

# A day in the life of a not so typical life



- **Seminarian:** Robert Smyth
- **Diocesan Priest:** Father John Coughlan
- **Religious Sister:** Sister Maria Sidorova
- **Religious Brother:** Brother Martin Bennett Ofm Cap
- **Missionary Brother:** An Br Mícheál (Brother Michael O'Donoghue)

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# A Day in the Life of a Seminarian

## Robert Smyth

**06:15** My alarm sounds. I'm on sacristy duty this week, which means that I have to head to the oratory a little earlier than normal to prepare for Morning Prayer and Mass. **07:00** 'O God, come to our aid...' is intoned on the other side of the oratory as the seminary community comes to life for another day. Each day begins with prayer, thanking God for the many opportunities He gives us and asking His help and direction for the day ahead. **07:15** 'The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.' Morning prayer leads us to twenty minutes of silent meditation. I let myself be distracted for a minute, looking around the oratory at the other men pursuing God's call to Holy Priesthood. I thank Him for the community he has gathered to share this journey together... and so begins my meditation. **07:35** An efficient process follows which sees the choir for the day rehearse the hymns for Mass, the clergy vest and the final preparations in the oratory complete. The organ sounds the first note of the Entrance Hymn at 07:45 – we are blessed to have an exceptionally gifted organist in our midst. The standard of liturgical music in Maynooth is very high – those who sing well pray twice!

After breakfast in Pugin Hall, I begin lectures at **09.00**. I'm in my second year, studying philosophy in the neighbouring NUI, Maynooth. I'm blessed in many ways, but particularly in that I love studying philosophy. Far from a removed and purely hypothetical subject, it trains you to think for yourself that is a life-skill in itself. From 9am to 6pm, a seminarian's day is similar to that of any third-level student. Lectures, tutorials, reading, essay-writing, study in the library – all form part of a standard day. Academic formation is but a quarter of the plan that the Church has for the formation of her priests however. There are four 'pillars' of formation – human, spiritual, academic and pastoral. With these in mind, additional activities fill our days. Spiritual direction (one-on-one meetings with a spiritual direction, often by a warm fireplace), formation meetings (one-on-one meetings with a director of formation), pastoral work (for me, working with people with mental health difficulties in a HSE facility), singing lessons, organ lessons, choir practice all add to the day's workload, not to mention laundry! The formation is broad and gives a breadth of experience that few walks of life can rival.

**18:00** The community gather in the oratory again to pray the Angelus, followed by Evening Prayer at 18:10. After the Rosary, I pay my third visit of the day to Pugin Hall – for supper. Following supper, there is time for reading, prayer, recreation, choir practice or even pastoral work. **21:00** Several evenings per week, the community gather for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament - a time of intimate prayer with Jesus. Night prayer follows at **21:45** – a time to examine my conscience to ask God's mercy for my failings of the day and to thank him for his many blessings. Once the Blessed Sacrament has been reserved and the Marian hymn sung, the day formally draws to a close. I say formally as it's not uncommon for friends to gather for a good chat over tea, snooker, table tennis and other distractions. A healthy balance between prayer, work and recreation is important. The patterns we establish now as seminarians will sustain us in our priesthood. So too will the friends we make. Another day begins after a good night's sleep. *Robert Smyth*



# A Day in the Life of a Diocesan Priest

## Father John Coughlan

When I was in my teens, if someone had said to me that I would be a priest, I wouldn't have believed them! However, I was ordained priest in 2008 after seven years formation. My current full-time ministry is further study at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, having previously ministered in parish and third-level chaplaincy.

A typical day for me begins at about 6:45am when the radio comes on. Following the morning rituals of washing and dressing, I pray *Morning Prayer* before joining the seminary community for Mass at 7:45am. After Mass, I have breakfast in Pugin Hall, usually with the seminarians. 'Pugin' as it's known, is a large dining-room in Maynooth.

I start my daily work sometime around 8:45am. The area of study that I am focusing on is 'Faith and Culture', particularly the question of secularisation. What does 'secular' mean? Are we now a secular country? Are we secularising? These are some of the questions that interest me. They are also important questions for the Church to discuss, explore and enter into conversation with others about.

Just before 11am, I break for coffee. Usually I pray the *Office of Readings* around this time.

