

Pat Dishon offers her memories of her fellow St John's parishioner Fr Tommy Greenan, whose funeral service takes place this Friday, 5 June, at Seafield:

'I was so very sorry to hear of the death of Fr. Tommy Greenan, a son of St. John's parish. He has been much in my thoughts since hearing of his passing and I have realized that some of the most memorable steps in my own Faith journey were spent in his company.

When I came to the parish about 1970, Tommy was still a youngster but he had already felt the call to his vocation and soon went to study for the priesthood. I was friendly with his mother, Mary, and Tommy was one of a large family of siblings living in the Lady Nairne Housing scheme in the parish. His mother was an amazing woman, with a shining Faith, that touched everyone who met her. Mary herself would be embarrassed to hear me describe her in such a way. She was the most humble and down to earth hard working woman with a great devotion to her large family. I was once sitting on the No. 42 bus when two of Mary's neighbours got on and sat behind me. They started to discuss her and one said – 'Aye, she's an awfy good woman, for all she's a Catholic'! It was perhaps inevitable that such a woman would produce such a remarkable son but Tommy struggled during his studies for the priesthood and many a time Mary told me she didn't know if he would make it. But, of course, he did.

His Ordination in St John's Church in 1980 was the first of my memorable moments. I have never forgotten it. As his Mum and Dad and all his siblings lined up to be the first to receive Holy Communion from him, the tears were streaming down his face and there wasn't a dry eye in the church! I can never hear the hymn, 'How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings Good News', which was played at the mass, without being transported back to that day. I knew then that this was a priest destined to bring the Good News to the poor.

He went off to be a curate and then he felt the call of the Missions. I tried to persuade him, (and Fr Jim Myers, who was a curate in St John's), that we needed them to stay here to carry out Missionary works. I argued that even the middle-class of St John's parish needed their souls saved. They both laughed but I wasn't joking. It seemed to me then that all the hopes and expectations which Vatican Two had raised in us young marrieds in the parish were already beginning to falter.

Whenever, Fr Tommy came back from South America on holiday, I would go and see him at his Mum and Dad's house.....I learnt how he was inspired by the life and death of Archbishop Oscar Romero, and aflame with the injustice inflicted on the poor. When he preached he disturbed the complacency of us sitting in the pews and many, many people took offence. When a group of us got together and started the Justice and Peace group we often met with the same problem. Many parishioners were happy to support our fund-

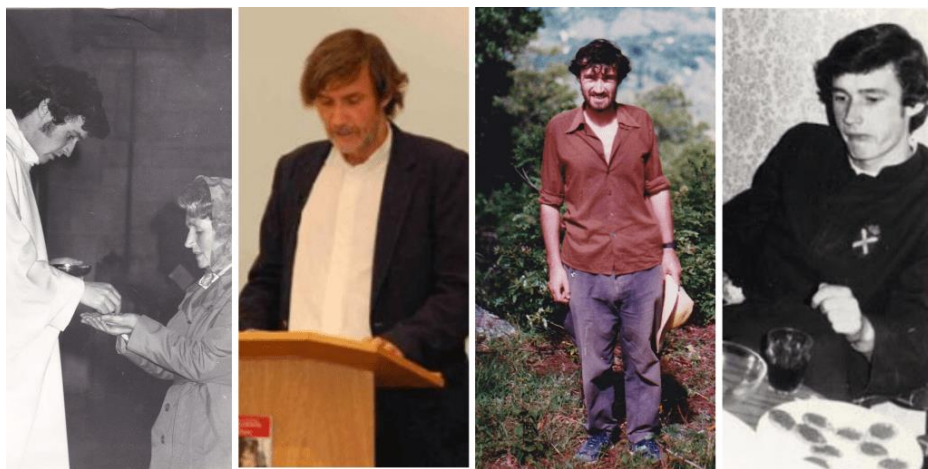
raising endeavours but attempts to raise awareness of structural injustices met with disapproval. Another memorable moment that I never forgot took place in St Catherine's Convent. Both Fr Tommy and Fr Jim Myers were home on leave and they had arranged a meeting for us J&P supporters. They had brought with them a young woman from El Salvador who had suffered horrendous abuse at the hands of the authorities. She gave her testimony in Spanish and first Fr Tommy, then Fr Jim took turns in translating for us. It took four hours and was one of the most harrowing experiences of my life but ever since I have sought always to speak out about injustice.

When Fr Tommy's mother died, of dementia, he came home to preach at her funeral mass in St John's church. His eulogy was full of love and respect and lots and lots of humour! He spoke of how Mary would get all her children tucked up in bed, after prayers, and then she would go round them all sprinkling them with holy water while they dived under the blankets trying to avoid the deluge! I was sitting with Elspeth Gillam and at the end of mass I turned to her and said – 'What a mother' and Elspeth replied – 'What a son.'

So many wonderful memories. I could go on and on....The last time I met Fr Tommy was at a J&P Event at the Lauriston Centre after he had retired to Edinburgh. As we talked I realised that he was far from well but still the Spirit of God shone out of him. He spoke of how kind the people were that he was living with.

As I read his book - *Archbishop Romero's Homilies* - I thought of the young Tommy who had struggled so much with his studies for the priesthood and yet, by the Grace of God, had managed this most wonderful, scholarly tribute to his, and mine's, great inspiration, St Oscar Romero. But, of course, it is for his faithful service, sometimes at the risk of death, to the poor and downtrodden of El Salvador and Guatemala and for his great love of his God, who never failed him, that Tommy had already entered into the Communion of Saints.

May he rest in Peace - all suffering at an end.'



*Fr Tommy gives his mum holy communion at his ordination Mass at St John's, in 1980... Giving a **lecture** in Edinburgh in 2010.....As a young priest in Central America.....As an even younger seminarian at the Scots College in Valledolid, in Spain.*