

**ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE
WESTMINSTER**

Fr John Michael Miller R.I.P.

Born in north London on 19 January 1923 and ordained to the priesthood on 30 May 1953 Fr John Miller was the fifteenth priest of the Diocese to be called to Heaven in 2020, and the oldest at 97 years of age. This obituary will be published in the 2021 edition of the Westminster Year Book.

John Miller was born and brought up in Finchley. He was educated at Finchley Catholic Grammar School until he was sixteen. Having left school John worked for Standard Telephones and Cables from 1939-41 when he took employment elsewhere until he began service with the Army in 1945. In 1949 John began formation for the priesthood as a student for the Diocese at St Edmund's College, Ware in Hertfordshire.

John was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Bernard William Griffin in Westminster Cathedral. Fr John's first appointment was to the parish of Our Lady Refuge of Sinners and St Catherine of Siena, Bow where he served as Assistant Priest from 1953-54 when he was appointed Assistant Priest at Our Lady Help of Christians, Kentish Town where he remained until 1966 and his appointment to St Lawrence, Feltham. Coupled with his duties as Assistant Priest, Fr John served as Chaplain to the local young offenders' prison and for two years he was the Hounslow Borough Commissioner for Scouts. His next appointment was Parish Priest at St Thomas of Canterbury and the English Martyrs, Royston where he served from 1972-76. From 1976 to 1986 Fr John was Parish Priest at Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception and St Joseph, Waltham Cross. Throughout this time he served as Dean of Lea Valley Deanery. He was then appointed Parish Priest at Our Lady of the Assumption, Potters Bar where he remained for thirteen years until his retirement from full time parish ministry in 1999 at the age of 76 having been asked to stay at Potters Bar to assist with changes to the organization of the parish. While at Potters Bar Fr John was appointed Dean in 1989 and during the period of the late Bishop Jim O'Brien's absence due to illness Fr John was asked to oversee pastoral life in Hertfordshire and be a point of reference for the clergy. He served as Secretary to the Senate (now Council) of Priests from 1983-91 while at Waltham Cross and Potters Bar. In retirement Fr John was called upon to supply in various parishes, covering for priests at times of holiday or sickness.

Fr John was a good leader of people in his parishes, giving firm direction and with a common touch. He was respected by people of all ages and backgrounds, treating everyone equally and always ready to see situations from the others' perspective. He was easy company among friends, especially at meals that ended with a cigarette and, always in moderation, a glass of Crème de Menthe. Genial and with a good sense of humour, he never seemed to be unduly anxious or troubled. He was comfortable in his own skin. Cars and motor bikes were a passion of Fr John's. His presbytery kitchens doubled as workshops for repairs to his vehicles, cooking oil and motor oil sharing the same shelf! He was gifted at do-it-yourself jobs and solving problems both pastoral and mechanical. In his later years he came to depend on his electric mobility scooter and treasured the independence provided, and he treasured living independently in his flat provided by the Diocese on Oakleigh Road North in Whetstone. Fr John was a familiar figure in the local area, an area he loved. Visits to the shops for groceries and essentials such as the daily newspaper kept him going, as did the companionship of close friends. He had a special place in his heart for the parish of Waltham Cross, making known his desire for his Funeral Mass to take place there and his chalice to be gifted to the parish. In recent years Fr John's physical health began to deteriorate, but he remained strong-willed and determined to maintain his independence. His mind remained alert and his spirit lively.

Fr John died peacefully in Barnet Hospital on 25 October following admission earlier in the month.

May this faithful and long-serving priest rest in peace and rise in glory.

**Mgr Martin Hayes | Vicar General | Diocese of Westminster
5 November 2020**

The Scout Service of Fr John Miller:

In addition to all Fr John's service with the Roman Catholic Church and in the wider community he was also a member of the Scout Association for some 35 years.

Father John's Adult Scout service began in 1941 when he became an Assistant Scout Master with the 7th Finchley Scout Troop on 29th April. He continued with the Troop becoming Scout Master on 22nd April 1943 until 17th November 1947. Also during this time he took on the role of Local Association Secretary for a year.

Following his Army service and becoming a Roman Catholic priest Fr John's second parish was in Kentish Town, St Pancras. Here he became Group Scout Master of the 14th St Pancras Group on 25th June 1955 and continued in that post until 14th February 1967.

When Fr John moved to Feltham in West London and he took on the role of Assistant District Commissioner on 10th May 1967 until 17th January 1968. He then became ADC (Leader Training) until 4th March 1970 when he took on the task of Borough Commissioner until 25th October 1972.

During this time Fr John joined the Greater London North West's Training Team as an Assistant Leader Trainer. He held this position from 12th March 1969 until 22nd October 1975. He then became a Leader Trainer until 31st March 1985. He was also District Commissioner of Royston in Hertfordshire for 6 months in 1976. Fr John took on the role of Roman Catholic County Chaplain for GLNW from 1st September 1979 until 23rd July 1985.

Fr John gained his Scout Wood Badge on 27th September 1944 and his Commissioner's Wood Badge on 10th December 1967.

For his Service to Scouting Fr John was awarded the Long Service Award on 3rd April 1964, the Medal of Merit in April 1966 and the Silver Acorn on 1st April 1974.

David Towler
November 2020