

Fr. Anthony Pelan, O.Carm. (1940-2011)

Following the death of Fr. Anthony (Tony) Pelan, the Prior Provincial of the British Province of Carmelites, Fr. Wilfrid McGreal, paid tribute noting his contribution to the Order's life in various communities over 50 years.



Fr. Anthony Pelan, O.Carm.

Fr. Anthony Pelan (known to his family as Hugh) died peacefully at Burrswood Christian Hospital near Tunbridge Wells early on 11th May 2011.

Fr. Anthony was born in 1940 in West Belfast. He was one of five boys and he grew up in a community where the Catholic faith was central to people's lives. As a teenager he was involved in church life and his decision to join the Carmelite Order was the result of meeting a Carmelite friar, Fr. Eltin Griffin. Fr. Eltin was giving a parish mission and Anthony was able to discuss his hopes with Fr. Eltin.

After some time at St. Mary's College, Aberystwyth, (a late vocations college), Anthony began his novitiate at Aylesford Priory in 1961. He went on to study in Ireland and was ordained in 1967 at Aylesford.

Over the years Fr. Anthony exercised ministry in various communities of the British Province of Carmelites. He ministered in Aberystwyth and was a popular chaplain with the university students. He is well remembered in Faversham where he was parish priest for many years. He had a friendly approach which was appreciated. Fr. Anthony was drawn to the charismatic movement and was involved in prayer and praise groups. Latterly he was chaplain to Maidstone Prison. Here he won the respect of staff and inmates and was always ready to walk the wings.

Fr. Anthony was always cheerful and energetic. He loved a game of golf and was no mean player. He was also blessed with many loyal friends who valued his presence.

Fr. Anthony began to feel unwell after Christmas but his final illness was short. He was given great care by Maidstone Hospital, Trish Golledge the Province Nurse, and the Carmelite Community at Aylesford and beyond supported him with care and prayers. He appreciated the Christian atmosphere at Burrswood and he felt ready to allow the Lord to call him.

The Carmelite Order grieves at losing a brother and extends its love and prayers to Fr. Anthony's family who were such an important part of his life.

May he rest in peace.

Fr. Tony's remains were received at Aylesford Priory at 6pm on Tuesday 17th May. His Requiem Mass and Committal was celebrated at 11.30am on Wednesday 18th May.



Fr. Tony (centre) at Aylesford Priory in 2008

Homily for Tony Pelan's Requiem Mass

The following homily was preached by the Prior Provincial, Fr. Wilfrid McGreal

Easter is a time of hope as Christ breaks the power of death and opens the way of life for us. We have the hope that we will be transformed and share in Christ's risen glory. That is a different vision to Professor Hawkins who the other day likened us to computers that cease to function and that's it. We are more than machines, because we are made for love, and Christ's commandment is that we love one another and that God loves us as friends and has chosen us to be in that loving relationship. Elsewhere the Gospel tells us that to believe in Jesus means we have begun eternal life.

This belief and a commitment to loving friendship were at the heart of Tony's life. He grew up in West Belfast, part of a loving family during the War and its aftermath. These were hard

times but Tony's home was a place of faith and the local Catholic Church was a beacon of hope. Tony left school at 14 and began working life, but again the Church was a key element as he joined the choir, then the Legion of Mary and finally the Third Order of Carmel. All of this gave him friends and awakened in him a desire to serve God as a priest. A chance meeting with Fr. Eltin Griffin, a Carmelite friar, brought Tony to the Carmelites. After novitiate in Aylesford and studies in Ireland, Tony was ordained. He was not a natural student but he was tenacious in applying himself.

Tony's life after ordination saw him ministering in various Carmelite communities in Britain. I remember him when he was in Aberystwyth and among his responsibilities was university chaplain. I gave a retreat to the students one winter's weekend and it was obvious that the students loved and respected Tony. What I also remember was his enthusiasm.

Tony went on to work in our parish in Walworth but perhaps he is best remembered for his time in Faversham. Here his energy and enthusiasm was freely given to young and old. He organized parish pilgrimages and enabled young people to go to Toronto for World Youth Day. He enjoyed company and is remembered for his laughter as he shared a drink. All this time he was supported by his family, and he in turn was a caring brother and uncle. I must not forget Tony's reputation at golf, a game he loved, a game he excelled at.

What I also remember about Tony was the sustenance he drew from his involvement with charismatic renewal. The prayer and praise resonated with his outgoing friendly temperament and was to prove bedrock in difficult times.

Aberdeen was a difficult time – not easy when your church is burnt down – but that set back was not a road block because, helped by friends, Tony took on a new ministry as chaplain to Maidstone Prison. Here again that gift of friendship helped him minister to inmates and staff. I know that when the men there heard of his death they wept.

Tony's last journey was short and to begin with not easy. He was lovingly cared for by his Carmelite brothers and Trish the community nurse; and his family held him in prayer. What I saw over the last while was a longing to let go and be with his Saviour. He felt loved by his friend Jesus Christ and was ready when the Lord willed to be in full communion with the Father.

Tony's faith, his warmth, and his friendship with so many speak of a life lived to the full, so humanly, but also allowing God's grace to have freedom to transform and fulfil.