

FATHER JERRY PAUL ENTWISTLE was born in Rossendale in Lancashire, on 17th April 1931, and became a Catholic when he was 22 years old, in 1953. He trained as a concert singer at the Royal Academy of Music in London, having gained a scholarship there. Having decided to become a priest he went to study under the Jesuits at Campion House, Osterley, for two years, and then entered Saint Hugh's Charterhouse, at Parkminster, being ordained as a Carthusian on 30th March 1963. After 19 years of Religious life, 13 of them as a priest, which taught him as he said 'to know how to be holy', he was incardinated into Nottingham Diocese by Bishop McGuinness, and worked as assistant priest in the parishes of Saint Joseph, Leicester (1976-77); Our Lady and Saint Thomas of Hereford, Ilkeston (1977-80); Saint Pius X, Grimsby (1980-82); and Saint Anne, Buxton (1982-84) before being appointed parish priest in Saint Norbert's parish, Crowle, in 1984, where he remained until his retirement in 2000.

He lived out his retirement largely in the presbytery next to Saint Margaret's School, Gamesley, supported by his faithful housekeeper, Mary. After her death in 2024 Father Paul moved to the Mercy Care Centre, Derby, joining some of the other retired priests of the diocese there. Bishop Patrick was able to visit Father Paul three days before he died, and he was anointed, and received Holy Communion, before being taken into hospital in Derby, where he died the following evening, late on Sunday 1st February 2026.

At the time of his diamond jubilee, in 2023, Father Paul wrote the following reflection of the early part of his life, under the title "From Poverty to Priesthood":

I was born, the first child and only child, of young working-class parents whose first house was one of a row, with one ground-level room and one bedroom, plus a very small cellar for coal only; we shared an outside tippler toilet. When we went to the cinema, on returning home, my mother and I used to wait outside until my Father had lit the gas light and then got rid of all the cockroaches!! My parents both worked in the near-by cotton-mill: my father as a spinner walking bare-footed on the wooden floor all day long, while my mother, a weaver with four looms in the noisy 'long-room'. Mother would not turn out cloth with faults, consequently she did not earn much money for her quality cloth; not enough of it for that!

My parents had me baptized, but themselves never went to Church. They worked from 07.30 (08.00) 'till 17.30 with an hour for lunch; from 18 months old I was 'looked after' by Nannie Swain, mother of a large Catholic family of 5 young working sons and an adopted daughter, until I started school at 5 years of age. My life really began for me, however, when I felt "called" in my heart to go to Church on Sundays. My parents would not let me go, on my own, to Church until I was six, whereupon I started what has never since ceased: following a path not of my own choosing. On Sundays, I walked alone, from home to the up-hill Church of St. Annes, about half-a-mile plus; I met choir-members there, but only as choir members; after the service I walked back home, alone. That went on for perhaps seven years, but I never felt lonely. I always wanted to go Church even though I thought the vicar's sermons 'not much', nor did I like always what happened in the choir when the vicar was preaching. When I was about 8 we moved to a house over a mile from St. Annes, and I eventually asked my mother (dad was in the RAF) if I could go to the nearby Methodist Chapel, which I then regularly attended three times on Sundays: Chapel morning; Sunday School afternoon, and Chapel evening.

I never thought either the Anglican Church or the Methodist Chapel was the Church Jesus founded; nor did I ever enter the Methodist body, formally; however, I was prominent there because of my singing ability, and also because I did well at Scripture, getting 100% at the yearly inter-Chapels Scripture exams once, coming 10th in all England. The teachers at St. Annes urged my parents to put me in for a scholarship to the Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School which I won aged nine. I began there when ten, and went on to gain the Higher School Certificate of those days before leaving at the age of 16.

I was too poor to land a job in a Bank ... 'Your Father owns a cotton mill? No, he just works in one'; too poor also to keep a job at a Chartered Accountant's office, because I had to travel there by bus and buy a meal at dinner-time, which my parents could not afford because my pay was little, since I was being trained to become an accountant. I then had to turn to work in a wholesale shoe and slipper traders for some money.

