



Local parish registers record Fr Tom Dunne as born on 25 November 1929 in New Ross, Co. Wexford. His father Michael J. (a solicitor's clerk) and his mother Anastasia (née Murphy) had him baptised Thomas Sylvester the next day in the local parish Church. Tom was eldest of six children, two of whom survive him, Kieran (now living in Great Yarmouth) and Betty (his sister, living in Wexford). His brother Michael and sister Mary both died in their infancy and his brother John died January 2015. Tom was confirmed in the faith at the age of 12 by Dr James Staunton, Bishop of Ferns, in the local Church of the Immaculate Conception on 31 May 1942.

EARLY TRAINING

Tom entered the Salesian Missionary College in Ballinakill in 1947 with Fr Patrick Molloy as Rector. In Tom's third year as an aspirant, Heywood House burned down on the Feast of St John Bosco on 31 January 1950. Massive slabs and burning rafters crashed onto the beds in the boy's central dormitory. Fortunately the boys were in the concert hall and an appalling tragedy was averted. Later that same Holy Year 1950, he began his novitiate with sixteen others in Beckford (Glos.) on 7 September. The Novitiate Register for 1950-

1951 shows his companions included Pat Ahern (Ballylongford), Dave Cahill (Templeglantine), George Gallagher (Strabane), Tim Leahy (Abbeyfeale), Pat McCambridge (Belfast) and Brendan O'Byrne (Timahoe). George is the only Irish Salesian of that group still alive and now stationed in Lansdowne (South Africa). The group received the religious habit on 21 November from Fr Albino Fredrigotti, Prefect General of the Salesian Society; Tom and 11 others ended their novitiate with first profession as Salesians in Beckford on 8 September 1951 into the hands of the then Provincial Fr Frederick V. Couche.

On receiving news of "the death of my good friend and fellow novice Fr Tom Dunne", Bro. Donald Mac Donald from Fort William in Scotland, now in Thornleigh House, Bolton, sent an email on the feast of the Epiphany which read: *"I have been in touch with Tom for many years and a long while ago he told me all about his illness and since then he never replied to my E mails, but we kept in touch with each other with our prayers.*

Another of our 1950/51 novices to return to the Lord. Now leaving Fr Peter Quinn, Farnborough and Big George Gallagher in South Africa and of course myself here in Bolton.

We were 11 professed and stayed together for almost 50 years before John Doherty went to his reward. Not a bad record!!

Thank you for looking after Tom and convey my condolences to his family and my prayers for you all at this sad time. God bless you all." Bro. Donald MacDonald.

Tom did his studies of philosophy in Shrigley (1951-52) and Ingersley (1952-53) after which he did four years of practical training in Farnborough. Tom's perpetual vows were received by the late Fr Harold Wrangham and witnessed by the old stalwart Salesians Frs John Wiseman and Harold Bleach.

He began his theology studies in 1957 in Melchet Court (Romsey). Fellow Wexford man Fr Michael Scott relates how Tom was a pretty good Irish dancer. He would organise four-hand and eight-hand reels for concerts and academies and involve Dan Crowley, Harry O'Brien, Charlie Cunningham, Larry McDonnell, Paddy Morrin and Hugh McHugh, with their green ties and stockings and yellow bellybands! He would manage to cajole Michael himself to do an Irish hornpipe in kilt and full dancing costume.

Tom's family were present for the happy occasion of Tom's being ordained a Salesian priest in Melchet Court on 2 July 1961 by Bishop Joseph Edward Rudderham (right) of Clifton.



SALESIAN MINISTRY

After ordination Tom was back in Ireland and taught in Pallaskenry until 1964 when he moved to Crumlin to do a B.A. in English, Geography and History at University College



Ordination Day, Melchet Court, Romsey, 2 July 1961
*Newly ordained Fr Tom with his father Michael and mother Anastatia,
 his sister Betty and brothers John and Kieran.*

Dublin. During this time he was friends with Mary McGee and helped her with the *Legion of Mary* meetings in Mount Street. Mary herself wrote: "I met Fr Dunne over 50 years ago. He was spiritual director in the *Legion of Mary* House on Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2. We became great friends. He met all my family and friends. He was studying in UCD at the time. He went to Ballinakill and he wrote to me and we met him when he came to Dublin every year. I got a Christmas card/calendar every year from him, the first of the season. He was very nervous when he married Sean and I in Westland Row Church in 1972, I think it was his first wedding. When we were house hunting he drove us around to look at houses."

