

# Douai Oblate

May 2010 No 33

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## From the Oblate Director

In recent months we have suffered three deaths among our oblates, Peter Lattey, Maurice Twomey and Derek Vidler. I was honoured to be asked to preach at the funeral Mass for Derek, and several of you contributed to that homily, it is printed here, and also the appreciation that was in the service programme. The funeral at Putney, on St George's Day, was a happy occasion, a true celebration of resurrection without a trace of black anywhere, and a credit to the parish. We were blessed too with a warm sunny day and were able to gather for a buffet lunch after the Mass in the lovely garden attached to the church, where Derek must have spent many happy hours.

Also included are the obituaries for Peter Lattey and for Maurice Twomey whose funeral at Winchester was attended by Fr Oliver.

A new issue of the Oblates Directory is available privately on the website:

<http://www.douaiabbey.org.uk/directr.pdf>  
Paper copies are being sent to those without email, and to others on request.

In April I was invited to Minster to attend the first one day retreat to be given for oblates from any community. There were oblates from nine communities present, including Douai. Two talks were given by Bishop Richard Moth, oblate of Pluscarden, which will be available soon on <http://www.benedictine-oblates.net>

The nuns of Turvey Abbey are organising two events for Oblates which are highly recommended:

**Oct 1 - 3 The Benedictine Way:** A weekend for Benedictine oblates. Seek wholeness and balance through Benedictine spirituality and prayer. Cost: £95 per person, including £30 non-returnable deposit per person. **Contact: Sr Miriam**  
[courses-retreats259@turveyabbey.org.uk](mailto:courses-retreats259@turveyabbey.org.uk)

**Oct 22 - 24 Listen with the ear of your heart:** Discover the word God speaks to your heart through the practice of the ancient art of Lectio Divina. Cost £95, including £30 non returnable deposit. **Contact: Sr Judith**  
[courses-retreat 253@turveyabbey.org.uk](mailto:courses-retreat 253@turveyabbey.org.uk)

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## Fr Maurice Twomey RIP 1932 - 2010

Fr Maurice Twomey was not known to many of you, as it was only after his retirement from active ministry that he became an oblate novice in October 2002. He had retired to Portsea, and had hoped to attend retreats regularly, but sadly ill health forced him to withdraw to various nursing homes. It was only through the kindness of oblates Philip and Philomena Sheppard that he was able to visit Douai in a wheelchair for a few hours in 2007 and make his oblation. That was his last visit. Before joining the diocese of Portsmouth, Maurice had been a novice at Quarr Abbey for some months, and although God had not called him to be a monk, the yearning for Benedictine spirituality never left him, so that during his parochial years, he was a not infrequent visitor at Douai. For much of the information here I am indebted to Fr Tom Grufferty who preached at his funeral Mass and who kindly sent me a draft of his text.

Maurice was of noble stock but lived in a modest way, his immediate surroundings were always surprisingly stark, but although lacking in home com-

*continued on the back page.*

## Homily preached at the Funeral Mass for Fr Derek Vidler, 1933 - 2010 on St George's Day, April 23, 2010, at the church of Our Lady of Pity and St Simon Stock, Putney.

The words of St Paul that we heard in the second reading,

“we are full of confidence, I say, and actually want to be exiled from the body and make our home with the Lord ... there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting home, not made by human hands in the heavens.”

2 Cor 5:6-7

could well have been spoken by Derek Vidler. A few years ago, some of you may know, Derek was very ill and had to spend sometime in hospital and was in danger. He told me that during that time he actually thought he had died, and it was one of the nurses who had to convince him that he hadn't. He found the supposed death experience very peaceful and calming, not frightening in any way and it taught him not to be afraid of dying, so he was quite ready and prepared for death. In this he showed his experience of living the teaching of St Benedict – ‘to keep death constantly before one's eyes’: always to live ready to die and meet the Lord. His death last week was unexpected, indeed, he had expressed to a friend by telephone earlier in the week that he hoped to be out of hospital quite soon. But, it was not to be, and Derek lived ready for that, like Paul eager to make his home with the Lord, intent only on pleasing him, and, as we heard sung in the psalm, he was sure that he would see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living. (Ps 26)

Derek was born in Central London in 1933 into a non-church-going family. At sixteen he became a Catholic. He was drafted into National Service and worked in accountancy, before going to Womersley seminary. He was ordained priest in 1962 and then worked in several south London parishes.

I did not know Derek as a pastor, nor was I familiar with his professional life as a canon lawyer, although I have heard a remembrance of his time as curate in Tolworth in the 60s and 70s, where he worked under a parish priest of the old school, but he proved resilient, highly effective and much loved. He is particularly remembered for his visiting of parishioners, something, my informant tells me, that was even then going out of fashion.

