

Monsignor John Sheridan - Obituary

Jack Sheridan was born in Clydebank on 22nd August 1929 and died on 25th March 2019, just a few months short of 90. Of those 90 years 63 were spent as priest of the Archdiocese of Glasgow. Jack was in every way a proud Bankie and his most prominent, and oft repeated, memory was, not surprisingly, the Clydebank Blitz. He would have been 11 years old at that time and the memories remained clear for him, as for so many others who lived through this. He therefore found himself finishing the last few months of primary school in St Vincent's, Thornliebank before beginning high school that same summer of 1941, at Holyrood.

His application to be a student for the priesthood saw him study at Campion house in Osterley in preparation for his studies at the Royal Scots College in Valladolid, Spain. This added another aspect of Jack's identity and he could be relied upon to whip out his guitar and burst into *Guantanamera* at the drop of a sombrero! His love of Spain, like his love of Clydebank, was integral to Jack, and so too was his love of the Church in whose service he was ordained priest in Spain on St Patrick's Day 1956.

Jack Sheridan was the man to ask if you wanted someone to do a job. Especially if you were a bishop. Jack seemed to say yes to every suggestion ever made about how he might exercise his ministry. Every priest is used to being asked to change parish and serve a new community of God's people in a different place, and Jack would serve as an Assistant Priest in St Philomena's, Saint Charles, Good Shepherd, St Pius X and in All Saints and was resident for two years in St. Leo the Great. And so Jack served north, south, east and west of the City during those years of his priesthood. In addition though, he had already begun to amass a number of roles outside parish ministry, something which would be true throughout his life as a priest. He was appointed to the Diocesan Boy Scout Committee and then to the role of Diocesan Chaplain to the Scouts. Lord Baden-Powell himself could not have spoken more often about scouting than Jack did; his ability to weave this into a homily was a talent unrivalled by any! He would eventually become the National Chaplain to the Scouts: a task which he approached wholeheartedly

and with a real belief in the value of the task and the benefit of scouting for young people.

In the summer of 1963, Jack was asked to serve as the Spiritual Director at the Royal Scots College and so he returned to Spain, this time as a member of staff. As was common at the time, he picked up a few extra tasks there too –in his time teaching, Pastoral Theology, Moral Philosophy, Spanish, Sacred Eloquence (Preaching) and *Ius Publicum*! His return to Glasgow six years later gave him a couple of quieter years in St. Charles before he once again began to collect roles outside the parish where he was assigned. He was a Religious Examiner of Schools; as already mentioned he was National Scout Chaplain; he became Chaplain to the St Mungo's Prayer Group, in its time the largest Charismatic Prayer group in Scotland, regularly attracting hundreds each week; he was a part of the Springburn and Barmulloch Schools Council and he was a member of the National Pilgrimage Committee.

Archbishop Winning was looking for a priest to help make the Diocesan Office a less daunting place, more open to visitors and more approachable by priests. Many priests could have told you of being warned that if they were ever in the office, it meant they were in trouble. Even a change in parish was communicated by letter and did not require a personal meeting with the bishop. Archbishop Winning saw this as a thing of the past, and so in 1983 he asked Father Jack Sheridan to become Diocesan Chancellor with the specific task of opening the office up and making it a friendlier place, especially for the priests. Jack was of his very nature, gregarious and friendly, he was welcoming and open to all and it is difficult to underplay the contribution that Jack made in changing the view of the Office held by the clergy and the way in which the Office functioned. That same warmth and friendliness made him an attractive option when people were looking for someone to assist them or when a bishop wanted someone to assist a particular task in the Church.

And so Father Jack carried on adding new ministries to his life as a priest, he was Archdiocesan Treasurer for the Holy Childhood, he was a member of the Council for Christians and Jews; he was Glasgow Co-ordinator for the National Tribunal and he was a

member of the Inter-Church Committee responsible for the spiritual aspect of the Glasgow Garden Festival, a pivotal moment in the revitalisation of the City of Glasgow that is taken so much for granted now. The Glass Chapel of the Festival was moved to Carfin where it remains, now named Our Lady Maid of the Seas in memory of the Pan-Am 747 blown up over Lockerbie on 21st December 1988. Jack was absolutely convinced and dedicated to the spiritual aspect of the Festival and gave himself devotedly to that task. He was on the festival site for at least a short time, almost daily. That dedication was true of every task that Jack undertook, he was never half-hearted or disinterested, he sought to give of his best always.

In all of his service of so many different groups, parish life was at the heart of Jack's ministry and when he became Chancellor he had become, as the custom then was, simply a resident in the parish with no pastoral responsibilities. After less than two years in this situation at St Leo the Great, Jack was anxious to be more involved in parish life and so Archbishop Winning appointed Jack to his first parish charge as Administrator, then Parish Priest, of Our Lady and Saint Margaret where he served for two years until 1987 when, now having a Vice-Chancellor in the Office, Father Jack could take on responsibility for a bigger, more demanding, parish and so he became Parish Priest of Saint Paul's, Whiteinch where he would remain until his retirement in October 2000. Jack was happy and fulfilled in Whiteinch, he loved the parish and the people and when in 1992 he finished his service as Chancellor, he could devote himself to what he had always wanted to be – a priest in a parish, serving the people. While serving at St Paul's it was announced that on 26th January 1993 Father Sheridan's service of the Church had been recognised and he had been appointed by Pope John Paul II as a Prelate of Honour with the title of Monsignor.

Of course his service of the people was shaped and formed by his personality and he brought to his ministry a warmth and a care for people that was, like him, generous and open. His chatty, friendly nature found its way into his sermons which were seldom noted for brevity and often noted for his ability to bring in the "other" trinity – a sermon was complete if mention had been made of the Blitz, the Scouts and the Diocesan Office!

After almost 19 years in retirement, most of which were served “helping out” Saint Thomas’ in Muirkirk until finally moving to Nazareth House in Glasgow, Mgr. Jack died peacefully on the Feast of the Annunciation 2019.

Above all Jack Sheridan was a nice man and he always tried to be a good man. It was this desire to be good and to do good that made him a good priest; he was comfortable in his priesthood and it formed who he was. Everything was centred on Jack’s love for Christ and his Church, for God and his people and on his love of the sacramental gift of the priesthood which he had received and which he sought to live out to the fullest. May God grant the him eternal rest promised to the good and faithful servant.