

## **FAREWELL AND THANK YOU.**

A number of parishioners have told me during the past few years, that they have missed my sports reports, particularly during the 6 Nations Rugby Championship. It's a competition that I look forward to each year, and I thoroughly enjoy all the games. Well, yesterday to commemorate my impending retirement. Ireland beat New Zealand, the All Blacks in Lansdowne Road, Dublin. It was a deserved victory, if I may be so bold to point out in an impartial way, but I couldn't relax until I heard that final whistle, and the game was over. Well done, to both teams for an enthralling and exciting game. It was only Ireland's 3<sup>rd</sup> victory over the All Blacks, I don't know how many defeats that they have endured, but I think it certainly is not 3.

In May 1998 I was finishing my yearlong sabbatical, and I wrote to the diocese that if they could name a parish to which I could consider returning from sabbatical, I would be able to decide and consider my choices. The diocese replied immediately and named St. Joseph's, Newbury. I consulted two priest friends, to whom I trusted and respected for their knowledge of the diocese as to the choice of the parish that the diocese would appoint me, when I told them both it is St. Joseph's, Newbury they both agreed that I should accept the offer of St. Joseph's, Newbury immediately.

The Prior of the Dominican Priory, where I was staying was familiar with St. Joseph's Newbury. Before he

became a Dominican priest, he was a military police officer in Greenham Common and used to sing in St. Joseph's choir at the 11.00am Sunday Mass. When I was reading that letter of appointment, he casually remarked that it looked like a letter of appointment. I said it was, and when he asked as to where I was being appointed, I replied guess? He said, it is not St. Joseph's, Newbury, I said yes it was, he said will you accept. I said I certainly I will.

That was 23 years ago, just over half of my priesthood of 45 years. These years have been the most fulfilling and enjoyable years of my priesthood, and I thank you all for that. I thank you for all the parishioners, past and present for making my time in this parish so memorable. I have really appreciated it. You have also welcomed my family and friends, and I am incredibly grateful for that. But for health reasons I must retire, and I will miss you, the parishioners and the parish of St. Joseph's, Newbury.

During the summer, a classmate of mine retired to his native Derry. In one of his last newsletters he wrote, "I think about you always, I talk about you still. You have never been forgotten and you never will. I hold you close within my heart and there you will remain, to walk and guide us through our lives, until we meet again."

Thank you and God bless you all.

Fr. Padraig Faughnan.