

Homily at Funeral Mass for Brother Cronan Loughrey

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have come to Mass here in Turners Cross Church this morning to remember Brother William Cronan Loughrey from Ballysheedy, Gort, Co, Galway who lived his vocation as a Presentation Brother with extraordinary commitment until he slipped away gently to his heavenly reward on Tuesday morning, at Nazareth House Nursing Home, Mallow, Co. Cork.

We are here to express our sadness, knowing that none of us will be welcomed by his warm smile when we visited him either in the nursing home or in Maiville where he resided before going to Nazareth House. We are here to give thanks for having known him and been influenced by this remarkable man. It affords us an opportunity to reflect on his values and the Catholic faith, that gave him the energy to be a true follower of Christ until he breathed his last on Tuesday morning. Brother Cronan was in his 99th year. He was the oldest member of the Congregation.

William Loughrey's life journey began in 1923 in the town land of Ballysheedy. He was the third youngest of eight children, and it was in this family home that he learned the love, generosity and commitment that we associated with him. He got his foundation of his Catholic faith from his parents, Mollie and Thomas, which he treasured. They passed on to him the traditions and values that moulded him into the person that we know as Cronan.

He came to Cork 1937 and started his secondary education at Coláiste Muire, Douglas. Having completed his Leaving Cert, he entered the Novitiate in Mount Saint Joseph in 1940, where he will be laid to rest this morning.

In 1943 Cronan was sent to De La Salle Training College in Waterford and in 1945 qualified as a Primary School teacher. He started teaching in St. Joseph's Boys National School, Mardyke, Cork. Cronan made Final Profession of Vows in the Presentation Brothers in 1945. During the 1950s Brother Cronan graduated with his BA and H Dip in Education at University College Cork

Cronan taught in different schools around Ireland from 1945 to 1994.

In 1951 Cronan was appointed Principal of St. Joseph's. He transferred to Greenmount Boys National School in 1955 where he was appointed as Principal. In 1957 he was transferred to Presentation College, Bray and took on the role of Community Leader and Principal of the College. In 1963 he returned to Cork and was appointed Community Leader of the South Monastery. In 1966 Cronan was appointed Community Leader in Birr. In 1979 Cronan was transferred again back to Cork and he served as Community Leader and Principal of Coláiste Therese. Subsequently Cronan was on the teaching staff at Presentation College, Cork until he retired 1994. He then moved to Maiville where lived out his retirement.

Brother Cronan had a great devotion to Our Lady; he was very active in the Legion of Mary and he was spiritual director to different Legion of Mary groups during his life time.

As I reflect on the life of Brother Cronan, the image that comes to me is of a man who embraced all that nature could give us, especial during the liturgical seasons. We have just celebrated the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Cronan was a man for all seasons; he moved on quietly to God during this special time for the church.

The first reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes, reminds us that:

There is a time for giving birth and a time for dying,

A time for laughter and a time for mourning.

The image of the Ascension of Jesus to heaven surrounded by those gone before him gives us the hope that those who have gone before us will be there waiting for us. So, we are on this earth for a period but we must move on to be with the Father. We are told there are different times in our lives; these are positive and negative; they go hand in hand. Cronan lived his life to the full, knowing that he would one day join Jesus because he believed that Jesus is “the way, the truth and the life”. Cronan always put Jesus first; he was a man of prayer.

In our Second Reading St. Paul writes that ‘the life and death of each of us has its influence on others; if we live we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord, so that alive or dead we belong to the Lord.’ These lines could be written about Brother Cronan.

We thank God for the positive influence he had on the lives of the children he educated and the young men he formed during his time as an excellent teacher. His past students went on to excel in various walks of life and witnessed to the Christian values that Brother Cronan instilled in them.

“In an Irish Times interview Ireland rugby legend, Peter Stringer, described Br. Cronan in glowing terms, as one of the teachers who most influenced his life”.

And another past student who spoke very warmly about Br. Cronan was Morgan O Sullivan who was recognised for his outstanding contribution to Irish film and Television and “he a credit his love for cinema to Br. Cronan, the way he encouraged him to follow his dream”.

Before I conclude:

I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the Province Leadership Team and the Brothers who live in the Maiville community to sincerely thank the Housekeeping staff, Kitchen staff, the Nursing staff and the Caring staff who looked after Br. Cronan over the pasted number of years. Br. Cronan was able to reside with his community thanks to you. The professionalism and caring nature that you showed Br. Cronan and the rest of the community is very much appreciated. Thank you all.

As I conclude:

We all thank God today for this gifted man from Ballysheedy, whom we were privileged to know at some time over the years. We all have different memories of Brother Cronan: mine would be a man of humility and understanding and he would want me to conclude this homily by thanking all of you for praying for him and with him this morning.

Ar dheis Dé go Raibh a anam.