Come 12:30pm, I take a break from my work and join with friends and colleagues for lunch. After lunch I try to take some quiet time. Sometimes I take a walk in the grounds to the rear of the College, at other times I will take a moment in one or other of the Chapels that dot the campus. I carry the Divine Office (prayers that a priest recites each day) in an app on my phone. I pray *Prayer During the Day* around this time. Around 2pm I am back at the desk.

The seminary community meets at 6:10pm for *Evening Prayer*. Sometimes I join them; at other times I recite the *office* in my room, before the evening meal at 6:30pm. Depending on my workload, I may do some more work after supper, or relax with some friends. I enjoy going to the cinema and to the odd live show at Dublin's Vicar Street.

I am currently reading *Not in Your Lifetime: The Assassination of JFK* by Anthony Summers. A friend of mine gave it to me for Christmas. For spiritual reading, I am reading *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* by Marcus J. Borg.

Being a night owl, I have to force myself to be in bed about 11:30pm. I pray *Night Prayer* and put out the light, thankful to the Lord for the day that has been and the life that he has called me to live.

**Fr John Coughlan**





# A Day in the Life of a Religious Sister

## Sr Maria Sidorova

I live in a contemplative community and though my days might look to an outsider pretty much the same and perhaps even dull or wasted, there is more than enough of variety, surprises and opportunities to learn and experience something new in the most ordinary days. Every morning my alarm clock tries hard to wake me up. Well, most of the times it does wake me up but it is not the alarm clock that makes me get up. I start my day with gratitude to God for the gift of a new day.

The community gathers in the chapel for the first common prayer at 7am. We start with a hymn to the Holy Spirit, entrusting ourselves, all that is ahead of us as well as the whole world to his guidance. What follows is one of the most precious moments of my day. We have thirty minutes of silent meditation which I love to spend with the Gospel reading for the day. I try to listen to God's word as it shapes my way of thinking and being in the concrete situations of my life. Then we proceed with praying the *Liturgy of the Hours*, namely the invitatory and the morning prayer. During the day we come back at different hours to pray the other parts of the *Office* around which our whole life is centered. Nevertheless, it's not just about saying the prayers in the chapel. Whether I am working, eating, doing my studies, reading a book, playing the piano, walking in the garden, spending time in solitude or with the sisters, I know that every minute of the day, every breath I take is an expression of prayer.



What I like about “the Redemptoristine way” of spending the day is that every hour, prayer or activity is in memory of some aspect of Jesus’ life. For example, the three hours of silence in the afternoon are in memory of Jesus’ suffering on the cross. Our work time is in memory of the hidden life of Jesus in Nazareth. However, our “remembering” is not only about the past, it’s rather a call to enter the mystery of redemption very much at work in our own times. It means that I am called not only to be united to Christ but also to every human being as they go through all kinds of situations in their day.

As a consecrated person I have given my entire life to God. My time, my talents and my limitations are at his service and at the service of others. Please God I will make my Solemn Profession in July. I am looking forward to that day very much, but I am also looking forward to tomorrow, to another ordinary day, a gift from God.



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**Sr Maria Sidorova**

# A Day in the Life of a Religious Brother

## Brother Martin Bennett OfmCap

A typical day for me usually begins with a short, yet fervent, prayer - 'Dear Lord, just five more minutes' – prompted by the sound of my alarm at 6.15am. I join the rest of the Friars, and members of the public who join us, for meditation at 6.30am, followed by Mass and Morning Prayer at 7am. I am in my 6<sup>th</sup> year with the Capuchin Franciscans and currently studying Theology & Philosophy in All Hallows College, Drumcondra. I live in community, or Fraternity as we call it, with 7 other Friars in Raheny. Fraternity, meaning Brotherhood, is at the core of our lives as Friars. We strive to live this out with each other, and with those we minister too, through our lives of prayer and service to the poor.

No day is the same here. As a student, during term, a lot of my time is taken up with lectures, reading and essays. Apart from this, there is always something to be done around the Friary, from grocery shopping to solving various computer problems, being the youngest, it is assumed that I am the computer expert!! Our Friaries are open, warm and welcoming places for all who visit. Raheny, in particular, is a place of prayer and stillness for the many people who come here each day. Our chapel is open from 6am each morning until 9pm at night, with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament all day. Our prayer is open to the public and, as well as in the morning, we are joined by local people for meditation, rosary and evening prayer from 5pm – 6pm each day and, in turn, they form part of our extended Fraternity.

