he mirrored this energy and faith because it radiated from him wherever he went and in whatever he did.

In 1993 the Province decided to re-found the community in Brockley and Brendan was joined by Michael Lambert and Thomas O'Brien to serve the parish as a team and open the doors of

the community to possible vocations. This apostolate continued for 4 years but only one prospective candidate joined them before he, too, moved on; so, in 1997 because of radically decreasing numbers in England, the difficult and heart-wrenching decision was made for the Assumptionists to leave Brockley and found a new community devoted to encouraging vocations in a new area, Burnt Oak, in North London. The new community initially consisted only of Brendan and Thomas O'Brien as Michael Lambert was asked to become Parish Priest of Bethnal Green. The next 7 years, however, were very busy and very happy ones. The Limesdale Gardens community (*as it was known*) became a house of formation accepting students from France: one a Russian, Edward Chatov who was soon to be ordained Deacon in Hitchin parish and two Vietnamese Assumptionists, John Baptist and Joseph. The community became greatly involved in the local parishes. Although several young people joined them for a community experience none of them stayed, so, once again, because of dwindling numbers, the community was asked to move to Bethnal Green to re-found the community subsequent to a complete refurbishment of the Priory into its present form.

In the new found community Brendan was appointed treasurer and had Fr Thomas O'Brien as his superior while Fr Andrew O'Dell was Parish Priest. During the next three years in Bethnal Green, however, Brendan's diabetes (*which he had from the early 80s*) was beginning to take its toll on his body. It was impairing his eyesight and beginning to affect his mobility. Undeterred, Brendan continued to help in the Parish, give retreats and maintain his annual pilgrimage to Lourdes with the Our Lady

of Lourdes Society. Our Lady always played a special role in his life, for him a model he sought to emulate, a support and strength, an inspiration and guide.

His sudden death on 7th September in the early hours of the morning to a massive heart attack brought on by a blood clot was a shock to everyone. Yet, he would have hated to have ended his days in bed or be a burden to anyone. Wherever he went, Brendan brought life and energy to the communities in which he lived and this was reflected in his pastoral activities. He loved community life and received great strength and encouragement from the life he shared with his fellow religious. Despite the problems brought about by illness in the latter part of his life, he was like a bouncy ball, always ready to welcome people with a smile that infused uplift, hope and new sense of purpose.

He will be remembered for his smile, his *joie de vivre*, the life and energy he brought to everything and everyone he touched. He loved people and, in the spirit of the Assumption, would do anything to help them in their faith. He was the bearer of a gentle wisdom, he inspired hope, and he brought light to all whom he met because he himself was infused with the light of Christ. His love for Mary and for Lourdes was boundless. It was in her company and with her support that he was able to bring healing and wholeness to so many.

May his smile, his infectious laughter, his faith, his gentleness and his love live on in each of us making the kingdom of God a reality in our world, a kingdom where all are welcome! Brendan

is an outstanding example of an Assumptionist who devoted his life in untiring service of the Kingdom of God on earth, in other words, of people, of us.

Our Assumptionist motto is *“Thy Kingdom come”*. Brendan has reached that Kingdom and many will be cheering his arrival and embracing his laughter: his family, his friends, his fellow Assumptionists; but, the one who will be filled with the most joy will be the God whom he served so selflessly and Jesus Christ on whom he modelled his life.

At the end of his Gospel, John says that no amount of books could contain all that Jesus did and said in his life among us. In reflecting on the life of Brendan, I have barely scratched the surface. It is for you, and all of us, to continue to tell his story so that his light and energy, his warmth, compassion and love will live on, and, like so many Assumptionists who have gone before him, **MAKE CHRIST REAL!!!**

“May God grant you always... A sunbeam to warm you, a moonbeam to charm you, a sheltering Angel so nothing can harm you. Laughter to cheer you. Faithful friends near you. And whenever you pray, Heaven to hear you.”

Na bígí ag caoineadh, níl tada dho thíos ansín achamhain an cludach a bhí air.

“Let us not be crying for there is nothing of him down there, only the covering that was on him in life.”

I would like to think that the following Irish blessing is the one
Brendan gives you today and every day....

A friendship blessing

May you be blessed with good friends.

May you learn to be good friends to yourself.

*May you be able to journey to that place in your soul
where there is great love, warmth, feeling and forgiveness.*

May this change you.

*May it transfigure that which is negative, distant
and cold in you.*

*May you be brought in to the real passion, kinship
and affinity of belonging.*

May you treasure your friends.

*May you be good to them and may you be there for them;
may they bring you all the blessings, challenges, truth and
light that you need for your journey.*

*May you never be isolated; but may you always be
in the gentle nest of belonging with your anam cara!*

* anam cara = soul friend. Brendan was an *anam cara* to many and still is!!

We take as our Motto the words of the Lord's Prayer:

THY KINGDOM COME,

and those of the Divine Office:

BECAUSE OF THE LOVE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

*"The coming of the reign of Christ
for ourselves and for our neighbour,
that is what we seek above all else."*

(Fr Emmanuel d'Alzon, Constitutions 1865 I.I)