

Rev. Fr. William Leo Brolly, (1903-1984)

Pioneer Principal of CKC Onitsha

Rev. Fr. William Leo Brolly was born on 16 May 1903 in Ballykelly, Co. Derry, Ireland.

Young Leonard had his early education at Blackrock, between 1917-1921. Having elected to become a priest, he professed at Kimmage, 1922, and professed at Rockwell and Blackrock. He studied Philosophy and Theology at St. Mary's. Rathmines and at the Castle, Blackrock.

Fr. Brolly was ordained in 1931 as a member of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers (Now Spiritans), he was appointed the following year to Nigeria and for the next 21 years worked in the old Onitsha and Owerri Provinces. In February 1933, was appointed by Archbishop Charles Herrey as the pioneer principal of **Christ the King College, Onitsha**. As principal of CKC, he was the main architect of the school's preeminence as an academic institution. He served in that capacity until 1937. He was succeeded by a fellow Holy Ghost priest, Rev. Fr. M. Flanagan. Fr. Brolly was subsequently redeployed as pastor in charge of the Ahiara Parish, Owerri.

From 1943 to 1945 Fr. Brolly served as Army chaplain with West African troops in the Middle East and North Africa. He then worked as Rector of the All Hallows Junior Seminary, Onitsha, until 1953. The extraordinary vigour of the Nigerian church and the prolific number of vocations to the local dioceses and to religious congregations including the Spiritans bears tribute to the early seminary directors of whom Fr. Brolly was one of the most distinguished.

In 1953 Fr. Brolly returned to Ireland and was subsequently sent to Canada where he established a new foundation in English-speaking parts Canada. Thanks to Bishop Cody of London, Ontario, (a past student of the Spiritans' St. Alexander's College, he made St. Rita's parish, Woodstock, his headquarters. He organized a mission-animation team which criss-crossed the country from Nova Scotia to British Columbia to introduce the Holy Ghost Fathers and their missions to English-speaking Canadians. In 1958 he laid the foundations of the Spiritans' first venture into education in Ontario – Neil McNeil High School, Toronto.

Having served for fifteen (15) years in Canada, Fr. Brolly returned once again to his native Ireland and in 1969 became superior of the Kilshane community. In 1975 he transferred to Kimmage where he remained until his death. Fundamentally sincere and serious, Fr. Leo was kind and considerate as superior, a good companion, and a raconteur with a fund of stories and quiet sense of humor.

Fr. Brolly's health began to fail after he suffered a stroke in July 1982. He died 8 April 1984, at the ripe old age of 80 in the town of in Kimmage, where he was also buried.