

Brother Anselm – Anthony Keogh

[Br Terence Collins](#)

Eulogy given at Br Anselm's funeral August on 28th July 2008, at Clayton Court.

Anthony Keogh was born in 1924, a Yorkshireman and a native of Leeds, as were his father and mother, William Keogh and Gertrude (whose maiden name was Wordsworth). Yorkshire grit and thrift were part of Anselm's make up, but he came very close to losing his Yorkshire-ness and nearly became a Devonian. His father worked for the Norwich Union Insurance Society, and those benevolent employers arranged for him to transfer to their branch in Torquay, Devon, because of his poor health. (He had suffered from a chest complaint ever since his experience in the First World War when he was taken prisoner.)



Anselm always had fond memories of the house in Teignmouth with its beautiful view over the river. However, the idyllic existence was shattered by the sudden death of his mother in February 1931 followed by the death of his father in June of the same year. The children returned to Yorkshire to live with relatives. Anthony and his elder brother went to live with their maternal uncle in Wetherby, while his sisters went to live with maternal aunts.

The Norwich Union again stepped in with its generous policy towards the dependents of deceased employees. They paid for the children's education, and that enabled Anthony and his elder brother to attend De La Salle College, Pendleton as boarders. And so he came in contact with the De La Salle Brothers. In his second year there, he responded to a visit by the Brother Recruiter and expressed a wish to 'join the Brothers'.

Anselm never knew what inspired his uncle and aunt to choose De La Salle College, away on the other side of the Pennines, in Lancashire of all places, but in later years he always said that Providence must have been at work in the decision. This was typical of the simple but profound and steadfast faith that he developed as a Religious. We cannot but draw a parallel with the life of the Founder who lost his mother and father within a space of two years. This put an end to his university career in Paris, but set him on a course that was to determine his whole life.

So in August 1937 Anthony Keogh set off at the age of 13 for Kintbury, where he spent four years in the Junior Novitiate in Inglewood. He was very happy in his studies and with the benefit of good teachers he did extremely well in the Oxford School Certificate.

In those days Inglewood belonged to what we would call today the English Sector of the District of Ireland. Consequently, Anthony went to Castletown, Ireland, for his Novitiate year in 1941. In his own words "Conditions were hard, yes, but tolerable, and we had the good fortune to be under the guidance of a most kind-hearted Director of Novices, Brother Berchan Close."

In November 1942, at the height of the Second World War, Anthony returned as Brother Anselm to

Inglewood for his 2 years of study in the Scholasticate. He was happy to be back at his studies, this time for the Higher School Certificate. Anselm enjoyed academic studies and he was good at them – a fact that did not escape the eagle eye of Brother Gilbert Ailbe.

In 1938 Gilbert had been appointed Auxiliary Visitor with responsibility for the English Sector. He was a man of vision and determination, and one of his first concerns was to improve the level of academic qualifications among the Brothers. The opening of a Community for university studies (similar to the Community in Ely Place Dublin) was one of his earliest priorities. He succeeded in establishing such a Community in Cambridge in 1942, and he was on the look out for the 'right Brothers' to send there. His gaze rested on Anselm as a most promising young Brother. So it was that, along with his other studies, Anselm was instructed to take up the study of Greek and Latin with a view to reading Classics at Cambridge at some future date.

In 1944, after 2 years in Inglewood, Anselm would have expected to go to St Mary's College Strawberry Hill for his period of teacher training. However, another of those 'providential events' intervened at this point in the form of a crisis in the Prep School in Cardiff occasioned by a Brother's decision to leave the Institute. It says a great deal about the Superiors'

high opinion of Anselm's abilities that they had no hesitation in sending him all untrained to fill the gap. Nowadays it would be looked on as a 'gap year' of school experience prior to a teacher training course, and it would be viewed as a highly enlightened step. Anselm did indeed enjoy his school experience, but he later admitted that during that time his classical studies gradually fell by the wayside.

After two enjoyable years in Cardiff, he moved to Strawberry Hill to resume his studies, this time for the Teachers Certificate. Next there followed three happy years of teaching in West Park Catholic Grammar School, St Helens. Brother Gilbert, however, had not forgotten his intention that Anselm should apply for a place in Cambridge. This he duly did, and he succeeded in obtaining a place at Saint Katherine's College. However, by this time the Classics agenda had been thoroughly shelved, and he spent his three years 'up' reading Geography, which as we all know became the love of his life ever afterwards.

Then it was back to teaching, first in St Helens for another satisfying three years and then in Liverpool for ten years of what he described as hard work. It was during this period that he honed his skills as a teacher and became really good at the profession. He also learned to drive. The Liverpool Community boasted the possession of a car for its daily trips across the city from house to school. Anselm as Subdirector was deputed to drive, much to the relief of the other Brothers in light of the deficiencies in the driving techniques of Brother Oswald the Director.

