

Father Frederick William SCRAGG (1936 - 2015)



Frederick William Scragg was born on 6 August 1936, the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, in Seaforth, a suburb of Liverpool. He was baptised in Our Lady, Star of the Sea church in Seaforth on 16 August 1936. He was the second son of John Charles Scragg and Christina (née Vaughan). He had an elder brother Jack, and a younger sister Joan. His father died when he was still very young. His primary schooling was done at Our Lady, Star of the Sea school in Seaforth, then he began his secondary education at St Mary's College, Crosby, before moving to Montfort College, Romsey, the Minor Seminary of the Montfort Missionaries. He entered the novitiate in St Joseph's, Totton, where he made his first religious profession on 8 September 1955. From there he moved to St Mary's Scholasticate, Church Stretton, Shropshire, where he sailed through his philosophy and theology studies without any difficulty. After his perpetual profession on 8 September 1960, he was ordained a sub-deacon on 20 October 1960, a deacon on 8 December 1960, and finally a priest on 25 February 1961 in Church Stretton.

Fred had always wanted to go to the foreign missions, but before being appointed to the mission in Malawi, he was asked to go to Rome to study Canon Law, with a view to becoming the Canon Lawyer for Zomba Diocese, then governed by Mgr. Lawrence Hardman, SMM. Accordingly he spent 3 years in Rome, 1961-1964, studying at the Urbanianum, where he obtained his Doctorate in Canon Law. Then he left for Malawi, where his first appointment was to teach at Chingale Seminary. After one year he was appointed Rector of the Child Jesus Seminary in Nankhunda, a post he held for 22 years. He particularly enjoyed teaching Mathematics and Science, and introduced many of the students to computers in the 1980s. From 1971-2 he took a year off to obtain a Post-graduate Teaching Certificate from Christ College, Liverpool. During his time in Nankhunda, many of the priests now serving the Church in Malawi, both Montfort Missionaries and secular priests, passed through his hands, and he is remembered with great affection and appreciation by all of them. From 1979 to 1987, Fred was also the Regional Superior of the Anglo-French Region of the Montfort Missionaries in Malawi.

In 1987 he was a delegate to the General Chapter of that year, and was elected as one of the Assistants to the Superior General, Father Gerard Lemire, who was then elected for a second term as General. Father Lemire appointed Fred to the post of General Bursar. Being re-elected to the General Council for a second term in 1993, Fred was thus to serve as General Assistant and General Bursar for a total of 12 years, until 1999. As both Assistant and General Bursar, he travelled to almost all the places around the world where the Montfort Missionaries had a presence, and was particularly effective in re-organising and re-invigorating the financial affairs of the Congregation, while at the same time giving much-appreciated encouragement to the various members of the Congregation, with a special emphasis on community life.

When his time as General Assistant and Bursar came to an end in 1999, Fred took a Sabbatical in the United States, following a Post-Doctoral Auditing course in Canon Law at the Catholic University of America. He was hoping then to return to Malawi, but in 2000 was instead elected Provincial of the Province of Gt Britain & Ireland. As Provincial he had the unenviable task of closing down some of

our houses, notably in Ireland and in Scotland, because of diminishing numbers. But he continued to encourage his confreres in the Province, placing special emphasis again on community life. He was elected to a second term of office (of three years) as Provincial in 2006.

Finally in 2009, Fred was able to return to his beloved Africa, though not this time to Malawi. Instead he was appointed to the international Scholasticate of the English-speaking General Delegation of Africa in Nairobi. As a member of this community he was much loved and appreciated, and after a year he was also asked to lecture in Canon Law at the Jesuits' Hekima College (part of the Catholic University of East Africa) in Nairobi. He held this post for four years (2011 - 2015), and had more or less made up his mind to retire (he was then 78) and return to Malawi when he began to experience disturbing losses of memory and coherence. He was diagnosed in Nairobi as having a tumour on the brain, and he decided to return to England to undergo whatever treatment was necessary and possible. Back in England it was confirmed that the tumour was a malignant one, and he underwent an operation to remove it, followed by radio- and chemo-therapy. Gradually, however, his condition was worsening, until finally he was taken into St Joseph's Hospice a few weeks ago. There, he received the best of palliative care, and seemed content, even going out for a meal occasionally with one of the Liverpool community and his sister, Joan. But on Sunday 20 September, while he was attending the Mass celebrated by Father Bob Douglas, his confrere, he began to be quite confused, and a short time later, he died peacefully.

May his beloved Mother Mary receive him and bear him to her divine Son.