ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE
WESTMINSTER

Fr Duncan Michael Adamson R.I.P.

Parishioners at the Most Sacred Heart church, Ruislip and members of the family, friends and clergy of the Diocese and beyond were shocked and saddened by the death of Fr Duncan Adamson at St Anne's Care Home, Stoke Newington on Sunday 16 October. Fr Duncan had gone to live there early in September due to retirement caused by a sudden deterioration in his heath. It was known that he was unwell but he remained hopeful that the treatment he was receiving would enable him to remain in his beloved Ruislip until, at least, Christmas. Fr Duncan, typically, did not make a fuss and he was determined to carry on as best he could despite increasing frailty. He was grateful for the support given to him in the presbytery and parish, especially by Fr Sebastian Joseph, seconded for ministry in the parish and chaplaincy to Catholics from Kerala by the Bishop of Quilon. It saddened Fr Duncan that he was unable to remain in Ruislip to bid farewell to Fr Sebastian and to welcome Fr Jose in mid-September. Throughout his ministry, and during his illness and short retirement, Fr Duncan's love for, and trust in, the Lord was evident.

Duncan Adamson was born in Northfield, Birmingham on 9 June 1948, the eldest of three sons. His father's work meant relocation to west London in 1955. At the age of nine Duncan, a regular attender of Mass on weekdays as well as on Sundays, was Confirmed, taking the name Aloysius. He was educated at the parish primary school, then at the Salvatorian College, Harrow before going to Shoreditch College in Egham, from 1967 to 1970, to study for a Certificate in Education. He studied the theory and practice of education and trained to teach woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing. He then worked as a teacher at Queensmead Schoool, South Ruislip and then at Bishopshalt School in Hillingdon. He looked after the school's minibus fleet and accompanied students on trips in the summer to locations in the UK and further afield in Europe and North America. As a member of the Most Sacred Heart parish Duncan served as a committed lay parishioner for many years, including as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and as the Master of Ceremonies with a concern for the worthy celebration of the liturgy and the training of altar servers. He was a good teacher, by example as well as by instruction. He encouraged youngsters who served to share responsibility for the preparation of the church for Mass, for serving at Mass and for clearing up afterwards. His easy way with children and young people was a gift nurtured by his training and career as a teacher.

After fifteen years of work, imparting knowledge and developing the skills of his secondary school students, Duncan returned to student life as a seminarian for the Diocese of Westminster at the Pontifical Beda College, Rome in 1985. There he was a keen student, becoming Dean of Students, and he developed lasting friendships.

Fr Duncan was ordained to the priesthood on 24 June 1989 at the age of 41. His was a mature vocation that blessed the Church and the Diocese with 33 years of steady and faithful service. His ordination, by Cardinal Basil Hume OSB, Archbishop of Westminster, was in the church of the Most Sacred Heart, Ruislip. His first appointment as an Assistant Priest took him back to west London, to St Raphael's, Yeading where he served from 1989 to 1993. His next appointment was to the parish of St Lawrence, Feltham where he remained for a year when he was appointed Parochial Administrator at Our Lady of Sorrows and St Bridget of Sweden parish, Isleworth where he remained for two years. In 1996 Fr Duncan was appointed Parish Priest of Our Lady of the Rosary, Marylebone. He served as Parish Priest until 2009 when he was appointed to the Most Sacred Heart, Ruislip serving as Parish Priest until his premature retirement, due to ill health, in September 2022. As Parish Priest Fr Duncan also served local parishes and the Diocese as Dean and, from September 2019 to May 2021, as an Episcopal Vicar in west London.

Kind, thoughtful, practical and dependable, Fr Duncan was attentive to the needs of his parishioners and to the condition of the church, parish hall and presbytery buildings in his various appointments. His ministry enhanced the lives of his parishioners and his practical skills were used to improve the parish property. If something broken could be fixed, or a fixture made, he would attend to it using his skill and the tools and timber he had collected over the years. His priority was always the church before attending to the presbytery.

For several years as a priest Fr Duncan would take a post-Christmas break on the north Norfolk coast near Walsingham where he would celebrate Mass at the basilica followed by walks and a good evening meal. Regular walking holidays in the UK, especially in the Lake District, were enjoyed by Fr Duncan over the years. His devotion to Our Lady brought him to Lourdes, leading a group from the parish as part of the diocesan pilgrimage every July. He will be fondly remembered for his commitment and reliability, and for his dry and self-deprecating sense of humour. Frequently Fr Duncan would remind others that Jesus has counted every hair on our heads – he would point to his advancing baldness while saying 'not so many to count on my head these days'! West London, and Ruislip in particular, was close to Fr Duncan's heart. There, in his 'home parish' of the Most Sacred Heart, he celebrated his seventieth birthday and also the Silver and Thirtieth Anniversaries of his ordination. How fitting it is that this church is the venue for his Funeral Mass. When Fr Duncan knew the time had come for him to stand down as Parish Priest he would surely have recalled words of the Nunc Dimittis prayed every night: '…all powerful Master, you give leave to your servant to go in peace…' And now we pray in thanksgiving for Fr Duncan's life and ministry. May this faithful priest rest in peace and rise in glory.

Fr Duncan's Funeral Mass – Thursday 10 November, the Most Sacred Heart church, Ruislip; burial 11 November at Northwood Cemetery.

Mgr Martin Hayes | Vicar General | Diocese of Westminster
30 October 2022