



I was born in Derry City in 1956, the eldest of 11 children: six sisters and four brothers. I lived in the Creggan area of the city for most of my life. I entered the Franciscan Order in 1976 at the ripe old age of 20.

I attended three schools growing up, St. Francis primary school, Long Tower school and finally my secondary school of St. Josephs. I finished my exams at the age of 16 and became an apprentice engineer finishing my time when I was 20 just one week before I entered the Order. I grew up in a City that was going through many hard times through unemployment and what has been labelled by the media and others of the time as 'The Troubles'. This was a very difficult and troublesome time for all concerned.

It was into this situation that most of my brothers and sisters grew up in, and I have to admit I was no saint during those times; some may even say that I'm still no saint! It was from this background that I was considering becoming a priest which didn't go down too well with some of my friends, not that they were anti priest or anti church far from it; we always went to Mass on Sundays of our own accord. They just felt that our group was breaking up and going our own ways. And as I said we were no saints.

I entered the Franciscan Order in 1976 in Killarney, Co. Kerry, went to Galway University where I studied Philosophy and then to the Dominican Angelicum University in Rome where I studied Theology.

In 1981 I took Solemn vows in Galway and was ordained to the priesthood in 1984 in my local parish church of St. Mary's in Derry City.

My first appointment was in Cork to help give school retreats and it was during one of those retreats that I was given the title 'the priest with the tattoos' and he is 'one of our own'. Since my ordination I have been in different friaries, working in different situations with people from all different backgrounds.

My favourite sport is football (soccer). I played for Galway university and an International student team in Rome. The teams that I follow are Derry City (my local team), Manchester United and Celtic.

I have been appointed the parish priest, so here I am among you at St. Anthony's. My wish is to continue and be part of the great community spirit that exists among you all.

MICHAEL



Born in Dublin 1942, the doctor who delivered me was singing, 'Galway bay', according to my mother. When my father saw me, his first words were, "he is like Joe Louis". My fists were closed and up to protect my face. I was the second son and the second arrival into the family. My older brother decided to come into the world on the same date, but two years earlier. My parent's were just great. My Da was surely my best friend. Sadly I never told him. My mother, God rest her, gave her life for her family.

The Irish language was the immediate instrument for my education and made a lasting impression on the educational formation. Then arrived two younger sisters. With my father we had two places of worship, the local Vincentian Church and Croke Park. I longed to be good at sport, but was useless. I was the youngest of my class throughout school and academically, like sport, useless. For the last 4 years of my secondary schooling I was sent to boarding school. Maybe I was not studying and a little difficult to control. Two Franciscan friars had the good fortune to teach me and I thought by their gentle temperament, they were Gods gift to humanity. If a person could be like that, maybe their life could be worthwhile. It is a life worth living. So I gave the friars life a try. To this day I am still trying.

I was a novice in Killarney. Then to the 'City of Tribes' to attend University College Galway. For the last years in formation I pursued theological studies in Leuven.

Life guided me into Chaplaincy in the School of Tribes, Dublin. For 6 years I was the Parish Priest in a very culturally rich but economically poor parish in Inner City Dublin. Knowledge of the price of stolen copper, broken windows and seeing used syringes became the order of the day. I returned to Leuven to rediscover theology and nourish the faith dimension of my life. This brought about my first encounter with the flock at St Anthony's in Kraainem.

Next a reluctant acceptance of an appointment as Fulltime Chaplain to a Community 2nd Level school in North Wicklow went from 1 year to 22 years. I was appointed as parish priest at St. Anthony's in 2014 and since 2020 I am the assistant priest.

I don't know any famous people or important people but I do know drug addicts, teenage parents, parents whose children have died violently and people with broken hearts. Best of all I know thousands of happy people. Living for me is about what I become before God, not what I achieve. What you see is, I hope, what you get.

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