



Dolen Mynyw Menevia News

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Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Ordination of Fr. Michael Burke

On the 28th July 1984, a young, thin, black-haired man walked into the Church of St David and St Patrick, Haverfordwest. On that gloriously sunny day, surrounded by family and friends, the deacon Michael Burke was ordained a priest. As Bishop James Hannigan placed his hands on the head of that young man, and later anointed his hands, I wonder if he knew what he was letting the diocese in for?

Twenty-five years later, as he celebrates his Silver Jubilee, Fr Michael may not be as young, as thin, nor have quite the black dashing looks he once did, but he certainly has gained one thing - a reputation! By his own admission in his anniversary homily, he notes that everyone he has met has cause to celebrate him. There are those parishioners who will want to celebrate all the good he has done - and there are those former parishioners who just thank God that they 'have gotten rid of him at last'! Fr Michael, judging by the large number of people who came to Sacred Heart Parish to celebrate with you, it would seem that the latter group are very much in the minority.

Fr Michael has served the people of Menevia in many different ways. Leaving from his home parish of Haverfordwest he has been a priest in many places. As well as his pastoral duties, Fr Michael has also done a great deal of other work to support the Church, both locally and worldwide. It was during his time as a seminarian in Rome that Michael spent two years learning about the Canon Law of the Church. With this newfound knowledge and skill in Latin, Fr Michael became the Judicial Vicar of the Diocese and to this

day uses his legal skills to help those in very desperate situations. As well as being the 'Communications Officer' for the diocese, advising national broadcasters on both Catholic teaching and local issues, he is also the Master of Ceremonies for the Diocese.



So where did it all begin? Fr Michael, in front of his parishioners, friends, and brother priests outlined his early beginnings in his anniversary homily. He first had thoughts of being a priest when, as a young five year-old boy, he was taken to Caldey Island by his father. Not only did he enjoy the boiled sweets that they had to offer, but there was something deeper which stuck a chord in him. There was just something about the life of the holy monks that impressed him. As a young boy perhaps Michael would have struggled to articulate that

feeling - today he would have no problem; the life of a Caldey monk is impressive because it is one of total dedication to God. While Fr Michael knew he could never live the monastic lifestyle, he has certainly made his life one of total dedication to God.

In the past twenty-five years Fr Michael has experienced both the highs and lows of being a priest. His happiest moment was being able to bless his Mum following his ordination. The saddest moment was when he had to bury her. In striving to do the will of God Fr Michael would say he is a work in progress! He has brought the love of God to many people through his celebration of the liturgy and pastoral visits; in return he has been shaped and changed by the people he has met.

During his Ordination Fr Michael said 'yes' to priesthood and made a lifelong commitment to continue the work that Christ gave the first apostles. During his anniversary Mass Fr Michael reaffirmed the commitments he made at his ordination: he would continue to celebrate the Sacraments so that others may grow in grace; he would continue to preach the Gospel so that all might hear the saving message of God; he would continue to pray for the Church that in all things God might be praised; he would continue to remain celibate so that he could be free to serve his parishioners with a single-minded heart; he would remain obedient to the Bishops of Menevia and Rome so that the worldwide Church would proclaim God's love with one voice.

Fr Michael said that his life "has been built as grace upon grace. All of it has been in view of one thing only - of bringing to you, the people beloved by Christ, the inestimable treasure of Christ,

present in the sacraments. I have no other purpose in life, nor do I want any. Twenty-five years have taught me that the priesthood does not belong to me, but I belong to the priesthood."



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