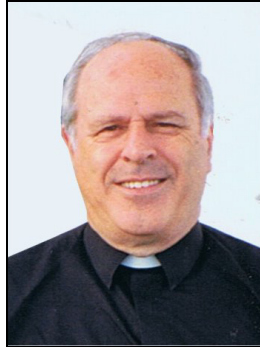


Father John Frederick MATTHEWS (1926 - 2015)

*Died 22 January 2015, in Thornton (England)
aged 88, with 69 years of religious profession*



John Frederick Matthews was born on 25 September 1926 in Blackpool, in Lancashire, the son of Sidney Matthews and Mary Helen Barry, and was baptised on 10 October 1926 in St Cuthbert's church in Blackpool. He was confirmed on 16 June 1935 at St John Vianney's, Blackpool.

After his primary schooling in Blackpool, Fred went to Montfort College in Romsey, where he received his secondary education from 1938 until 1944. He entered the novitiate of the Montfort Missionaries in Ashurst, Hampshire, in 1944, and made his first religious profession there on 27 September 1945. He then began his studies in philosophy at Leagram Hall, Chipping, in Lancashire, where the English scholasticate had been established after the return of the English students from France in 1940. When the scholasticate moved in October 1946 to Church Stretton in Shropshire, Fred continued his studies in philosophy and theology there. He made his perpetual profession in Church Stretton on 27 September 1950, and a short time later was ordained Deacon. His ordination to the priesthood was brought forward as his mother was dying, and it took place in St Cuthbert's, Blackpool (the church where he had been baptised) on 7 October 1950.

Father Fred's first obedience, in 1951, was to Montfort College in Romsey to teach Latin and French. Then he was sent to Southampton University in 1955, to study for a degree. He obtained his BA degree in Philosophy, Latin, French and Spanish in 1958. During the time he was at the University he lived at Nazareth House in Southampton, and acted as chaplain to the Sisters of Nazareth. In 1958 he returned to Montfort College, Romsey, to teach Latin, French and Roman History, a post he held until 1965.

In 1965 he was sent to Barrhead in Scotland to be director of the new hostel seminary that the Province had opened there, and also to act as Vocations Director for Scotland. One year later, however, he returned to Montfort College in Romsey to be Superior and headmaster of the school, a post he held until 1970.

In 1970, Father Fred became the first Provincial Superior to be elected by the confreres of the Province of Great Britain and Ireland (those preceding him having been appointed by the Superior General). He was re-elected in 1976, so was Provincial for a total of 12 years. During his time as Provincial, the Provincial residence was moved from Liverpool to London, initially to Kilburn.

In 1975, Father Fred was made President of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors for England and Wales, an appointment that was renewed in 1981. As such he greeted Pope John Paul II on behalf of all the Religious of England and Wales on the occasion of the Pope's visit to England in 1982.

When his second term as Provincial ended in 1982, Father Fred moved to Liverpool, where he was appointed by Archbishop Worlock to be Episcopal Vicar for Religious for the Archdiocese. He was

also a member of the Archbishop's Council. He held these two offices for many years, and so was well-known to all the Religious and priests of Liverpool Archdiocese. During this period, for a few years, he also took on the responsibility of the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption in Gateacre, which had been entrusted to the Montfort Missionaries. When he finally retired at about the age of 82, he returned to the community in Liverpool, but continued to serve some of the local convents for a few years, until ill health made it necessary for him to enter the retirement home, Nazareth House, in Crosby. As his health deteriorated, he was taken into Jospice (St Joseph's Hospice), where he died on 22 January 2015. He is remembered with great affection by many people, especially the Religious and former Religious that he helped during his years as Episcopal Vicar for Religious.

May he rest in peace!