

Fr Sean Murray Funeral St Anne's Chertsey Saturday 24th January 2026

When I was asked by Fr Gerry to preach at Fr Sean's funeral, I was trying to think about what Biblical text summed up his life and this is the text that came to me.

In Chapter 15 of John's Gospel, we read: Make your home in me as I make mine in you... this is at the heart of the Gospel message in St John. the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. In Christ God makes his home among us, he stretches out his tent and invites us in. There we meet Christ in those who proclaimed Foxes have their holes, the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of man have no place to rest his head. Fr Sean took to heart that Gospel message. He made a home for so many youngsters whom he served at Blaisdon and for so many Salesians there and at Farnbough and Bootle and shared his home with all of us at Chertsey and at Holy Family. We thank God for his life and pray that he is now at home in God's eternal embrace.

Sean's Dad was an officer in the Garda Siochana, or guardians of the peace that had been established in 1923 as a predominantly unarmed police force aimed at gradually establishing a civilian police force that would have the confidence of all Irish people whatever side they had taken in the War of Independence and the Civil War that followed. As a result, the *gardai* as they were called could not serve in any community where they had family or local connections. Hence Sean always associated home with his mother's birthplace and family in Glenbeigh in the ring of Kerry and on the wild Atlantic way. Though he was born in Michelstown Co Cork in 1933.

That background had I suspect a profound impact on Sean as he grew up. He was a man of peace who was good with children and young people who were anxious or disturbed. He was a man of peace that sought to bring peace and understanding to those who were troubled or at odds.

He had a profound gift for making people feel at home and creating a homely atmosphere was his incredible gift to us as Salesians wherever he went. Blaisdon, Bootle and Chertsey and Addlestone.

When we think of Sean's vocation he followed his brother to the Salesian College, Pallaskenry in Limerick for which he retained a great affection. He could tell stories of some of the great men of that time, Fr T P O'Connor who asked him at the interview, could he do anything useful like milk a cow... to which Sean was delighted to reply positively.

His brother had preceded him to Pallaskenry and was keen to become a Salesian but struggled with a speech impediment and eventually left and joined the Pallotine Missionaries where he was ordained and later in life became well known as a spiritual director and began his work in the mobile home that he had on his mother's family land

in Kerry where Sean loved to return to again and again and near to where we hope to bury his mortal remains in the family grave.

His sister trained as a nurse with the Bon Secours sisters in Cork whom she joined and rose to become Provincial and a member of their General Council in Rome. Sister Bosco as she was called, Sean always complained was very bossy but immensely effective in developing the Bon Secours Hospitals in Ireland into a modern medical charity.

Sean joined the Salesians at Burwash in 1952 from Limerick and studied theology at Melchet Court where the Salesians had an International Theologate and Sean's connections were all over the Salesian world.

After Ordination and Teacher Training in St Mary's at Twickenham he was asked to go to teach at Blaisdon, which was a special school for what were called 'maladjusted children' most of whom had ended up in care because of family difficulties.

Sean admitted that Blaisdon was the one Salesian house he did not want to be sent to and when he got there he said so to Fr John Gilheney who replied: *join the party*. Fr Sean, John Gilheney and their close friend Fr John Cavanah transformed Blaisdon from a sort of Trades boarding school into a transformative educational experience. Fr Sean's expertise in primary teaching meant that helping young people who had missed out on regular primary education could learn to read, write and count effectively. With the arrival of Fr James Pilling, who was a psychiatric social worker and Fr Aidan Murray who was a wonderful athlete, Blaisdon could offer real opportunities to young people who faced huge challenges.

Sean began as a teacher then became Head Teacher, then served as Rector, until the closure of the school, due to falling rolls.

Fr Sean then moved to be Rector at Farnborough where many of the former Blaisdon community settled, and Sean saw to it that it became a real home for them. With the wonderful team that Brother Joe Adams and he built around them the confreres who moved there to retire could be sure of being looked after.

That capacity to create a homely atmosphere, became the characteristic of his next move to the community at Bootle, where he became the Community Bursar and home maker for fifteen years. He inspired confidence and welcome.

He came to Chertsey seven years ago and was a wonderful welcoming presence among us. He made it his job to make our house a real home, and no birthday or feast day was ever missed and he delighted in the details that made our celebrations really homely affairs.

When we began to look after Holy Family Parish in Addlestone, I asked Sean if he might be able to offer a Wednesday morning Mass on a regular basis and he really found himself at the centre of a home from home. I noticed that he was getting back to the

Chertsey house at 12.30 or later and I asked him if Mass was still at 9.30am. He replied, *but those women can talk...* in fact he loved the parish experience and they loved him. His message was clear, you are really good people and good people are happy people. He was just himself and shared the memories and events that were so important for him.

Another great service that Sean offered for many years was being the Provincial National Delegate for Past Pupils. He loved the Blaisdon Past Pupils and always attended their annual celebrations. He celebrated his Diamond Jubilee with a wonderful Msss in Blaisdon Parish Church and so many past students and families and friends had a wonderful celebration lunch afterwards.

Just before I left Chertsey to take up my new job in Battersea, he gave me a big hug and with tears in his eyes. He told me that he had never been as happy in his life as he had been in the last seven years. I put that down to all the love and encouragement that he received from so many of you.

When we lay him to rest in Kerry, we know that he will be at home with all his family and friends who have already gone before him to the heavenly home. No doubt Sister Bosco will have something to say to him, but we know that this is the homeland that we are all waiting for.

St Francis de Sales, our Salesian patron used tell his directees,

Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then, put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations, and say continually: 'The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart has trusted in Him and I am helped. He is not only with me but in me and I in Him.' Sean was invited home and has made his home in him as Christ made his among us.

I came across this song the other day and the lyrics sum up in a way, Fr Sean's life and mission.

Make Your Home in Me

Song by

Ben Walther

Every fox a den
Every bird a nest
But the Son of Man
Has no place to rest

Every heart a man
Every king a throne
But the Word made Flesh
No earthly home

Your burden's light and
Your yoke is easy
Your name is Love and
Your grace is free
My heart was locked but
You had the key
Make your home in me
Make your home in me

Lord, You come to me
In Your homelessness
Burning in Your eyes
Such a great distress
Who will heal Your wounds?
Who will make Your bed?
I will comfort You
I will share my bread for

Your burden's light and
Your yoke is easy
Your name is Love and
Your grace is free
My heart was locked but
You had the key
Make your home in me
Make your home in me

Where there is love
There is no fear
So make Your home and
Residence here
I'm so alive when

You are near
So make Your home in me
Your burden's light and
Your yoke is easy
Your name is Love and
Your grace is free
My heart was locked but
You had the key
Make your home in me
Make your home in me
Oh, make your home in me