

Memories of Fr. Charles Murray C.Ss.R

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Published: 26 May 2014

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Fr Charles Murray or Charlie Murray died in Sunderland in 1987.

When he was ordained in the early '30s he was sent to Rome to study philosophy. When he finished his studies there he came back and he taught philosophy in Hawksstone before the war, during the war and after the war for a few years.

Later he was then appointed to Bishop Stortford where he was Parish Priest and later Rector, but he had a stroke while he was there, he was taken to hospital and he was very deeply unconscious.

He was lying there in hospital and he talked afterwards about his time, and he said he could even appear to be out of his body as it were, up at the ceiling looking down at his body, the doctors and nurses surrounding him and hearing their comments. One of the doctors turned to the other and said well as far as I can see this man is finished, and Charlie said at that moment he said to himself, he couldn't speak out loud, but he said to himself I am not, I will get better, I will get back on my feet and I will be able to celebrate Mass again. And sure enough, he came out of his unconscious state, eventually went home to Bishop Stortford and then was moved up to Sunderland and while he was there he gradually improved, so much so that he began to say Mass again, and he began to say Mass at the side altar in the church, the lady chapel at about 10 o'clock in the morning and gradually people began to realise he was saying Mass there every day and quite a crowd used to come to that 10 o'clock Mass. So much so that the 10 o'clock was made a public Mass in Sunderland, and it was in Sunderland that later he died.

Charlie went to Rome to try to obtain his doctorate in philosophy, and he wasn't always the most diplomatic of men, and in those days in what about the mid '30s he decided to write his doctoral thesis, his dissertation on the 'League of Nations' and then chose as his director one of the German professors in the angelecum, whether it was through this German Professor, from his partiality or not, no one knows but Charlie Murray's dissertation was not accepted.

And I remember Charlie talking to me because I did the same as he did and I taught philosophy for a few years and I always knew Charlie was a bit hesitant about what he was teaching, he didn't fully believe in the text books that he was bound to use, by Rome, the text books I had to use. The text books the title of the Rector had to send up to Rome each year in Philosophy, Dogmatic Theology and Moral Theology, to make sure that no text book had been changed without official permission from Rome. And in his later life Charlie said to me once he said did you have a way to believe in everything you had to teach the students when you were lecturing in philosophy, and I said No, and he said Thank God for that neither did I.