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Capuchin Friary
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Dear Friends,

Most or all of you know by now that I have returned permanently to Ireland from New Zealand. I arrived in NZ on 3 October 1973 and left it on 30 June 2019, so almost 46 years have been spent there. Half of that time was spent in Auckland (Christmas 1976 until beginning of 1988; beginning of 1995 until beginning of 2000 and from September 2012 until my final departure); 16 years were spent in Wellington (October 1973 – Christmas 1976; beginning of 2000-September 2012) and the remaining seven years in Dunedin. In my early years there I was engaged mostly in preaching parish missions, conducting retreats and assisting Secular Franciscans, but also did a lot of visiting in our Wellington and Auckland parishes. In 1979, I was appointed in charge of the friars in NZ and fulfilled this role for eight years at that time and later for nine years more. In Dunedin, I was involved in lecturing in Sacred Scripture at the National Seminary, Knox Presbyterian College and the University of Otago. For most of my time in NZ I was an Assistant to the Secular Franciscans (Third Order of St. Francis) either at local level only or also at National level. From 1979 until my departure I was on presenting team for Marriage Encounter. My official assignments to parish work were only 1977, 1995, 2000-2012 and 2016-2019, but during all of my time in NZ I helped in parish work also. As you will see from the above, I had the opportunity to meet thousands of New Zealanders or people living there and became acquainted with many. Some became closer friends and all of you are among these. I feel very happy as I recall and continue this friendship, even if it is now from afar. You are always in my thoughts and prayers and I hope that you will, as far as possible, continue to correspond with me or contact me in other ways and to contact me especially if you come to Ireland.

On arrival in Ireland I had my regular triennial holiday, just cutting it short by a couple of weeks to take up my first appointment. This was to be Assistant Priest in our north Dublin parish of Priorswood, but I was there only a very short time when asked to move to another of our friaries in north Dublin, Raheny, which is in the Howth direction. This is not a parish but has a small church attached where we have all-day Adoration and daily Mass and Morning and Evening Prayer with the public. Not many attend on weekdays, but the small church is full on Sundays. In our community there are currently eleven friars, one of whom is from Zambia and here for one year. However, a few are affected by failing hearing, sight or memory and are not able to drive. Two of the friars are chaplains to two hospices, one local and the other (a branch of the first) about 30 minutes distant. I am on call one day each week for each of these. We also have Masses in a nearby Rest Home and in a convent a few times each week and we are available in our own church for Reconciliation seven

hours each week (as well as at other times, if needed). There are also some other devotions, so while not overworked, we are kept occupied.

I am beginning to feel the cold weather here now. It is a bit colder than Auckland was, but not that much different from winter in Dunedin. As the friary is a fairly new building, the central heating is good.

My three sisters live in Co.Monaghan, less than two hours from here by car, so I can call up to see them from time to time. Moreover, I now have a free travel card for the public bus and train service (like superannuitants in NZ) so that is a form of transport I can easily use , if needed. My youngest brother lives in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal so he is about four hours distant. An older brother, who was 83 and an Oblate priest (OMI) died on 2nd. November. He had a stroke a few years ago and had been in a Rest Home since about that time. By the end, he had lost any ability to speak. We had his funeral on 4th. November in the parish where we grew up (Castleblayney, Co.Monaghan), celebrated by the Oblate Provincial and with myself and others concelebrating. He is also buried there in our parents' grave. Please pray for him and for my parents and two oldest brothers who had already passed away.

For myself, I am keeping well, feeling a bit stiff at times but able to get around well and carry on with the ministry. It is good to hear the Irish language on Radio and to some extent on TV each day and to have some more time to read and listen to music. A couple of the friars with me celebrated 60 years in the Order on 3rd.October and we are celebrating with a special dinner this coming week.

As I am sure it is in NZ at present, it is very obvious in the shops that Christmas is approaching, just over four weeks away now. I hope to get this letter off to you in a day or two to let you know my address, phone and email details. I would love to have as many of your email.addresses and Mobile phone numbers as possible and also if you are on WhatsApp or Viber (I have both).

I pray that you all may have a blessed and joyful Christmas and New Year and you will be remembered in my Christmas prayers and Masses. Slán agus beannacht Dé oraibh (Goodbye and God's blessing on you).

May the Lord give you peace.



Fr.Matthew Clerkin ofm cap.

P.S. My address here is, as given also above:

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