It is as oblate director at Douai Abbey, that I have known Derek. He was a faithful member of our body of oblates. He had first come to know of monastic life, when he was a young soldier doing military service, stationed at Arborfield, in the early 50s, and had visited Douai Abbey, which was quite close; he also

had contacts with Quarr and Farnborough Abbeys. However his primary vocation was to be a secular priest and that is how he faithfully lived out his life, nevertheless, the call of Benedictine spirituality remained with him, aided no doubt by his wide reading. So, when he learned that Douai was developing its oblate programme, he wrote to me expressing that he felt God was calling him to share in the monastic life as an oblate, and so he duly became an oblate of Douai Abbey.

(Perhaps I should explain here, that an oblate is a person, who, while remaining faithful to his or her primary vocation as a married person, a priest, a doctor or whatever, follows the Rule of St Benedict as their way of life, while remaining in the world, and who is affiliated with a particular monastic community.)

Derek was faithful to this second vocation, frequently coming to the oblate retreats at Douai, and more recently becoming part of the London Chapter, when it was formed, and which he suggested should be put under the patronage of St Erconwald, the seventh century Benedictine who had founded and became first abbot of Chertsey Abbey, before being called to become bishop of London. This points to another aspect of Derek, he was quite a scholar in a quiet way, reading deeply in mediæval and monastic history. Indeed, he contributed the chapter ‘*The Benedictine Heritage*’ to the book, *The Oblate Life*, which was published a couple of years ago.

When I notified the oblate community of his death last Friday, many tributes of appreciation came in return, and I quote from several of these in what I am going to say now.

“Derek Vidler was a model priest. At a time when the Tridentine model of the ministerial priesthood is under attack in some quarters, Derek stood out as being confident in his ministry as a priest, and he was highly sensitive to the dangers of clericalism. Derek did not see being a priest as giving a status which had to be displayed and acknowledged, he was not the type of man who expected deference or precedence. He was a very humble man and quite happy to sit among the oblates in lay attire and just listen, the very model of a Benedictine. This was not because he had nothing to say, on the contrary, but because he wanted both to sincerely listen to the views of others and not inhibit their contributions with a display of erudition”.

Indeed, there were times, that I myself can remember, when I thought ‘Oh Derek has gone to sleep’, as he

sat there with his head down and eyes closed, but no, when there was a pause he would say something which showed that he had been paying full attention the whole time, had thought about it deeply and had something worthwhile to say. It is significant that he was never the first to speak.

Another email I received says “Derek made an enormous contribution in a quiet very positive way with quiet authority. He stands out for his great humanity, total non-sentimentality, fully understanding of human frailty, always non-judgemental, lack of any form of hubris, but always quietly positive about what he believed. At all meetings he was always non-clerical, and we shall miss his wisdom.”

“He was a very tolerant man, another Benedictine attribute, slow to condemn others because he always wanted to listen and even learn from those whose views he found startling. Perhaps his pastoral work in the marriage tribunal helped here. While some see Canon Law as an embarrassment and hindrance to the Gospel, Derek demonstrated how it could be a good pastoral tool, aiding the spread of the gospel.”

The Douai oblates will certainly miss the presence of Derek as a friend and model. Some found they did not get to know him quickly, this was because he never thrust himself forward and would never be the first to speak, but once people did get to know him they certainly appreciated him, and he will be greatly missed both at the retreats at Douai and at the meetings of the London Chapter. The monastic community will also miss him, and the abbot is sorry that a teaching commitment at Wonerish seminary prevents him from being here today. Derek has made a very generous contribution to the monastic library building currently under construction.

So now that Derek has been called from us, he can surely affirm with Job, those words we heard in the first reading,

“After my awaking he will set me close to him,  
and from my flesh I shall look on God.  
He whom I shall see will take my part:  
These eyes will gaze on him and find him not  
aloof.”

Job 19: 26-27

*The following was printed in the Order of Service.*

**W**e gather as friends and admirers of Derek to congratulate him on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. He told us that he was born at 4am at St Pancras while the snow was falling on London. He was baptised at the parish church by the curate as a one month old baby. Two years later, with the death of his father, the fam-

ily moved to Streatham. He recalls the gas lamplighters visiting his street in Streatham to light the lamps in the evenings and returning at dawn to put them out.

As a child he enjoyed travelling by tram to the outskirts of London. In those days that was Woolwich. From there he would get the trolley bus to visit relatives in Abbey Wood. Going in the opposite direction the family would visit Hampton Court. From these two experiences was born in Derek the desire to travel, to learn about other cultures, and an interest in history.

Religion was not a priority in his family's tradition, but it became a conviction in him after a visit to Westminster Cathedral when a Mass was being celebrated at the high altar. His great aunt Flo had warned him that what Catholics worshipped was blasphemous. That made him eager to know more, so he returned to the cathedral on his own, saw its beauty and began to read about the church. As a teenager he had instruction, was received into the church, studied at Osterley and Wonerish, and set out on the road that led him here today.

