

Father Daniel KEENAN

(1956-2007)

*Died 7 February 2007, in Belfast (Northern Ireland)
aged 51, with 29 years of Religious Profession.*

The focus of these words is not to be on Fr. Danny for he himself would not want this. Rather the central person in this little account is the Lord Jesus and in what He can do in a life that is yielded to him. In the book of Danny's life we can turn over many pages in which we see the life and ministry of Jesus manifested in loving compassion for others. Danny's life was Montfortian, Marian and Missionary.

Fr. Danny made First Profession as a member of The Company of Mary on the 19th September 1977 and was ordained on the 9th April 1983.

To prepare well for all that he had to do is a legacy from Fr. Danny to us. For example, he would take great pains to prepare for Mass. He prayed, read the Scriptures and when he had to preach did so with the utmost conviction. His books and notes showed the extent of his commitment to preparation.

He was at his best dealing with the weak and wounded. In this way he could live out his Montfortian dream: to serve the poor. Perhaps he realized he was a "Wounded Healer" himself.

For his funeral Mass he chose the Gospel of the poor widow putting her last coins into the Temple offerings. He could identify with her total dependence on God. He saw that only what you give away do you get to eternally keep.

He had more than ample opportunity to trust and to serve as he ministered as a missionary in a school for the blind in Uganda, Africa or as he acted as chaplain to the City Group of Hospitals here in Belfast. He looked up to people and gave them a sense of their own dignity. In Dublin he spent four years in the Noviciate House from where he acted as a Convent and college chaplain. In Uganda he had really bent his back to help those suffering and dying of the scourge of Aids.

He loved the sense of drama in the liturgy and sought every opportunity to use signs and symbols. Sometimes we did not appreciate his imagination and creativity.

He came back from Uganda in 1996 and joined the community in Monaghan, Ireland. He had spent about ten years in Africa. He now needed radiation treatment for a cancerous condition on his face. No word of complaint ever passed his lips.

When Montfort House in Monaghan sadly closed in the summer of 2002 Fr. Danny went to Belfast to stay with his mother, now deceased, but while with her and despite his own failing health got permission from the Provincial to take on hospital chaplaincy ministry. Danny realized that the quality of service to the neighbour flows from the extent to which one is willing to make sacrifices.

It was a big struggle for him to leave his family and country - and he loved both - at a very young age and go to Montfort College in Romsey near Southampton. Then the call to go to Malawi and then Uganda were real challenges. But undoubtedly the biggest challenge was to face illness.

Fr. Danny stayed at the home of his sister Carmel and brother-in law Michael in the last three months of his illness. He was sustained by the prayers of the Montfort Family, his large circle of family, relatives and friends, the Hospital Chaplaincy team, the Bishop and priests of the diocese of Down and Connor, the Sisters of the Adoration Convent, Falls Road, his colleagues in Africa and all who knew him.

If one word was to sum up Danny's life as a Montfortian, as a Missionary, as a Priest of God, it would be Passion. Passion for life, for wounded humanity, for Christ. His "Yes" to God, like that of the Blessed Mother to whom he was truly devoted, enabled him to say "No" to his own will and plans. He now experiences the truth of Christ's words in John 10:10: "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full".