It was Anselm's reputation as a first rate teacher that brought about his next move to De La Salle College, Hopwood Hall, in 1967, where he was to be a trainer of teachers working in the Geography Department for the next 22 years. This new kind of work gave him a great deal of 'job satisfaction' and he did it very well. He was respected by his colleagues and liked by the students. He was especially noted for the quality of his supervision and guidance of students during their periods of teaching practice. This was something he really enjoyed. He also loved doing the fieldwork trips that formed the practical part of the course in Geography. He was a colleague and a friend to all in his Department. He was especially noted as a scientist with a grounding in classical languages, and on field trips to France his knowledge of the language was much appreciated.

Besides being something of an academic, Anselm was a very down-to-earth person and he loved things of a practical nature. In fact he was a bit of a jack of all trades. He was a good mechanic, skilled at the 'plane and the lathe'. Indeed his lathe was well known for

moving around with him from house to house. It was especially familiar to the young Brothers who were 'volunteered' to do the heaving and hauling across Manchester from one basement to another. He was also proficient in the micro-engineering skills of a watch-mender. He just loved having a tool in his hands.

He dabbled in printing, and his skills in photography enabled him to amass a huge range of audiovisual aids for his subject specialisms (Historical Geography, Cartographical Techniques and The Geography of Australia). It was this last item which occasioned the one big piece of extravagance in Anselm's otherwise straightforward career, namely his visit to Australia, where he took what seemed to be thousands of photographs to add to his slide collection. His eyes would glow whenever he got the chance to talk about them. Indeed, he retained a simple, boyish enthusiasm for everything throughout his life, an enthusiasm that was most noticeable in his abiding passion for steam trains of every shape and size.

Anselm was always ready and willing to help. He was unassuming and approachable and totally sincere. His Yorkshire thrift may have been a bit too conspicuous at times, but he was never mean-minded or malicious. He was an open book, and he did not try to hide his feelings of pleasure or displeasure. For example, he hated mispronunciations of his name as 'Anslem' or even worse 'Anslum'. (Other variations that cropped up were Brother Aslam and even Brother Aslef.) He also disliked it intensely when he heard anybody say 'drorin pin' or 'the lor o God' – a pet hatred he no doubt acquired in Liverpool. He hated any criticism of his driving. However his anger lasted only for the moment and his smile easily returned.

In many ways Anselm was an ideal 'Community' man, and that meant the Superiors felt able to ask him to undertake a wide variety of roles in the District. Thus it was that during his years in Hopwood, besides being a lecturer and tutor, he took on the role of Director of Student Brothers in the Castleton Hostel from 1973 onwards. He moved with them to the Eccles Novitiate in 1977 (accompanied by the lathe) and commuted to Hopwood to carry on lecturing. In Eccles, he was noted for his readiness to do all kinds of odd jobs around what was a very old house in Ellesmere Road. He also decided to improve the culture of the Brothers by playing classical music during breakfast each morning. Classical music was another love of his life, and it was something he greatly regretted losing with the progressive deafness that overtook him in later years.

It is fair to say that Anselm found it easier to relate to his teaching practice students than to the student Brothers. The 1970s were years of change in liturgy and in the religious life. Anselm did not adapt easily to the new ways of thinking. However, it is also fair to say that he tried his best, and the fault was not always on his side. Although he was 'out of his depth', when it came to the personal accompaniment of the young Brothers, they were able to recognize his witness of faithfulness in obedience, his fidelity to the task he had been asked to do, his steadfast faithfulness in personal prayer, in community prayer and in the daily Eucharist.

After retiring from Hopwood in 1988, Anselm returned to Eccles in what can only be described as a holding exercise, looking after a house that was in search of a purpose. When that purpose came in the form of the ELANICO Language Centre, he was clearly disappointed at not being asked to be part of it. Nevertheless, he reconciled himself to the move to Clayton Court in 1993 with characteristic obedience.

Once there, he really enjoyed the chance to develop at leisure the many hobbies and interests that had always been a source of joy to him, and he entered whole-heartedly into his new role as Sub-Director and super driver.

His fifteen years in Clayton Court were happy ones almost to the end. Those who knew Anselm could not fail to notice his rapid decline over the past twelve months. He developed a pronounced stoop and moved around with some difficulty. In fact he had developed prostate trouble, and that called for minor surgery in July 2008, after which he felt better but was not entirely comfortable. He went to hospital for a general scan on Wednesday August 6th 2008. This revealed that there were in fact two unrelated cancers – one in the prostate and one in the liver. The cancer of the liver was very aggressive and the doctor said it would only be a matter of time. From then on he was confined to bed. Communication became very difficult. He deteriorated rapidly; he did not eat and he could drink only through a straw. By Sunday 17th, he could not drink even with a straw. All were astonished that he kept going for two more days until 5.20 a.m. on Tuesday 19th of August.