My qualification for being here is that I have known Derek for 50 years, the longest one present among us. But don't feel any disadvantage. Once you meet Derek you get what you see. Big in heart, big in vision, and big in generosity of spirit. Over the years I've seen no change but development and growth. His pastoral ministry took place in Tolworth, Wimbledon Park, Bermondsey and Mottingham. Before he was exhausted, as he gave 100% in each place, he asked Archbishop Michael Bowen for a new ministry, hence the Marriage Tribunal. With his total dedication and compassion for others he has fulfilled the wish of the diocese and the needs of the people who have experienced a broken marriage. He recalled the pain in the first divorced persons in his experience. How we have changed for the better. How justice and charity exist and people are freed from the mistakes of the past. Derek is the first person to meet people in this situation, seeking an annulment. Charity and justice with compassion are the key words that describe him.

On a lighter side, Derek has a second religion which he followed with passion. He was not alone in this second religion, there are many followers who meet once or twice a week or more often in the season. This is love for opera and music. Since the Spirit is very much present in music we might say this interest complemented his priestly life and his pastoral ministry.

*Now that he has left us for paradise we can imagine listening with joy to the heavenly choirs. ♦*

## Maurice Twomey - *continued from page 1*

forts, he had a very rich intellect and was a great storyteller. There were two things that shaped Maurice's life which stayed with him right to the end. His Godmother left him a great gift in her will; he was to spend three months in Paris soaking up French culture and language, which he did in such a fashion that that wonderful present remained with him for the rest of his days. The second thing was his time as a seminarian at Heythrop College. Bishop Derek Worlock made a wise decision to send Maurice into the world of academia since he was well able to hold his own with theologians, and in his heyday Maurice was the most informed priest of the diocese. Out of Heythrop grew a great love for the church and a desire to be a good priest. The two New Testament readings at the funeral Mass were taken from the rite of ordination deliberately and with good purpose. Paul asks Timothy to be to all believers 'an example in the way you speak and behave, in your love, your faith and in your purity'; Maurice most certainly tried his hardest to exercise those characteristics.

Maurice laboured long and hard in pastoral work, and sometimes that did not come easily. He loved his time in Horndean mainly because the people there contributed to and enhanced his ministry; they were more than willing to compliment the leadership role of their priest and in this Maurice may well have trail-blazed a new trend. There are lay people and priests who are active members of the diocese today because of the dedication and commitment of Maurice. Long before Facebook Maurice had a network of people from across the country. These appear to be men and women who saw in him the true marks of what it is to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

St Paul in our scriptures says that he was a prisoner of the Lord. Maurice too was a prisoner in his self-doubt and low self-esteem. In the walking group, to which he belonged, at the start of a day's walk Maurice would be in despair. Priest companions would set Maurice free so that he returned to his beloved Horndean free as a bird. Three weeks or so later, he was often discovered to have incarcerated himself once more. The prison, that Maurice imagined, grew darker by the day so much so, that few could visit him in the final months of his life. Death itself was the great liberator. Maurice has been set free from the bars and the chains that have kept him fettered for the last 17 years. Following a great labour of Love, Maurice has discovered, as we shall all discover, that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. ◇

## Deacon Peter Lattey RIP 1941 - 2009

Oblate Peter Lattey died suddenly on October 27. He had become a novice in 2001 and made his oblation in April 2002. A quiet gentleman, he was frequently at retreats in the following years, where he was always insistent on clearing away after meals, maintaining that was the deacon's role. In recent years he had suffered ill health, which, for a time, prevented him from driving, so he was not able to come, but recently his health improved so we were hopeful he would be able to come again, but it was not to be. The following appreciation has been copied from the Portsmouth diocesan website.

'Peter was well known not only as a deacon in Fleet, but as the Assistant Director of the Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage, a former Diocesan Trustee and a former Provincial President of the Catenians.

He spent his working life in insurance. He was ordained deacon by Bishop Crispian Hollis in 1998. In this role he was a mainstay in the parish pastorally, liturgically and spiritually, always constant in being alert to the "signs of the times". He was married to Sue, who is an Anglican Priest, and had two children and four grandchildren.

His Funeral Mass at Fleet was celebrated by Bishop Crispian, Bishop Walmsley to whom Peter acted as Secretary when the later was Bishop to the Forces, and priests from the diocese, assisted by some of Peter's fellow deacons. There was a large congregation including many from other churches in the town and a number of Catenians.

In his homily Bishop Crispian referred to the role of deacons in the Church and said that Peter was a prayerful man called by the Lord. He was indeed a good and faithful servant. He mentioned in particular Peter's service to the Lourdes Pilgrimage which this year he organised himself in a spirit of gentleness and loving service.

In his last article for the Parish Newsletter written the day before he died Peter reflected that "All Saints Day gives us a glimpse into our own glorious future, our eternal destiny which has to be worked out in love and service here on earth". The article ended "We pray that one day this will be our feast as well." May he rest in peace. ◇

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