

Memories of Fr Gerry Breen - Part 1

Parish Newsletter - Sunday 27th April 1997

It is no secret that occasionally I frequent our local *watering holes* – many of which are run by Catholics! It is a good way of keeping up with the *lapsed* and *collapsed* (and I don't mean through alcohol!). Not always in clerical dress, the other evening I was toasting the health of St. George, when a local approached myself and a friend with the statement:

"You 're not from round here are you ?" I replied that I was just passing through! Not having a clue who I was he went on to say how proud he was to be a Catholic. I asked him if he went to Mass telling him that I went occasionally. *"Not for some years"* was the reply. He then spoke fondly of Fr. Cooney! I told him that I thought he had died and that the present Priest wasn't too bad! As the conversation went on he looked at me laughed and said *"If you had a collar you'd look like him from Ballykissangel!"* Then he looked at me again and said seriously *"No perhaps not – you haven't got a priest's face!?"*

I suggested that we might meet again at the church and go into Mass? 9.30 am would be too early for him but 6.00 pm seemed reasonable. If you are reading this my friend - I'm the one sat at the front in the big chair! and you are so very welcome!

Simply saying we are *proud* to be Catholic isn't enough - neither is just attending Mass! We have to meet the Lord in all things in all people and in all places - and He is to be found!

Happy hunting.

Memories of Fr Gerry Breen - Part 2

Newsletter - Sunday 24th August 1997

The warm weather continues and shorts seem to be the dress of the day – both on and off the sanctuary! – which is the link for a 'short story'. The other day when clipping the yew hedge in the parish garden I was whisked off to Sainsbury's to replenish Mother Hubbard's Cupboard. Rather than change I went incognito. The disguise consisted of: shades (sunglasses to wrinklies!); shorts (respectable ones!); and a singlet (a vest to smoothies!). The outfit (or lack of it) was completed by a baseball cap that – I was informed: 'had to be worn back to front!' Convinced I would not be recognised – off we went.

However, having skilfully avoided certain familiar figures, requests for Mass Cards and the usual excuses for not being at Mass, whilst examining an iceberg lettuce a voice said: *"Hello Father!"* I was rumbled - not by a parishioner - but a local Undertaker! I suppose they look at us differently with those tape-measure eyes, and it's not so much dress but height and width that gives the game away?

"It's never the clothes that make the man!" as the old saying goes; and next Sunday's Gospel reminds us that: *"it is not what is on the outside that makes a person unclean but what comes from within - from the heart."*

So whatever you are doing (or wearing) this week - do it with a good heart, but remember: there are shorts and there are SHORTS!

Have a good week and God Bless all wrinklies & smoothies!

Canon Gerry Breen RIP

20th February 1957 - 22nd December 2019