

A TRIBUTE TO FR. MICHAEL CROSBY.
A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS, SITUATIONS & OCCASSIONS

It's been more than 19 years ago since Fr. Crosby took to the Curraghline and leaving Galway city behind him after a lifetime of work there to take up his new appointment as PP of Shrule Parish.

He was very pleased with himself and happy about it moving a little bit closer to his birth town of Ballinrobe and the lovely County Mayo. He settled in well in Shrule Parish and he had lots to talk about as Mayo had just beaten Galway by 4 points in the Connacht Final. That summer, from Frank Mullins shop to the Parochial house, football was the main topic of conversation in the village. Later that summer Mayo went on to an All Ireland Final and replay.

Even though they didn't bring the Sam McGuire cup home across Shrule bridge that year, it did provide Fr. Crosby with an approach to get to know all his parishioners very well.

For his first ten years in Shrule 1996 to October 2006, we in Glencorrib didn't see very much of Fr. Crosby at all, as our curate Fr. John Creaven was serving this side of the parish very well. However on 1st November 2006, Fr. John retired to SMA House in Claregalway. It would be a big task to replace him. Then on Thursday morning 2nd November 2006, Fr. Crosby arrived in Glencorrib to start the nine day Novena at this end of the parish, he assumed that he would be stepping into Glencorrib for just a short period of time. However a few weeks later, word came from the Diocesan office that no curate would be coming to Glencorrib and that he had to do his best to keep the two churches going.

With Christmas 2006 on the way, there was little time to ponder and think about it. Preparations had begun. From the sacristy after weekday morning Mass, you could hear Gerry Murphy telling him; "Fr. Crosby, leave all that to us and we'll get it done for ya" "You don't have to worry about anything" Comforting words for the relatively new man on the block. Gerry and Mattie along with a few locals would source the Christmas tree for the church. Jimmy, Vera and Una preparing the interior for what was to become the most special time of year. Christmas eve Mass by candlelight and a beautifully decorated church and crib created from sheaves of corn, the infant child, candle light, the choir, the tree the star was a special time of the year for all.

With the new year 2007 having been shown in, by early February, he found himself making his way to Mochara where Kathleen Fitzgerald (Mike's mother) RIP had just passed away. He got to know Kathleen from the First Friday calls. He would start the research by talking to the family and then to a few locals. He would build up a picture of the deceased's life in the home, in the village and in the community. What they enjoyed, their joys and their crosses. At the funeral homily he had the proficiency to give to the listener an account of the deceased's life story. Naturally there would be tears but he also had the ability to tell a funny incident or two that happened during the deceases' life. And he always seemed to get the right balance with it.

One of his biggest challenges, surely, was sprinting from one Mass to the other. Glencorrib 7pm and Shrule 8pm. Glencorrib 10am and Shrule 11am. However, after Mass in Glencorrib, he always found the time to go down the aisle for a chat. If he spotted Eoin Kearney, he'd reach out and shake his hand while having a quick chat with his mum Brid. He'd chat away to anyone who wanted to talk to him. He was very easy to talk to and he also enjoyed a good laugh. As the clock ticked, he'd make his way back into the sacristy as Gerry would say to him, "Off ya go now Fr., I'll close up here". "Thanks Gerry", would be the reply and out the door he'd run and off he went to the next Mass in Shrule. I'm sure he must have been breathless when he got out on the Altar in Shrule as he was always conscious of not being late over to them. I just wonder what his thoughts were as he



drove from one Church to the other and back again. Was he practicing his sermon? Probably. He told me a few times that sometimes he'd go back to Saturday evening Mass in Glencorrib and deliver a sermon. Feeling it wasn't his best. He'd bin it and delivery a brand new sermon Sunday morning. Where did he get his nuggets of information? He'd never tell you. He knew like Fr. Christy O'Connor knew that the best way of explaining anything was with a story. He would tell us about a particular sportsman, musician or an artist and use their life experience as an example to explain the Gospel reading. We left the church with the story and a great way of carrying the Gospel reading and message home and into our daily lives.

The fisherman: The month of May was a great time of year for the Crosbys. Fr. Michael and his brother Fr. Denis, like the Apostles of old, fishing was a favourite hobby for the two brothers. After 10am Mass in Glencorrib, the two men would head off for the shores of the Corrib and then out on the lake for day. I never really got a full account of how much fish they caught but it must have been ok as they'd be out again the next day. However, some years were as he would say himself "a disaster", the weather being too cold or too warm etc. It is this time that he met the Murphy families who supplied mayflies to the fishermen. A business and personal relationship that spanned years and he was like a lighthouse to them when they needed him to carry them through some storms. Not alone like the Murphy family, he was a rock to so many of us here in Glencorrib. His humble way of easing our sorrows, our fears, our anxieties was exemplary. He didn't have all the answers or the quick fix, but he had patience and he gave us his time. His experience in difficult situations made him an unforgettable friend to so many in times of crisis.

