

## Canon Michael Downey

The Very Rev. Michael Canon Downey was born at Jenkinstown, Co. Kilkenny, on 20th August 1896, and was ordained priest on 14th August 1921. He passed the whole of his priestly life in the Deanery of St. Ninian, where he served in the three parishes of Stirling, Bonnybridge and Kilsyth. Canon Downey ministered here at St Patrick's Kilsyth from 1938 till his death on 24th December 1955.

His first concern was to improve the amenities of the Parish, and was responsible for the construction of the present presbytery. At that time, it was thought that the ground occupied by the former presbytery could be used to extend the church by adding a new aisle to balance the one built in Canon Turner's time. An outbreak of fire in the church at the beginning of September 1954, changed his former plans, and it was decided that a new church should be built.

Sporting activities in the parish had been carried on in the Haugh Park under the auspices of the Emmet Football Club. This field was quite inadequate for the purpose, and Canon Downey decided to extend it. He acquired this ground and the adjoining Garrell Vale Park which had housed Kilsyth Rangers F.C. in the pre-war years, and set about building the present St Patrick's sports field, which was one of the finest sports grounds in the county. The old fields had been very low-lying and required to be raised and this was accomplished by infilling with 100,000 tons of pit debris which raised the surface level. The whole area, extending to over four acres, was enclosed by walls eight feet high. This provided space for a full-sized, turfed football pitch, a smaller ash-covered pitch, two tennis courts, a bandstand, and dressing accommodation for each sport.

Canon Downey did not live to see the whole scheme completed, and after his death the committee honoured his intentions to have permanent dressing accommodation and built the present pavilion which was opened officially by Mr. Harry Sullivan on 11th September 1963. Canon Downey's love of golf and his encouragement to other would-be golfers among the youth of the parish is reflected in the growing interest of many young men in this sport at that time. In recent years (starting in 2006) an annual golf tournament at Kilsyth Lennox Golf Club has borne the name 'The Michael Canon Downey Memorial Golf Tournament' in honour of his memory.

Canon Downey was also active on the Education Committee of the County of Stirling from 1944 till he died.

His death on Christmas Eve 1955 brought to an end a long period of ill-health which Canon Downey had borne with a resignation and patience equalled only by his diligent attention to his priestly duties and his determination to build a church worthier of the Blessed Sacrament and of his congregation – an ambition that was ultimately to be fulfilled by his successor as Parish Priest of Kilsyth, Thomas Canon McGarvey.



## Canon Downey's Prayer Card

**SACRED HEART OF JESUS**  
have mercy on the soul of

O Compassionate Lord  
Jesus, grant him eternal  
rest.—7 years.



My Sweetest Jesus, be not  
to me a Judge, but a  
Saviour.—50 days.

**Very Rev. A. Canon Downey**  
**St. Patrick's, Kilsyth**

Who died on Christmas Eve 1955

Aged 59 Years

**R. I. P.**

O God by whose favour Thy servant, Michael, was raised to the Sacred dignity of the Priesthood, and thus honoured with the Apostolic functions, grant we beseech Thee, that he may be admitted to the eternal fellowship of the Apostles in Heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**THY WILL BE DONE**

Sweet Heart of Jesus, be  
Thou my love.  
—300 days each time.

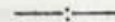


Jesus My God, I love Thee  
above all things.  
—50 days each time.

Within Thy Sacred Heart dear  
Lord,  
May his precious soul find rest,  
Thy Will be done, O God of Love,  
Thou knowest what is best.



No more on earth thy hand in  
Priestly Blessing,  
Upon the brow of dear ones canst  
Thou lay,  
But from the hands of Jesus and  
His Mother,  
Thou wilt a blessing win for us  
each day.



*Lalor, 63 Mid Abbey St., Dublin.*



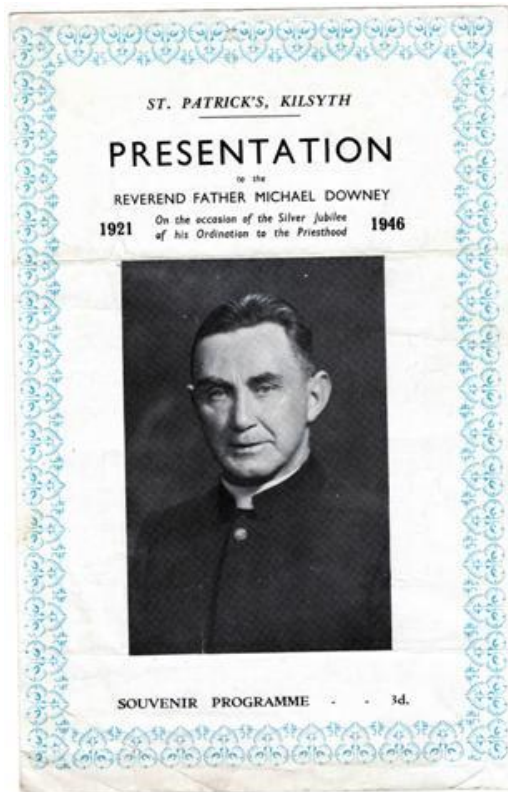
Above Canon Downey's old Headstone.

