

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P1QJ

4 SEP 1997

FROM THE VICAR GENERAL
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2nd September 1997

Dear Father,

CANON MAURICE O'LEARY, RIP

Canon Maurice O'Leary died peacefully at Luton and Dunstable Hospital on Sunday 31st August, 1997 aged 77 years.

Maurice Plunkett O'Leary was born in Kilburn on 20th July 1920. He was educated at St Dominic's Preparatory School, West Hampstead and Salesian College, Battersea. He offered himself to the Diocese of Westminster as a candidate for the priesthood in 1934. His secondary education was at St Edmund's College, Ware. In 1937 he went to the English College, Rome, completing his studies at Stonyhurst, when the seminarians moved from Rome at the outbreak of the Second World War.

Maurice was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Griffin in the Crypt of Westminster Cathedral on 13th February, 1944. He was appointed as assistant priest at St Bridget's, Isleworth where he was chaplain to the patients and staff at the West Middlesex Hospital. He was responsible for starting the Nurses Guild in the Hospital. He became assistant priest in Warwick Street in 1952, remaining there until 1956. He had a vast influence on the early days of the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, eventually becoming its Director. It was through his vision and leadership that the CMAC reached its present stature and importance. He was appointed parish priest at Kenton in 1975 and undertook the re-ordering of All Saints church in accordance with the liturgical norms of Vatican II. In 1984 he became parish priest of Harpenden where he remained until his retirement in 1995.

Marriage and Family Life were important priorities in Maurice's ministry. He always advocated good, sound preparation for engaged couples and strong support, especially in the early years of marriage. He was Chairperson of the Family Resources Trust, established to research methods of strengthening family life. Maurice himself initiated regular meetings of priests from all over the country to discuss, reflect and share pastoral initiatives and practices in connection with marriage.

He was known to be caring and understanding of his fellow priests, especially those who found their ministry difficult. It was always a pleasure to be in his company, not least because of his sense of humour and his story telling. The Diocese is profoundly grateful for his organisation and direction of the Westminster Ecclesiastical Education Fund. In addition to these many responsibilities, he was also Chaplain of the Knights of Malta.

The Cardinal, Bishops and Clergy offer their sympathies to his sister Maureen, his family and friends.

Canon O'Leary's body will be received in the church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Harpenden on Sunday 7th September at 6.00 p.m. and the Funeral Mass will be on Monday 8th September at 11.00 a.m. The Cardinal will be the principal celebrant. If you wish to concelebrate, please bring Diocesan vestments.

Canon O'Leary was a member of the Deceased Clergy Association.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Egan

Mgr Tom Egan VG