I just mentioned my singing, which was the most important aspect of my life until I became a Catholic. I began singing about 8 yrs. old. I was taught by the Mayor of Bacup, director of the Bacup Choral Union who was a

deeply religious man, and every week I would -- with another student -- catch two buses and then walk a couple of miles for my singing lesson. He always gave me religious songs or songs appreciated by Christians audiences. I was the centre-piece (literally, in the photograph!) of the 'Bhoys' as Mr. Hargreaves called a group of about seven of his pupils who did dozens of concerts around the Rossendale valley during the war. I also had personal concerts where I was paid -- which was helpful for my mother, whose wage was, as I have said, low - - but I would not sing if people were not listening! Once I went early to the concert hall and thought the piano unsatisfactory ... another one had to be brought in before I would sing. After winning a large festival at Burnley, when 18, I was urged (by the adjudicator) to go in for a Scholarship at the Royal Academy of music in London, which I won at the age of 19, and which gave me a total of three years help to study at the Academy. I won the opera prize there in 1953 singing a song 'cursing' God (Iago's aria)! My ambition, however, was to become a German Lieder and concert singer. Singing was always a religious matter for me ... I liked to think that people who listened closely to my singing, that is, to my interpretation of the words, might become better people for such understanding ... just very secret thoughts, hopes, at the back of my mind!

Whilst at the Academy I shared a top floor room in the Campden Hill Gardens home of Ashley Dukes and Marie Rambert of the Ballet Rambert -- with John a viola player. Though stable-companions, so to speak, our worlds at the Academy were quite different; and on Sundays, whilst John met with his friends, I would go to some Chapel, usually Methodist. Then I would go to Shepherd's Bush to be given a good Sunday dinner (my only real meal in the week!) by a distant relative. In the evening I often went to the Kingsway Hall service given by Dr. (later Lord) Donald Soper. He was a very good 'evangelist'! Intelligent and up to date, and always able to stand up for his Christian beliefs. I was impressed by him strongly enough to go to one of the Scripture groups at Kingsway Hall; but I was so disgusted by a plethora of personal opinions flaunted at the meeting that I never went again. I met a New Zealand cellist, Frances, at the Academy, with whom I occasionally talked about her Catholic faith. I read the Imitation of Christ, St. Therese of Lisieux, etc., and rethought the views I had gradually developed over previous years of dissatisfaction with the 'Jesus-authenticity' of the Anglican Church and the Methodist Chapel. The pot -- as it were -- slowly boiled until I finally agreed to go to a Catholic Mission at Ogle Street Catholic Church. The priest concerned, Fr. Michael O'Connor, convinced me -- not easily, because I was very proud of the England of war time and immediately after -- by baptismal statistics, that England was no longer a Christian country, and I began to go to a nearby Carmelite Church at Kensington on Sundays.

My ultimate conversion was occasioned by a catechism, 'This is the Faith', sent by Fr. O'Connor to Frances and given by her to me. That was the first book I literally cried over: such beautiful and authoritative Truth, such divine Goodness and mercy!! It was all I had vaguely thought God was and the Church should be! My former stable-mate, John, had gone on obligatory national service (I was unfit due to multiple operations on my left foot) in the meantime, and I remember him ringing me one evening, and my telling him that I had made a wonderful discovery that he too should look into ... Catholicism!! I became a Catholic in 1953, and John followed my advice, and became a Catholic himself! I wanted to learn how best to serve God, and the Carthusian lifestyle immediately seemed ideal to best teach me how to love God, and with the great help of the chaplain to London University, Monsignor Gordon Wheeler, I was able to visit the Carthusians.

Subsequently I spent two years working by day while studying and living at a parish 'set-up' in Walworth for late aspirants for the priesthood, under the guidance of the Rev. E. Holloway, a learned theologian (not at all sure of Karl Rahner's influence in the Church!) and a zealous priest. After another two years at 'dear old' Fr. Tigar S.J.'s Campion House, Osterley, I was then allowed to enter the Carthusians where I stayed for 19 years during which time I became a Catholic priest these 60 years ago.

May Father Paul now receive the rewards of his labours, as we pray the Lord welcomes him into the glories of Heaven.

Father Paul at the time of his diamond jubilee, 2023