In his speech at the presentation, he spoke well of Fr John Creaven SMA and the great missionary zeal that Fr. John had. I'm sure you will agree that Fr. Crosby was also always a man on a mission too. Maybe a different one to Fr. John's. But a mission none the same. When he landed on your doorstep, most times there would be a favour to be asked and most times granted. He was a hard man to refuse and most times you wouldn't have the time to come up with an excuse. Anyway, how could you refuse him, the type of man he is. Over the nine years, that Fr. Crosby did so much in our church and community. The church was reroofed, exterior and interior painted, carpeted, the new window ledges, sound system and so on. He also helped with the community centre renovations plans.

The Ark" an inspiration of Fr. Crosby and created by local artist and sculpture Maura Finnegan from Cahir Aid, Glencorrib. The bronze Ark with the impression of a rainbow over head is one of our church's grand masterpieces and treasure. The size of the piece and attention to detail is second to none and it's always a good idea



to stop by it now and again and no doubt you'll find something new that you may have previously missed.

Another treasure in our Church is the Antependium. "The what?" you might ask. Most of us know it as the '**Altar Quilt**' a masterpiece of our local craft group. Each village name was carefully researched by Fr. Crosby and the local craft group and Mayo Co Co. as there were so many name spelling variations to the same village/townland. Putting a map onto

cloth posed many challenges given that the person with the idea (Fr. Crosby) didn't know anything about sewing and the people doing the sewing work had never before worked with such an unusual shape; A parish of 25 irregular townlands



(surrounded by Lough Corrib and other parishes) with 2 townlands trapped in the middle belonging to Kilmainebeg (i.e. Ballisnahyney East & Carrowoughteragh) and the townland of Brackloon floating out into Kilmainemore! But the challenge was accepted and unveiled at weekend Masses on 9th March 2014. Today, the craft groups Altar quilt proudly takes its place alongside other locally created pieces including homemade altar chairs, a pottery cruet set, a pair of stone candle holders and the Ark.

In his closing speech, he said that we should not be thanking him but he should thank us for accompanying him on life's journey in such a fantastic way. He hoped that his presence or a word that he might have said will have lessened a burden on our life's journeys. He thanked everyone for the great friendship that was always shown to him and he wished everyone well.

Nellie Sheridan the most senior person in the parish then presented Fr. Crosby with a book of good wishes from the people of the parish. Dell Maye presented him with a Royal Tara China teapot and two cups as a symbol that he is very welcome back to any house in the parish for a visit and a cuppa tea. Grainne Garvey presented him with a photo of our church.

Back in October, when we set a date for the first meeting, it was decided not to form a committee as there were so many people out there wanting to do something to thank Fr Crosby for his years here in Glencorrib. However we did elect a chairman Jimmy Hennelly and two treasurers Dell Maye and Maureen Sheridan. Every man, woman and child in the community were the committee. In the run up to the 29th we experienced a great community spirit that wanted to reach out and thank a man who did so much for us. A man who was always our rock in times of trouble and sadness, a man who would laugh with us in times of happiness. A man you can always depend on. He like the Ark would always do his very best for us by steering us in the right direction. His presence in the parish will be missed by so many. Gerry Murphy mentioned to me that we always call Fr. Crosby, "Fr. Crosby" and never Fr. Michael or Fr. Mike. That was a sign of the respect we all have for him and continue to have for him.

We have to mention a few people who make the day a bit extra special. Ger McGaugh who donated the tree, Noel Whelan who donated the gravel, Ger Noone who donated the engraved stone plaque, John Murphy (stonemason) who created and donated the beautiful Fr. Crosby bench, Monica O'Connor and all the ladies who organised the teas and refreshments and catering, Mattie, Maureen and Kevin Sheridan who organised the main hall and all those involved in decorations, Liam Donoghue our photographer for the day. We also wish to thank the following, Gerry Murphy who was our MC for the day. Jimmy Hennelly who got everything done on time, Fr. Vivian Loughrey, who led many of the tributes to Fr. Crosby. Please remember Fr. Crosby even though you have retired from your duties, don't be a stranger! Bring that teapot and two cups with you where ever you go as you know that the kettle will always be boiled for you here in Glencorrib.



Fr. Crosby planting the commemorative tree 'A Contorted Hazel' assisted by Ger McGaugh & Maurice Bolster



Fr. Crosby and John Murphy (stonemason) cut the ribbon on the Fr. Crosby bench commissioned for the occasion by John.



Fr. Loughrey & Fr. Crosby



TIME FOR TEA: Gerry Murphy, Nellie Sheridan. Fr. Loughrey, Fr. Crosby, Dell Maye, Eoin Kearney. Back Row: Kevin Flood & Jimmy Hennelly



Some of the Group at the tree planting ceremony



Glencorrib Church by Anne Murphy RIP