Such friendship was typical of Tom. He was shy yet extremely loyal to the circle of friends he made and his attention to detail was legendary. In response to letters informing her of Fr Tom's death, funeral arrangements and Month's Mind Mass, Maureen Oleszkiewicz wrote from Nottingham: "Thank you for your letters about Fr Tom Dunne RIP. I was very sorry to hear of his death. I was at his Ordination many years ago. I was married to his uncle Jack 1948 but sadly he died two and a half years

later, that was my connection with Fr Tom. And he sent me a Calendar every year." Tom's sister Betty explained that it was their step-uncle Jack that Maureen had married, and that when Tom was unable to attend to his Christmas post during his last stay in Our Lady's Hospice in Harold's Cross before he died, she had been Tom's post-mistress, sending out Calendars to those on the list Tom had diligently prepared previously.

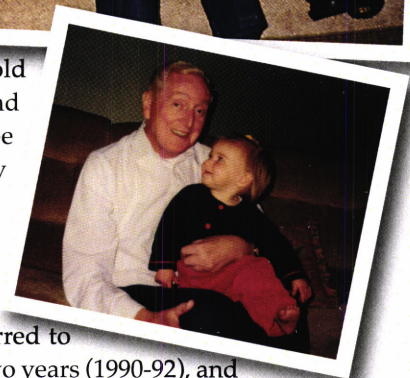
During his time in UCD, Tom's health collapsed. He was sent to England and was meant to be recuperating. Tom's own comment on that period, written in his own hand in his personal file in the Provincial office, was: *Period of rest!* spent working in an approved school 1966-67, and teaching in Farnborough 1967-68.

He returned to Ballinakill Juniorate in 1968, where he had begun his Salesian journey, and was renowned for the extreme care he took of the Geography room. The room was so clean it was said you could eat your dinner off the floor! During this period in Ballinakill, he was involved in a car accident with three other Salesians, Fr Martin Ryan, Fr Patrick Brewster and Br Jim Kernyn on their way to a province meeting in Maynooth during very frosty January weather and with very slippery roads. A truck came round a corner on their side of the road, and they ended up in the ditch, thankfully all alive. That accident left its mark on all four.

Still in Ballinakill, his bond of friendship was seen in the regular weekly visits he paid to the Fitzgerald household where he spent hours with Aileen, Emer and impish Seoda (*right: on his lap*) listening to tape recordings of Disney's music while mother Mary got time to catch up on weekend ironing after a busy week's teaching in Heywood!

Tom celebrated his Silver Jubilee of Salesian Priesthood in Ballinakill in 1986.

After his time in Ballinakill, Tom was transferred to Salesian College Celbridge where he taught for two years (1990-92), and then became Bursar in Crumlin where he served for the next seven years. During the 1990s Tom would go on summer parish supply to St Patrick's Parish in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, New York, where he is well and affectionately remembered and where he and Fr Dan Devitt, also on summer parish supply, would meet up on Sunday evenings after their work was done in their respective parishes.



PROVINCIAL SECRETARY

Tom was appointed to succeed Fr Pierce Kearns as Provincial Secretary in 1999. He served three Provincials, Fr Michael Smyth, Fr John Horan and Fr Michael Casey. It was a work he performed with dedication and discretion, his desk ever tidy and his programme followed with gentle discipline. He quietly carried out the tasks of his office, attending to correspondence, updating statistics and keeping lines of communication open between Dublin and the Salesian central administration in Rome.

Part of his job was that of Provincial Archivist and he assiduously preserved documents and materials that will provide a precious resource for future historians.

Fr Michael Smyth wrote from Moshi in Tanzania: "He was my faithful, competent, conscientious secretary for six years, and then looked after my affairs while I was in Nigeria. I owe a lot to him." In 2013 Tom's health began to decline.



Fr Tom (left) with former Provincial Fr Michael Smyth whom he served for six years.

