



Presentation Brothers Generalate



+AMDG

**Requiem Mass
for
Br. Francis Clement McCarthy
Presentation Brothers
Christ the King Church
Turners Cross, Cork**

19-2-16

Martin Kenneally fpm

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Our first reading today, from the Book of Ecclesiastes, reminds us that ‘there is a time for everything, a season for every activity under the heavens – a time to be born and a time to die’.

And so we gather today for the Requiem Mass of Br. Francis Clement McCarthy – Frank to his own family and Br. Clement to his Presentation Family. In our second reading, St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, 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 certainly true of Br. Clement whose whole life was given to Christ and who influenced each of us and so many thousands of others for good.

Our first words must be words of sympathy and support to the McCarthy family in their sorrow and loss. To Br. Clement’s sister-in-law Tess, to his nephews and nieces, grandnephews and grandnieces and to the extended McCarthy family we extend our sincere sympathy.

And we extend this sympathy also to Br. Clement’s second family – the Presentation Family. His loss is keenly felt among the Presentation Brothers, especially the Maiville & Mount St. Joseph communities, our staffs and friends who loved Br. Clement so much.

No matter how inevitable death may be, no matter how clearly we understand that all life will pass away, death often seems to take us by surprise. This was my reaction last Tuesday afternoon when Br. Andrew phoned me to tell me of Clement’s death. Somehow, I thought of him as someone who would always be around and I relied so much on his wisdom, his friendship and his prayers.

When the hand of death is laid on the shoulder of someone we love, death becomes not a natural and acceptable experience but a strange and sometimes mysterious encounter with the unknown.

At times like this we need the solidarity and support of family and friends. Through the liturgy of the Mass, we gather to thank God for Br. Clement’s life and to ask God to take him into the fullness of his life and love. Through this Mass we share in the mystery of Christ, who has gone through death before us, and has by his resurrection given us all the one sure

ground of hope and fulfilment. Death is a mystery with which we can hardly grapple at all without faith. But in the light of faith, all is transformed.

One of the central beliefs of Christianity is that each person is loved eternally by God and is destined to enjoy a personal and permanent place in God's love – which we call eternal life. We believe that Clement/Frank has now entered into the fullness of God's love and is truly gone home to God. The great American Cardinal Joseph Bernardin wrote the following in his final illness as he prepared for death:

Quote: *Many people have asked me to tell them about heaven and the afterlife. I sometimes smile at the request because I do not know any more than they do. Yet, when one young man asked if I looked forward to being united with God and all those who have gone before me, I made a connection to something.*

The first time I travelled with my mother and sister to my parents' homeland of Tonadico di Primiero, in Northern Italy, I felt as if I had been there before. After years of looking through my mother's photo albums, I knew the mountains, the land, the houses, the people. As soon as we entered the valley, I said, 'My God, I know this place, I am home'. Somehow I think crossing from this life into life eternal will be similar. I will be home.

End quote.

Last night, speaking to members of Br. Clement's family, I got a sense of how important home was to him. I got a sense of how close you all were to Frank – of how you looked forward to his visits – times of fun and laughter and music and dance – of how he loved company and endless talk – of the surprise Mass and celebration party in the hayshed for his 80th birthday! He loved each one of you and you loved him so much in return.

I heard of Frank, the youngest child, doted on and perhaps spoiled by his mother, full of fun and energy, who would rather avoid going to school if he could, yet ended up spending most of his life in school!!

At this Eucharist, while we mourn Frank's loss we also celebrate his life and give thanks to God for him.

I want to thank the McCarthy family for the gift that Frank was to the Presentation Congregation. It was the culture and faith of the McCarthy family and his beloved Knocknasna and Abbeyfeale that first nurtured all the wonderful qualities we saw in Clement. And I want to assure you that he was loved among the men and women who work with us and those who share our charism and mission. In the various places where he served – in Cork, in Cobh, in Bray, he is held in the highest regard. As teacher, as school Principal, in the various leadership positions he held within our Congregation he showed himself to be a highly intelligent man, warm, hospitable and encouraging to those around him.

He made first profession of vows in 1950 and for 66 years followed the Lord as a Presentation Brother. He loved being a Brother! What a great person to pray to now this year to intercede for vocations! He was a friend to many and indeed a spiritual guide to many. People recognised his genuine goodness and appreciated his sound judgement. The word 'saintliness' would really embarrass Clement but a lesser word hardly describes a person so touched by the finger of God, a person of deep faith, real humanity and mature spirituality.

In today's 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 just mourn Br. Clement's death but celebrate his homecoming. Our faith assures us that those who have passed are still close to us; that all the bonds of love and friendship endure, that we can pray to them and they can help us. In that knowledge, let us receive the gift of peace that the Lord offers us today.

We give thanks too for those who cared for Br. Clement during the last phase of his life, when he faced declining health – especially the Maiville Community and staff and the nursing, medical and care staff who attended him.

Each of us will have our own special memories of Clement. I met Br. Clement last Wednesday week when I visited the Maiville Community to brief the Brothers on a conference I had recently attended in Rome. We met for an hour before supper. I found him in great form! He was really interested in and engaged with what I had to say, so much so he asked me to stay on for a while after supper and we discussed the upcoming Presentation Brothers General Chapter – such was his enthusiasm for our Brotherhood and our Presentation way of life right to the end! I told him that, when in Rome, I had visited the shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel at Genazzano. He was thrilled by this. He had, of course, a deep devotion to Our Lady. He had visited Genazzano himself, one of many spiritual pilgrimages he made with people during his life's journey.

A thread running through Br. Clement's life is that of loyalty. He was loyal to his family and to the culture and faith which produced him. He was loyal to his Brothers of the Presentation Congregation and he was loyal to his friends. In a world where there is much betrayal and much that is second-rate, he was a shining example of fidelity and hope. I have so many happy memories of Clement. I learned so much from him and I always felt energised and respected in his presence. A writer has written '*you may forget what people say, you may even forget what they do, but you will never forget how they made you feel*'. He always encouraged me when we met and I treasure all of the cards and letters he sent me, the last two concerning our Council of Elders of which he was a very enthusiastic member.

As we go forth from this Mass, let us be inspired by Clement's life to live the Christian life in our different vocations. As we give thanks to God for Clement's life, let his witness inspire all of us and especially the younger members of the McCarthy family to carry the light of faith, humanity and generosity into the future. In this way we honour his memory best. He was a man who knew love both in the giving and the receiving. The American writer, Raymond Carver, sums up such a life best when he writes:

Quote: *And did you get what
 You wanted from this life, even so?
 I did.
 And what did you want?
 To call myself beloved, to feel myself
 beloved on the earth.*

Clement was beloved on the earth.

One of Br. Clement's many gifts was that he had a great fluency in the Irish language. We commend him to the Lord with the words of Duain Chroí Íosa, by the poet Tadhg Gaelach Ó Súilleabháin, born near Dromcollogher, Co. Limerick, who lived in Waterford and was a friend of Edmund Rice:

*Gile mo chroí do chroíse, a Shlánaitheoir,
is ciste mo chroí do chroí-se a dháil i m' chomhair
ós follas gur líon do chroí dom' ghrá-sa, a stóir,
i gcochall mo chroí do chroíse fág i gcomhad.*

A Poem to the Heart of Jesus

*The light in my heart, O Saviour,
is Thy Heart, the wealth of my heart,
Thy heart poured out for me.
Seeing that Thy heart, Love, filled with love for me
leave thy heart in keeping, hooded in mine.*

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.
Amen.

Thank you for being here today.