

Requiem Mass
For
Brother Colm Matthias Comyns
Presentation Brothers
Mount St. Joseph
Blarney Road, Cork
18-01-19

Raymond Dwyer FPM

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the First Reading, from the Book of Ecclesiastes, we are reminded that there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens – a time to be born and a time to die, a time to weep and time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.

So we gather here today at Mount St. Joseph for the Requiem Mass of Brother Colm Matthias Comyns - Colm to his family, Matthias to his fellow Presentation Brothers. To the people of the Grenada, he was affectionately known as Matto.

In the Second Reading, St. Paul reminds us that “the life and death of each of us has its influence on others; if we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord.” This was very true of Brother Matthias; he was a man of humility who followed the example of Christ, by seeing all that is good in others no matter who they are, be they the rich or poor. He saw all people as God’s children. Brother Matthias influenced each of us in different ways; he influenced thousands of students whom he taught for over 50 years in Presentation College, Grenada.

On behalf of the Brothers and those here today, we express our sincere sympathy and support to the Comyns family in their sorrow and loss...his brothers Noel, Michael and Tom; his sister Mary; his nephews and nieces; grandnephews and grandnieces; and the extended Comyns family.

The loss of Brother Matthias will be keenly felt among the Brothers especial Brother Robert Fanovich who lived and served in community with Matthias for over twenty years and Brother Barry Noel, a native of Grenada and a past pupil of Matthias.

We also extend our sympathy to the Presentation Associates in Grenada; the past students of Presentation College, Grenada; and the people of Grenada (especially the poor) who journeyed with Matthias over the last five decades.

Brother Matthias was born on September 8th, 1938 in Tarmon near Kilkee, Co. Clare to Michael and Nora Comyns. After spending one year in secondary school in Kilkee, Colm moved to Coláiste Muire, Douglas, Cork, the Juniorate of the Presentation Brothers. He soon established himself as a keen student and as an accomplished footballer and athlete. He would easily have got his place on any County minor team but instead joined the Presentation Brothers’ Novitiate in Mount St. Joseph in 1957; he took the religious name,

Matthias. In 1959 he made First Profession of Vows. Matthias made Final Profession of Vows in 1962.

In the early 1960's he attended University College, Cork where he graduated with a BA. He returned to UCC in 1974 to complete a Higher Diploma in Education and taught briefly in Coláiste Therese in Cork. It was during this period home that his father Michael died.

A former pupil, businessman Michael Conlon, wrote the following about Matthias in the Irish Examiner on Oct 25th, 2012 in an article entitled **'Making a Difference: Stories of Inspirational Teachers'**: *'Over the years I have often thought of Brother Matthias Comyns, and in my mind and imagination, I have transported myself back to his classroom for inspiration, for moral check, for constraint of approach, to find humility, to help myself simplify something I am making complex, to structure sentences, paragraphs and reports, but mostly to touch the passion of a subject'.*

In 1964 Matthias volunteered for the West Indies Mission and was posted to the island of Grenada where he was to spend most of his life apart from short stints on the neighbouring island of Trinidad before taking a Sabbatical in the US and returning to his beloved Grenada. He experienced many ups and downs during a turbulent period in the history of Grenada including the revolution of 1979 and the foreign interventions in 1983...traumatic experiences for all, as was the utter devastation of Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

Matthias established the first school band in Grenada. He was also very active in the scout movement.

In the Gospel, Jesus invites the faithful disciple home: "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest...Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls."

So let us not mourn the passing of Brother Matthias but celebrate his homecoming. The faith that Matthias had, and we have, is that those that have gone before us are still close to us, that the bonds of friendship and love endure, that we can communicate with them and that they can help us. In faith and with this knowledge let us receive the gift of peace that the Lord is giving us today.

Over the past few days I have been asking Presentation Brothers and members of the Comyns family for their memories of Matthias. The qualities that were invariably mentioned were his humility and the care he gave to others especially the poorest of the poor, be it giving them breakfast, a few dollars on a Sunday morning or building two-room houses for those who could not afford to build their own. Matthias did all this without fanfare. He did not want honours; he was just following the example of Blessed Edmund Rice and in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

"When I was hungry you fed me, when I was sick you visited me, when I was homeless, you housed me..."

We thank God for the positive influence Matthias has had on the lives of the young men and women he formed during his time as their educator and who went on to excel in various walks of life and witnessed to the Christian values instilled in them.

We all thank God today for this gifted man from Kilkee whom we were privileged to know at some time over the years. We all have different memories of Brother Matthias; mine would be a man of humility, a welcoming smile, a kind word of encouragement.

Brother Matthias would want me to conclude this homily by thanking all of you for praying for him and with him this morning.