LIVING WITH CANCER

Tom spent the next two years in Crumlin, where he spent much time attending consultants and clinics in the Mater Private Hospital in Dublin and spending periods in hospital after being diagnosed with cancer.

He was supported by his community and the House staff in Crumlin, particularly administrator Janet O'Brien and domestic assistant Kay Fogarty, as he was taken by taxi to hospital appointments, had increasing drug prescriptions filled, and received the attentive care and practical aids needed and provided by the local HSE staff, the district nurse Rayla Sherry, the palliative care team from Our Lady's Hospice, Harold's Cross, and the constant prayer and visits of his confreres when he was confined to his room.

During all this time he was attended daily by his friend Martina O'Connor, herself a carer. She had given him unstinting service for nigh on fifteen years.

For as long as he was able, Tom would make the weekend trip to Portlaoise to the Fitzgerald family and he paid a last visit to his brother John who was sick in Wexford and died in January 2015. He kept up his spirit and joined the community for dinner when possible. His confrere Fr Tom Clowe recalled mornings when Tom's reply to being

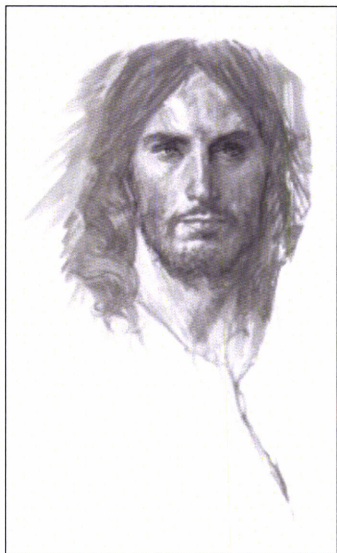


asked around 10 o'clock how he was feeling, was, "It's too early to tell!" Knowing Tom's likes, the local bursar Fr Ray McIntyre provided him with the occasional drop of brandy to which Tom was partial.

As his illness progressed, Tom spent time in Caritas Convalescent Home, Merriion Road, Dublin, under the care of Sr Manus Daly, for whom he had high regard.

OUR LADY'S HOSPICE

After a period of palliative care in Crumlin, Tom spent a period of respite in St Gabriel's Ward in Our Lady's Hospice, Harold's Cross, and found the place and the staff very friendly and welcoming. He got his wish and was back home in Crumlin for a short time. He was readmitted to the Hospice in December 2015 where he celebrated what proved to be his last Christmas. His friend Martina happened to be out of the country during Tom's last days. So as not to upset him, Tom was told she had a bad cold and couldn't call for fear of passing on an infection, an explanation that seemed to satisfy Tom. In his last days, his sister Betty visited him from Wexford and his Salesian confreres dropped in constantly.



During New Year's night as 2016 arrived, Tom took a turn and was moved to a private room. Retired army chef Oliver Brady from Huntingstown, Co. Dublin, who had known Tom well and worked in Crumlin House for many a year, visited him in the Hospice on New Year's Day, but Tom was already in a coma. Some of his confreres from Crumlin and Celbridge paid a visit and prayed for him, entrusting him to the protection of Mary Help of Christians as the hour approached for him to bring his consecrated life to its highest fulfilment. The last visitor that evening was his Provincial and trusted friend Fr Michael Casey who left Tom when the nurses arrived to settle him down for the night. By the time Fr Michael reached home, Tom had quietly taken his leave, on the first feast of Our Lady in 2016, to join the Lord he had served so faithfully in the educational and pastoral mission of Don Bosco for young people.

TRIBUTES

When told of Fr Tom's death, his confrere of many years Fr Alan Mowles, who used to bring Tom his usual copy of *The Mail on Sunday*, remarked: *He was a gentle soul. He wasn't inclined to mix much with people.* In fact, Tom was a very private person, and yet when something funny caught his fancy, his smile would light up his face, as though a headlamp had been switched on!

June Vause, a close neighbour in Crumlin whose mother cooked for the Salesians for many years, also said Tom was "a real gentle guy".

Bro. James O'Hare reminisced that Tom was a great friend of the late Fr Tom Kenny, a Salesian from Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, who died in April 2014 and whose sense of fun and punning Tom enjoyed.

