ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE
WESTMINSTER

Fr Seán Carroll R.I.P.

Fr Seán Carroll was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Westminster on 11 June 1988. His priestly formation was at St Patrick's College, Thurles in Co. Tipperary. In his final report on Seán the seminary President wrote, 'I will be deliberately brief. Seán has been an excellent student in every way. I have the highest regard for him and he should do great work for the Lord in the Archdiocese of Westminster.' The President went on to become a Bishop, Seán went on to fulfill the words that were written about him. His unexpected death in the presbytery at Ruislip, at the age of 68 years, shocked and saddened all who know him – his family, friends and parishioners in Ruislip and elsewhere. His 36 years of priestly ministry in which he did great work for the Lord, generously serving his parishioners, leave a lasting legacy that will not be forgotten.

Born on 7 November 1956 to parents John and Christina (formerly Guidera) Carroll, in Co. Tipperary, Seán was baptised four days later in the local church of St James in Two-Mile-Borris with the name John Bosco, John after his father and Bosco chosen by his mother because of her devotion to St John Bosco. Seán is, of course, Irish for John. His primary education was at the local two-teacher National School. He then went to the Christian Bothers School in Thurles to study for Intermediate Certificate exams. Secondary level education was completed at the Mill Hill school in Freshford in Co. Kilkenny. Having completed his school education Seán took employment as a clerk with the Royal Liver Assurance Company in Thurles. During this time he was very active in the Legion of Mary. He spent a year working with missionaries in Iceland.

In 1982 Seán went to St Patrick's College seminary in Thurles. Inspired by the writings of Cardinal George Basil Hume OSB, Archbishop of Westminster, Seán applied to the Diocese for acceptance with the hope of being ordained for service in Westminster. He was given encouragement to do so by priests of the Diocese who also had studied in Thurles. He was accepted. In the summer of 1987, during the holidays, he went to Calcutta to work as a missionary for two months with Saint Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity. Although he did not meet Mother Teresa, she was in Africa at the time, this experience left a deep and lasting impression on Seán.

In a letter of welcome to the Diocese following his ordination to the priesthood the Cardinal encouraged Fr Seán to remain steadfast to his prayer life, advice taken to heart by Fr Seán. Fr Seán's first appointment was to New Southgate where he served as Assistant Priest from 1988-92. He was then appointed to Willesden where he remained until 1994. His first appointment as a Parish Priest was to Stonebridge where he served from 1994-2002. In February 2002 Fr Seán took up his appointment as full time diocesan delegate for child protection issues, having undertaken this work, part time, since 2000. It was to become part time again in the summer of 2002 when Fr Seán was appointed Parish Priest at Edmonton. He handed on the child protection work to his successor in 2003. Fr Seán remained in Edmonton for eight years until 2010. He was then appointed Parish Priest at Stroud Green until 2022. In 2016 he was appointed to serve as Dean of Haringey, an appointment he accepted with characteristic

generosity. While at Stroud Green Fr Seán commissioned the window in the church porch that has the images of people whose lives had inspired him: St Peter, St Teresa of Calcutta, St Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, St Maximillian Kolbe, St Josephine Bakhita. The Canadian priest and writer, Fr Ronald Rolheiser OMI, is another person who gave Fr Seán inspiration and who writings on theology and spirituality he would often quote. Fr Seán requested, and was given, sabbatical leave enabling him to fulfill his ambition to walk the pilgrim way of the Camino in northern Spain. He kept a journal during these seven weeks describing his deepening spiritual journey on the pilgrimage, 'an awesome spiritual experience', he wrote. In January 2023 Fr Seán took up his next, and final, appointment as Parish Priest at Ruislip. He died, at home in the presbytery, on 5 January – the day before the second anniversary of his arrival in the parish.

Fr Seán rejoiced in being able to celebrate the Eucharist, bringing the real presence of the Lord to his parishioners and being personally and profoundly nourished and sustained in celebrating and receiving the Eucharist. He was a skilled communicator, using stories and humour to help children and adults to deepen their understanding of the scriptures and how the scriptures are applied to daily living. Throughout his life Fr Seán loved his family, friends and parishioners, and that love was requited. He also loved football, the 'beautiful game', and was an avid Arsenal supporter. Golf was another love of his life, disclosing that meeting friends regularly on Thursdays on the golf course helped him to remain sane! Playing golf, being with friends, making time for his family, were all important to Fr Seán. He won't be joining his golfing friends for the trip to the Algarve on 7 February. They, and all who knew Fr Seán, will remain united in thanksgiving to God for the life and ministry of this faithful priest.

May the soul of Fr Seán, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Fr Seán's Funeral Mass – Thursday 30 January, Most Sacred Heart church, Ruislip

Mgr Martin Hayes | Vicar General | Diocese of Westminster
25 January 2025