



## **Death of The Right Reverend Kevin J Dunn** **Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle**



**July 1950 – March 2008**

It is with great sadness that the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle announces the death of The Rt Rev Kevin John Dunn, Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle. He died at 9.30pm on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008, in the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne, at the age of 57.

Bishop Kevin Dunn was ordained the twelfth Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, by Bishop Ambrose Griffiths on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2004, the Feast of St Bede, at St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Bishop Kevin had been poorly in intensive care at the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne since Friday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Over the last three weeks, although there were times when he was kept very stable, his overall condition continued to deteriorate.

The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and Bishop Kevin's family are extremely thankful to the medical teams who did all they could to treat Bishop Kevin and keep him comfortable. The Vicar General, Canon Seamus Cunningham, said: "We are very grateful to the doctors and nurses at the Freeman Hospital for the loving care and concern given to the Bishop and his family throughout his illness."

The death of Bishop Kevin will be greatly felt throughout the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and people in the parishes will be at prayer for their late Bishop.

The Diocese extends its sympathy to Bishop Kevin's mum Cath, his sisters Elizabeth, Mary and Julia and his brothers Stephen and Peter, and to his nieces and nephews, who will all miss him greatly. The Diocese also extends its prayers and sympathy to Pamela Hyland, Bishop Kevin's housekeeper for the last three and half years in this Diocese, as well as many years previously in his home Diocese.

Just before he died, Bishop Kevin's family gathered together with Canon Cunningham, with clergy from the Episcopal Council and Bishop's Secretary and the prayers for the sick and dying were prayed together.

May the Lord welcome this faithful servant with love and mercy. May he rest in peace.

## **Biography of Bishop Kevin Dunn**

Kevin John Dunn was born in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1950. He went to St Mary's Primary School then on to St Patrick's Secondary School in Newcastle-under-Lyme. He studied with the Salvatorian Fathers at Christleton Hall in Chester, and studied A Levels at Cotton College in North Staffordshire.

He studied for the priesthood at Oscott College, Birmingham, and was ordained to the priesthood at Our Lady and St Werbergh's Church in Clayton, Newcastle under Lyme on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1976.

He served in St Patrick's, Walsall, and was chaplain to Stuart Bathurst High School. He became chaplain to the Caribbean community in the Archdiocese of Birmingham from 1980 to 1987 where he lived in Aston, Birmingham (next door to Aston Villa football ground!).

For two years he was Parish Priest at Our Lady of the Angels and St Peter in Chains, Stoke-on-Trent. He was also Chaplain to the Royal Infirmary, and Chaplain to Staffordshire University.

He underwent further studies at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome and was awarded a Doctorate in Canon Law in 1991.

Upon his return to England in 1991, he worked as a Parish Priest in St Austin's, Stafford and also lectured in Canon Law at Oscott College. During this time he became the Episcopal Vicar for Religious in the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

In 2001 he was also appointed full time Episcopal Vicar for the areas of Wolverhampton, Walsall, the Black Country and Worcestershire.

In 2002 he became a Canon of the Metropolitan Chapter of St Chad and a member of the Episcopal Council, in the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

The announcement of his appointment as Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle by His Holiness Pope John Paul II was made on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2004, the Feast of St Cuthbert, patron of the Diocese. He was ordained Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2004, the Feast of St Bede, at the Cathedral Church of St Mary in Newcastle upon Tyne.

### **Bishop Kevin's work in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle:**

Although Bishop Kevin was Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle for less than four years, he has made a deep impact in the Diocese, amongst the clergy of the Diocese, and the many people whose lives he touched both in the Diocese and beyond.

As a member of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Bishop Kevin has been very involved with several committees; he was an Episcopal member of the Catholic Education and Formation Committee and the Chair of the Board of Religious Studies of the Catholic Education Service. He was a Committee Member of the Catholic Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (COPCA); he was also Chair of the Canon Law Working Party.

Bishop Kevin established an Episcopal Council, appointing a Vicar General and five Episcopal Vicars who were responsible for a geographical area of the Diocese whose role was to advise and assist him in the Diocese. He also appointed a new Personal Assistant and a Diocesan Chancellor. He worked very closely with all of these.

Bishop Kevin was very supportive of the many young people involved in the Diocese, especially of the work of the Youth Ministry Team and he actively supported the development of the Youth Village in the Diocese. He attended the World Youth Day at Cologne in Germany and has been a regular pilgrim and leader of the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes. There in Lourdes he was particularly thrilled to see so many young people from the Diocese coming together each year, and so he took time to encourage them to come to a deeper knowledge of their faith and was keen on supporting them in the living out of their faith back home. He was also very supportive of the work of the Diocesan Youth Council and met with them on a regular basis.

The Catholic History of the North East is littered with lives of many well known saints, and Bishop Kevin soon began to realise the importance of the North East in the history of the Catholic Church in the United Kingdom. His love for the saints of the North East of England became very evident fairly quickly in his episcopal ministry and he soon did what he could to encourage the Diocese to reflect on these men and women and their place in diocesan history. He was a key mover in encouraging the Diocese to refurbish the Church of St Aidan on Holy Island (Lindisfarne) so that it could be a worthy place for the many pilgrims to Lindisfarne and was extremely proud that both the Titular Bishop of Lindisfarne and the Papal Nuncio were visitors to the Island in 2007. Bishop Kevin also promulgated a new Diocesan Lectionary and supplement to the Roman Missal "*Ad Experimentum*" with Missal texts for the lives of the saints of the North East of England.

