

## Obituary of Fr. John FitzGerald, O.Carm.



*Fr. John at the 'Cum Nulla' Celebrations  
in York Minster in 2003*

*Fr. John died on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007. His funeral took place at Aylesford Priory, Kent. The reception of remains with Evening Prayer took place at 6.30pm on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December, with the Requiem Mass at 11.30am the following day, followed by burial in the Province Cemetery.*

It is with sadness but trusting in the mercy of God that the British Province of Carmelite Friars announces the death of our brother, John FitzGerald, on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007, following a short illness and aged 80.

Born Michael FitzGerald on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1927, he joined the Carmelite Order in 1942 taking the religious name John and making his first profession of vows as a friar a year later at the age of 16. Following initial study of philosophy and theology in Ireland John undertook higher level studies in Rome and at Christ's College, Cambridge. John was ordained a priest in 1951.

With his death the Welsh-speaking Christian community has lost a key figure. Sent as a young friar to join the then "Welsh Mission" of his Order, John grew to love the language, culture and people of Wales. He was a key figure in the translation of the Liturgy into Welsh and participated in the production of an ecumenical Welsh translation of the Bible. He also translated some of the works of the philosopher Aristotle from Greek into Welsh. His commentary on The Letter to the Hebrews, originally written in Welsh, was translated into English and published as the Lenten reading recommended by the Catholic Bishops of Wales (entitled *Backwards Into The Future*).

A book of Fr. John's poetry in Welsh was long-listed for the Book of the Year award of the Welsh Assembly in 2007.

Fr. John enjoyed a distinguished academic career, teaching philosophy in Welsh for many years at University College, Aberystwyth, where along with his brother Gregory (also a Carmelite) he served at times as Roman Catholic Chaplain to the University. From 2002 he combined the office of Chaplain with that of Prior of his community until 2004 when the Carmelite community transferred from Aberystwyth to Llanelli where he continued as Prior.

He will also be remembered by generations of students from Saint Mary's College, Aberystwyth, which functioned as a college for 'late vocations' to the priesthood until its closure in the 1970s.

John was a man who never stopped learning and retained something of a young person's wonder and awe in discovery right up until the end of his life. In his latter years he took up the study of Basque. The Basque Country became the regular location for his summer holidays, always taken after he had fulfilled his duties on the Catholic stall at the National Eisteddfod of Wales. In the last few years he was involved in exchange visits of both sheep-farmers and poets between Wales and the Basque Country.

John FitzGerald's great love of learning, especially the works of Thomas Aquinas, gave him a breadth of humanity and understanding which meant he was a compassionate and understanding friar-priest. Never the narrow scholastic, John would always err on the side of pastoral care for the individual. His easy humour and love for God and the people he served drew many people of all ages to the Gospel.

We will not see his like again.