Fr Eddie O'Neill SDB, Rector, wrote from Lansdowne, South Africa:

"Dear Pat and Irish confreres, Please accept my condolences and those of the confreres here in Lansdowne on the passing of Tom Dunne. For many years he was always the conduit to the Irish provincial and served as a diligent and gracious secretary. May his dear soul rest in peace and may he now receive the reward promised to every faithful Salesian! Blessings too for the New Year 2016."

Sr Mary Doran FMA, Provincial of the Salesian Sisters wrote: *"I knew Tom years ago when we met at Geography courses. Will ask the community to pray for him that Our Lady will be with him on this her first feastday of 2016. Happy new year with many blessings to you."*

From Swaziland Fr Martin McCormack SDB wrote: *"Pat, with community in prayer. God journey with Fr Tom."*

From Malta: *"Please pass on the condolences of the Salesian Community in Senglea to Fr Provincial and Tom's confreres."* Fr Antoine Farrugia SDB.

Fr Francois Dufour SDB, Superior of Southern Africa, wrote: *"Condolences from us in AFM. I was in Ballinakill with him for 2 years. He had a good innings. In union of prayer for his happy repose."*

Fr Michael Smyth from Tanzania: *"May he rest in peace. Tom was a good and faithful servant who suffered much, especially in his latter years. May he now rest in peace. Please convey my sympathy to the confreres and especially to his sister Betty. Explain to her that I am far away and tell her that I will offer Mass tomorrow, Sunday, for the happy repose of his soul. Go ndéana Dia trócaire ar a anam dhílis."*

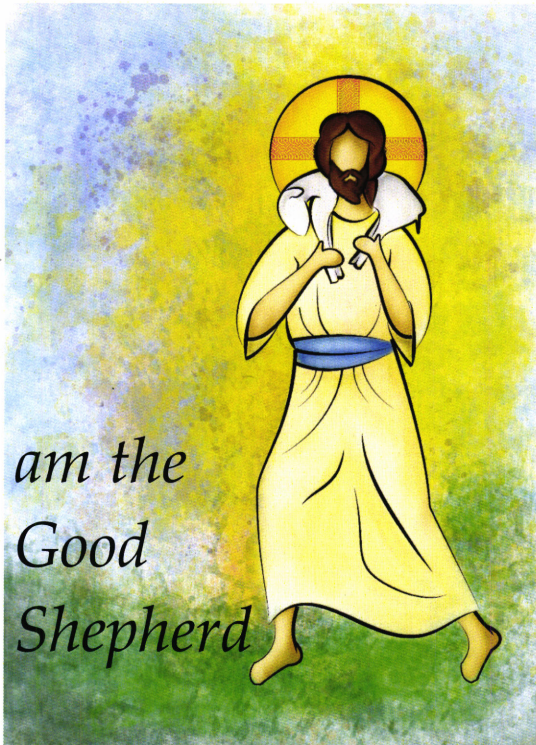
Marian Kelly from Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal wrote: *"Fr Tom was a lovely man and we exchanged Christmas cards plus new every year since my Mum passed away eighteen years ago. He was very kind to her when both my brother and myself had flown the nest!!"*

ETERNAL REST

Fr Tom's funeral Mass took place on Tuesday 5 January 2016 in the Church of the Assumption, Bride Street, Wexford Town and was attended by Tom's sister Betty, relatives and friends, along with Bishop Denis Brennan of Ferns, diocesan clergy Fr Michael O'Shea, Fr Martin Byrne, Fr Hugh O'Byrne, Provincial Fr Michael Casey SDB and Salesian confreres. Tom now lies buried next to his parents in St Ibar's Cemetery, Crosstown in his native Wexford.

His allotted span is over; he has left his mark on this world. May he enjoy the company of the Risen Jesus with all those he loved and who went before him marked with the sign of faith.

I am the
Good
Shepherd



SHUTTERSTOCK/THOOM

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal!

—Fr Patrick Egan SDB,
Rector, Crumlin House.
4 April 2016.

For the Necrology:

01 January **P DUNNE Tom** † Dublin, Ireland, 2016, a. 86