

Father Francis Joseph (Frank) O'Regan

When Agnes Mary Sloan (1900-1952), a grand daughter of Peter Carrucan, married builder David Michael O'Regan (1900-1973) in Warrandyte in 1922, they could not have guessed the paths their children's lives would take – of their five children, three would serve the Catholic Church directly – two as priests and one as a Marist Brother – while the other two would marry and continue the family line.

Their children were born in quick succession, as was the norm in those days: Francis Joseph (1923-1985), Mary Margaret (1925-), Bernard David (1926-2005), Kevin John (1928-1981) and John Desmond (1930-1998).

At home, life was simple and well ordered. The family rosary was said every night. The children all went to Catholic schools and the family was heavily involved in parish life. Thus it was perhaps not surprising when in 1942, Kevin started pestering his parents for permission to join the Marist Brothers (he was at the time a student at St John's College in Hawthorn, run by the Marists). What was perhaps surprising was that he was only 14 years of age!

His parents eventually relented, allowing him to move later that same year to the Marist Brothers Juniorateⁱ at Mittagong, NSW. John then joined one year later, also going to the Juniorate in Mittagong. The two youngest boys went through their years of religious training together and both took their First Profession as Marist Brothers in July 1948. At this stage, their religious names were conferred – Kevin became Br. Henry and John became Br. Raymund.

It was a great shock to the family when, only months later, Kevin decided to leave the brothers and return to the laity. It must have been hard for John to continue on with the loss of his brother from their shared life. But carry on he did, serving as a Marist Brother until his death in Perth in 1998, after 50 years of Professed life.

When Kevin came home, he worked first for the Bank of NSW, then in the State Insurance Office. He married Margaret Byrth in the late 1950s and they had 5 children Mary Kathleen (1960), Michael John (1962), David James (1963), Geoffrey Kevin (1966) and Daniel Francis (1971).

Sadly he died in 1981 at only 52 years of age while playing in a social cricket match in Perth

Just as the two youngest brothers chose the same religious order, so the two oldest chose the Priesthood. First Frank entered the seminary in Werribee in 1943 and then Bernie followed him in 1944. That means that in the space of 2 years, all four boys had chosen to enter consecrated life.

Frank had been a very good cricketer and footballer and had tried out with Richmond cricket club before entering the seminary. An article in the Melbourne paper at the time noted that budding young cricketer Francis O'Regan had opted to enter the Catholic priesthood, thus putting an end to a promising cricketing career.

While at the seminary, Frank decided to opt for the country and transferred to the Sale diocese. He was ordained in Sale Cathedral in July 1949 and then spent the rest of his life ministering in that area. He was initially posted as curate to Morwell and then followed postings to Yallourn, Bairnsdale, Orbost, Morwell East and Pakenham, where he celebrated his 25th anniversary as a priest. He died while serving as parish priest at Pakenham in 1985, only 62 years of age.

Bernie was ordained two years later in July 1951 but chose the Melbourne archdiocese for his ministry. His life as a priest turned out to be anything but mundane as you can read in his own profile.

And what of Mary, left at home as all her brothers chose to follow religious vocations. She got on with life, finished school and eventually married Harry Tippet in 1949, just after her brother Frank had been ordained. They went on to have three children Mary Agnes (1955), John Michael (1956) and Bernadette Frances (1963).

Unfortunately Harry died in 1986 at only 64 years of age. Mary still lives in Melbourne, surrounded by multiple generations of O'Regans, Tippetts, Nolans, Keasts and Butlers.

It is great to see that Father Frank's memory lives on, as is illustrated by this article from the July 2010 edition of the Diocese of Sale newspaper 'Catholic Life'.

O'Regan chalice back in use



MGR Bill Caffrey (right) and Mgr John Allman concelebrate Mass with the O'Regan chalice.

A CHALICE donated to the Church by the family of the late Fr Frank O'Regan is being put to good use by two retired priests at O'Mara House, Traralgon.

The chalice is now used for daily Masses by Mgr John Allman and Mgr Bill Caffrey who share adjoining units at the retirement facility run by St Vincent de Paul.

It was passed on several years ago by the late Mgr Bernie O'Regan of Melbourne Archdiocese in memory of his brother who served here.

Fr O'Regan grew up in Box Hill and went to St Patrick's College in Sale.

He went through the seminary in the same year as Mgr Caffrey and they were ordained together in St Mary's Cathedral, Sale, by Bishop Richard Ryan in 1949.

Fr O'Regan served as curate at Morwell, Bairsdale and Orbost and was parish priest at Morwell East, Yallourn and Pakenham.

He served at Pakenham from 1969 until his death on June 25, 1985.

The simple silver chalice was made in Melbourne by well-known firm J.W. Sleeth and Son.

It and a silver patten are housed in a tight-fitting leather-clad storage box.

i The Marist Juniorate at Mittagong was a secondary boarding school for boys aspiring to become Brothers. It was opened in Mittagong in 1917 and was used for that purpose for 55 years.