As part of our service to the poor, under the leadership of Brother Kevin Crowley, we run the Capuchin Day Centre for Homeless People in Bow Street, serving over 700 meals each day and 1600 food parcels each Wednesday to those most in need. This is a very tangible expression of our Fraternity and follows closely in the footsteps of our founder, Saint Francis of Assisi. The Centre has been running for over 40 years and now provides, in addition to food, a Doctor, Nurse, Dentist and Chiropodist.

Since joining I have had the opportunity to live in Oxford and Zambia, working in varied apostolates with young people, drug addicts, psychiatric patients and the homeless. I am part of our Provincial Vocations Team, which promotes our way of life, and have worked to develop our on-line presence through our Vocations Blog, Facebook and Twitter. Our life is a life of Fraternity, prayer and service, lived in the midst of the world, offering a 'welcome' to all we encounter.

***Brother Martin Bennett OfmCap***

**Capuchin Franciscan**



# A Day in the Life of a Missionary Brother

## Brother Michael O'Donoghue

My name is Br Michael O'Donoghue, known here as Br Michael, a Christian Brother from Tipperary. I spent most of my life teaching in Ireland – in Dublin, Monasterevin, Tralee, Kilkenny and Thurles. I have been here in Zambia for 12 years and am based in Mufulira. Teaching Maths and Science in Mufulira High School has occupied me for seven years. It is a large Government school of some 1,500 pupils. I was then appointed as Mission Development Officer for Zambia. This involves coordinating requests and applications for funds and then monitoring the work and the expenditure and reporting. In recent weeks I have had the pleasant task of overseeing work on a new library in Mazabuka, a new classroom block in Maz, a new bakery operating in Lukulu, a new computer room in Livingstone (Ngwenya C. S.), teachers houses refurbished in Mongu, a new maternity unit in Mokambo, new diesel injector bench in Kaoma and new roofing for the AV and practical subjects block at St Edmunds in Mazabuka.



It is wonderful to see so much infrastructure being put in place for poor people and we are very grateful to *Misean Cara*, to *Edmund Rice Development*, to *Gorta* and to the many schools and other donors in Ireland whose support is so essential in our efforts to empower so many poor and marginalized people. As can be seen, with so much monitoring and other support work to be done, I spend a lot of time moving around. But when I am at home in Mufulira with my two Zambian companions, Br Lubasi Simasiku and Br Egidious Chalo, my day would be something like this – but it varies quite a lot:

**06.15** Morning Prayer **06.40** Breakfast usually Porridge **07.15** Out on my bike for a spin before it gets hot – good for my heart ! **08.15** Work in the office - applications, emails, phone calls, reports, finances etc etc. Just now I am working on some twelve applications and some thirty reports. There is a lot happening. **10.30** A cup of coffee to rejuvenate myself. The other two Brothers are away teaching in Chibolya C.S. **13.15** Lunch/Dinner with the Brothers who have returned from school. **14.00** A short siesta to avoid the heat of the day. **15.30** Back in the office to continue to deal with correspondence, do planning, research etc. **17.30** Mass and evening prayer either here or at the local Dominican Convent. **18.30** Evening meal - leisurely and chatty. 19.45 Some quiet time - reading, reflecting, relaxing. **21.00** Watching TV - often soccer - my two companions are mad Man Utd supporters. **11.00** Lock up and then off to bed.

At home also and in between times, I check on progress at Chibolya community school (for poor Children c. 360), help out in Murundu Development centre with computers (some afternoons), check on the upgrading of WaSH facilities (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in eight schools), provide support for feeding/nutrition programmes for elderly poor, orphans and vulnerable mothers/babies and presently just now buying electrical and plumbing items to equip our new maternity block in Mokambo.

Life is very interesting and sometimes challenging. We are very grateful to our friends and supporters in Ireland without whose assistance we could not function. We pray God's Blessing on all those who help us. Beannacht Dé go Fial oraibh uile.

*An Br Micheál*