Bishop Kevin was very proud in October 2007 to showcase the Diocese to the Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Archbishop Faustino Sainz-Munoz and in a very busy four day visit to the Diocese;

Bishop Kevin showed the Nuncio many good things that were happening in the Diocese, of which he was very proud and excited.

Bishop Kevin was also responsible for changing the whole form of Parish Visitations within the Diocese and together with his Episcopal Council, has encouraged parishes throughout the Diocese to use the Visitation as an opportunity to see how well the parish community works together, what it does well and how to improve on those areas that need development.

Although there was one Permanent Deacon in the Diocese, Bishop Kevin ordained the first 'group' of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese in 2005, followed by further ordinations in 2006 and 2007 and has also been very active in promoting Vocations to the Priesthood, appointing a Diocesan Promoter of Vocations to work alongside the Vocations Director and opened a new "House of Hospitality" in Penshaw, as a place where enquirers can live for a period of time.

Bishop Kevin has also been a prime mover in welcoming new religious communities into the Diocese and as a result there are now several communities of male and female religious in the Diocese who are actively involved in parish and hospital work. Bishop Kevin was disappointed when the Poor Clare Community decided that they could no longer sustain their Abbey in Darlington, but was delighted when the St John of God Religious Community agreed to take over the building and to develop their services for the sick and disabled. To assist in his care for the religious of the Diocese he appointed both an Episcopal Vicar for Religious and a Vicar for Religious.

He was Vice Chair of the Board of Governors and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of Ushaw College, the seminary for the Dioceses of the North of England which is situated in the Diocese.

Since the day of his Ordination as Bishop he has been closely involved with the leaders of the other churches in region, Christian Churches as well as "Other Faith" communities. He met regularly with members of the 'North East Christian Churches Together' and was elected as Deputy Moderator of this group. He worked closely with the other Christian leaders but was also closely involved with the leaders of other faith communities in the region. In 2006 Bishop Kevin organised a Pilgrimage to Rome for the church leaders, the highlight of which was a prime position seat in the square in St Peter's for the General Audience with Pope Benedict, who personally greeted the group of church leaders present.

Bishop Kevin took great care to visit many of the schools in the Diocese; unfortunately he never managed to get around to all of them; but he made a deep impression on the children and staff in the schools he did visit. On the day of Episcopal Ordination, he was presented with a large book of welcome, to which every school in the Diocese contributed and this was proudly on display each day in Bishop's House.

As a Board Member of St Cuthbert's Care he was extremely supportive of the work that this diocesan organisation has done in reaching out to people throughout the Diocese and particularly proud of the fact that St Cuthbert's Care worked hard to open the new state-of-the-art "Alan Shearer Centre" for disabled people, their families and their carers.

Bishop Kevin has worked very hard in recent months with members of the Religious Education Department at Durham University to develop a new 'Bede Chair of Catholic Theology'. The Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education recently commended "the efforts and great care that have been exercised in the planning and proposal of this endeavour".

He was Prior of the Northumbrian Section of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre and also a Member of Honour of the Knights of St Columba.

Bishop Kevin was a keen golfer and played on various courses around the Diocese, joining some of the clergy from around the Diocese on many occasions. He was also the main instigator in starting an annual ecumenical golf tournament with Bishop Tom Wright and members of the clergy of the Anglican Diocese of Durham.

He was also a keen walker and took the opportunity to take in many of the excellent walks throughout the countryside and coastlines of the Diocese.

His last official engagement was on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007 when he visited the SVP Ozanam House in Newcastle.

The death of Bishop Kevin has come as a huge shock and will leave a large gap in the life of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. He will be a great miss.

At the same time, Bishop Kevin was very much a family man, who never forgot his family roots in Staffordshire or the example set before him by his mum and dad. At this sad and difficult time, the Diocese asks you to remember in your prayers Bishop Kevin's mum Cath, his brothers Stephen and Peter, his sisters Liz, Mary and Julia, his nephews and nieces. We ask that you also keep in your prayers Pam Hyland, his housekeeper who was with him in his home Archdiocese of Birmingham and who moved north with him when he was appointed Bishop.

Bishop Hugh Lindsay, Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle from 1974 – 1992, said:

"Bishop Kevin went into hospital on Shrove Tuesday; next day, I began the saddest Lent I can ever remember. He was in critical care the following day and died on 1<sup>st</sup> March despite the

wonderful care from specialist doctors and nurses at the Newcastle Freeman Hospital. I was sad because he became diocesan Bishop almost 30 years after me, was so much younger and had less than four years to work amongst us. Although I did not meet him until after his appointment, I realised how determined he was to give of his best. The prayers and Masses offered for him in the Diocese heartened me, as did the evident love of his family, his housekeeper Pam and Canon Seamus Cunningham; during his illness, each of them was at his bedside every day for long periods. I pray for the Diocese in its loss of a comparatively new bishop and, with them and his family, pray for Bishop Kevin too. May he rest in peace.”

Canon Seamus Cunningham, Diocesan Administrator of Hexham and Newcastle, said:

“Bishop Kevin was a wonderful man, very warm and welcoming. I would be inclined to describe him as “the smiling bishop”. He was very supportive of his clergy, he was a man of understanding and compassion. He achieved a lot in his short time as Bishop and he will be sadly missed in our Diocese. It is now up to the priests and people to continue to build on the foundations that he laid together with his predecessors.”

**Eternal Rest grant unto him O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him.**

**May he rest in peace.**

**✠ May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, rest in peace. Amen.**