

Father Ronald Gerard Mitchell



*Died 30 May 2012, in Ashurst (England)
aged 69, with 44 years of religious profession*

Ronald Mitchell was born on 14 October 1942 in Belfast, Northern Ireland to Patrick and Anne Mitchell. He was baptised two days later in St. Peter's church, Belfast, in the diocese of Down and Connor. He received his primary education at St Mary's Catholic Primary School, and his secondary education at St Mary's Grammar School, Belfast. After some higher studies at Queen's University, Belfast, he became a Civil Servant, until, through his membership of the Legion of Mary, he came into contact with St. Louis Marie de Montfort and his spirituality. Inspired by this, he entered the novitiate of the Company of Mary in Ashurst, Southampton, England, where he made his first profession of vows on 8 September 1967.

He followed philosophy and theology courses, first of all in St Mary's Scholasticate, Church Stretton, England, and then (as the Montfort Missionaries in Gt. Britain & Ireland joined forces with the English Jesuits for priestly training) at Heythrop College in Oxford and later in London. At the end of this time he obtained a degree of Bachelor of Divinity and a Diploma in Pastoral Theology. He made his perpetual profession of vows in the Montfort house of studies in London on 8 September 1972, and was ordained priest in St. Peter's Cathedral, Belfast on 7 July 1973.

After a year serving as assistant priest in St Gabriel's parish in Upper Holloway, London, Fr. Ronnie was appointed in 1974 to the Montfortian Retreat and Pastoral Centre in Monaghan in the Irish Republic, where he quickly became a renowned retreat preacher. He was appointed Superior of the Monaghan house in 1980.

From 1981 until 1988, he was novice-master for the Province of Gt. Britain & Ireland, first of all in Hendon, London, then in Dublin in the Irish Republic. In 1988 he was appointed Superior of Montfort House, Barrhead, Scotland, where he remained until 1994, acquiring a reputation as a great preacher, particularly in Catholic Charismatic circles, among whom he was often referred to as "the healing priest".

He took a Sabbatical in 1994-95 at the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham, taking a course in Personal, Moral and Spiritual Development, and obtaining an M.A. degree from the Open University. He was subsequently appointed once again as Superior of Montfort House in Monaghan, Ireland, where he remained until that house was closed in 2002. He was then appointed to Montfort House, Liverpool, from where, in collaboration with Fr. Bob Douglas, he conducted Parish Missions and Retreats, many in his beloved Ireland.

In 2006, he was appointed Superior of St Joseph's, Ashurst, where he worked hard to promote Montfortian Spirituality and to provide a welcoming spiritual centre for all who came to the house.

In 2009 he was elected Superior of the Vice-Province of Great Britain & Ireland, and remained in Ashurst, from where he continued to conduct retreats in various places, as well as carrying out his duties as Vice-Provincial Superior.

His sudden and unforeseen death on 30 May 2012 was a great shock to the Vice-Province, as well as to his many friends in Great Britain and Ireland. He will be sorely missed by all. May Our Blessed Lady, to whom he was always affectionately devoted, welcome him into the Kingdom of her Son, Jesus Christ.