Below Canon Downey & Canon McGarvey's New Headstone in Kilsyth cemetery





Father Michael Downey's Silver Jubilee Presentation courtesy of George MacDonald



## Address

TO THE  
**REVEREND FATHER MICHAEL DOWNEY**  
 FROM THE PEOPLE OF  
**ST. PATRICK'S PARISH, KILSYTH**  
 ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
**Silver Jubilee of his Ordination to the Priesthood.**

Reverend and Dear Father Downey,

We are gathered together to-day to celebrate a great occasion in your life, the **Silver Jubilee** of your Ordination to the Priesthood. And while we share in your joy and thanksgiving for the tremendous graces which God has poured down upon you during the past twenty-five years, we feel that we are more than justified in observing the traditional custom by giving you a small token of the regard in which we hold you and of our gratitude to you for the work you have done for us all since you came to Kilsyth.

The apostolate of any parish priest is two-fold. First, there is his work for God, his efforts to increase the grace of God in each individual soul committed to his care, his desire to prepare saints for the Kingdom of Heaven. In this domain none but God alone can fully appreciate the good you have done among us, and we can be sure that He will reward you in His own royal way for your zeal in His service and on our behalf. Then there is that work which is visible and more easily judged by men. And when we think of all you have done during the eight years you have spent among us, hampered as you have been by the troubles of War and often handicapped by uncertain health, we may well thank God for having blessed this parish with your ministrations.

Hardly had you arrived in Kilsyth before you began to re-decorate and embellish the House of God and to build a new Chapel House, so badly needed. And during your stay here you have never ceased to show us, by example and precept, that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the one firm foundation of a truly Catholic life; you have spent your energies unsparingly in the organisation of parish societies and youth clubs; you have provided us with a site for playing fields which will, when finished, be the

envy of the whole district; you have restored and decorated the parish halls and made them second to none in Scotland; . . . you have, in a word, worked indefatigably and unflinchingly for the temporal and spiritual good of the parish. And as if that were not enough, you have devoted much of your time and energy to the improvement of educational facilities, and particularly to the furtherance of Catholic education, not merely of our own children, but also of those of the entire county.

You have indeed every right to say, with St. Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am. And His grace in me hath not been void." (1 Cor. 15, 10.)

But while even the bare list of your activities is impressive enough; it is not so much what you have done for us that commands our affection, respect and admiration, but rather what you are. For in you we see a priest who is truly a model for his people. A priest of vision, a priest who is not afraid to make plans on a large scale, a priest of great artistic taste, of extraordinary attention to detail, of tremendous drive and energy, a priest in whom we can recognise but one ambition, one purpose and one aim in life, the glory of God through the good of the parish.

It is that single-minded devotion to duty, coupled with your kindness to all who come to you for help and your transparent honesty of mind which endears you to us. You are a true apostle among us, ready to spend yourself and be spent for our souls. It may well be said that for you, our good comes first, last and all the time.

We hope that you will remain here in Kilsyth for many years to come. For we count ourselves blessed to have such a parish priest, and we know that it would be a just reward to your labours to build in this parish a church which is worthy of it.

So, while looking forward to many years of fruitful apostolate, whether in this parish or elsewhere (if God so will), we join with you to-day in thanking God for the many gifts and graces which He has granted you since He first chose you to be His priest, and pray that He will continue to pour down upon you the abundance of His blessings.

The Parishioners of St. Patrick's, Kilsyth.

(Signed) PATRICK HOLLAND, Chairman.  
 JOHN McWILLIAMS, Secretary.  
 Rev. T. McCARVILL,  
 Rev. JOHN C. BARRY,  
 Joint Treasurers.

*G.M.D.*

## PROGRAMME

1. Mr. John Carberry Baritone  
 "Ole Man River."  
 "Trees."
2. Miss Isabel McGuckin Soprano  
 "The Lost Chord."  
 Selected.
3. Mr. John McCluskey Tenor  
 "The Holy City."  
 "Gentle Maiden."
4. Miss Julia Cox Soprano  
 "Ave Maria" (Schubert).
5. Mr. Harry Dempsey Accordion  
 Selections.
6. Mr. John Carberry Baritone  
 "When Other Lips."
7. Miss Julia Cox Soprano  
 "I Dreamt that I dwelt in Marble Halls."
8. Mr. John McCluskey Tenor  
 "Bless this House."
9. Miss Isabel McGuckin Soprano  
 "The Lass with the Delicate Air."

**PRESENTATION TO Rev. Fr. DOWNEY**  
**Father Downey's Reply**

**FAITH OF OUR FATHERS**

John S. Burns & Sons, Printers, Glasgow, C.A.



The Michael Canon Downey Memorial Golf Tournament Trophy



This picture was taken some time between 1948 and 1955 and it shows a procession from the Parish House to the old St Patrick's church. The Parish priest is Canon Downey in front of him are the 2 assistant priests Fr Brennan closest to the camera with Fr Anthony beside him, a little obscured. The 6 Altar boys are from back to front - William McGuire, Joseph Clinton, Peter Canavan, Hugh Armstrong, Pat Harvey and an unknown.



Right to left – Michael Canon Downey beside Archbishop Campbell of Glasgow, Canon Ryan and Canon Ward at Corpus Christi parade in Holy Cross Croy c1950



Fr Michael Downey – a newly ordained priest in 1921 aged 25



This picture was taken in 1947 at the wedding of Frank Millar and Ellen Waters. It shows rear left Fr Thomas McCarville, rear right Canon Michael Downey. In the front row Eddie Waters, best man, Frank Millar, groom, Ellen Waters, bride and Mrs Nan Johnstone (nee Waters) bridesmaid.  
Courtesy of Catherine McGrath.





Canon Downey and Fr Thompson (the future Bishop Thompson) at the rear of the Chapel House in St Patrick's Kilsyth with two House Keepers c1947



Canon Downey and Fr Thompson (the future Bishop Thompson) at the rear of the Chapel House in St Patrick's Kilsyth with Canon Downey's dog c1947