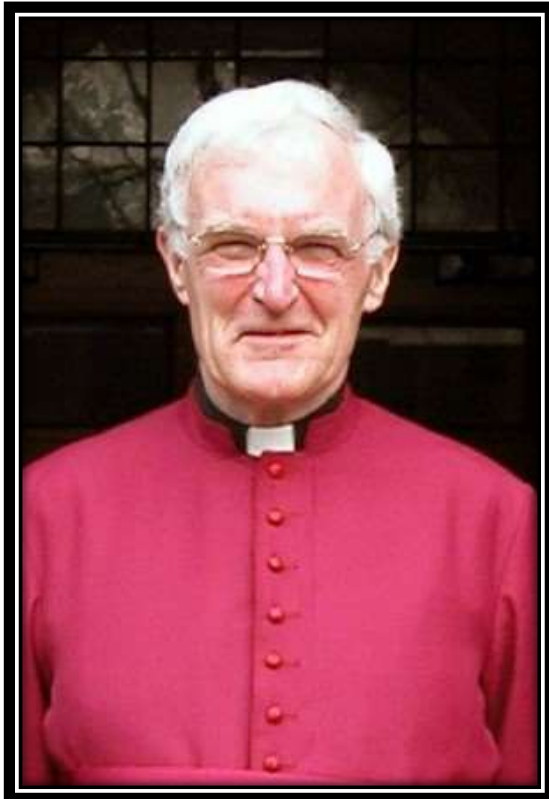


*In Thanksgiving  
for the Life of  
Monsignor Michael M<sup>c</sup>Kenna  
Rest In Peace*

*Reception & Vigil Mass  
7.00pm, Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
Requiem Mass & Committal  
12 Noon, Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024*



*St. Gregory's Church, Weldbank, Chorley*

For a whole generation of priests, Monsignor Michael M<sup>c</sup>Kenna will be remembered as a key figure in the life of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. In his role as Episcopal Vicar for Finance and Development, between 1983 and 1999, he did so much to stabilise and improve the finances of the Archdiocese, as well as working tirelessly to alleviate the stresses borne by parish priests in parishes burdened by debt. Though without doubt financially astute, he was above all motivated by a pastoral heart that cared deeply about the wellbeing of his brother priests. He encountered many of these problems at first hand during his second appointment as a priest. In August 1967, he was appointed as a curate to Monsignor Tom Barry in Skelmersdale, which had been designated as a new town in 1961. This was a time of rapid expansion, with families moving from Liverpool with the promise of employment in the new factories of Courtaulds, Dunlop, and Thorn EMI.

With a young population, the Church prioritised the building of schools, and these became community hubs. Fr Michael spent many years mopping floors and putting out chairs after Saturday evening socials, and stacking them away after Sunday Mass, ready for school the next day. Following the appointment of Archbishop Derek Worlock in 1976, the drive to establish several distinct parishes within the new town was reversed. Under the leadership of Fr Kevin Finn, a team ministry was established with several priests working together with some very dedicated and enthusiastic headteachers and teachers. By this stage many of the major employers, who had been drawn to Skelmersdale by generous financial incentives, pulled out when the incentives were withdrawn. As a consequence, many factories closed, and unemployment reached 40% at one stage. Fr Michael responded to this crisis with a project that came to be known as:

***'Tomorrow's People Today'***. With considerable funding from central government, he established a programme of job creation. His vision and enterprise enabled many young people to take their first steps into the world of work. It is not surprising that his gifts came to be recognised by Archbishop Worlock, who appointed him to succeed Canon Vincent Burrowes as Episcopal Vicar for Finance and Development.

He was responsible for establishing the offset-banking system, whereby parishes in debt did not pay interest on the overdraft and parishes in credit sacrificed a percentage of the interest to which they were entitled.

Fr Michael was always careful to acknowledge that the idea came from Monsignor Joe Gibb, for many years Treasurer of the Archdiocese. He challenged breweries to write off existing debts on individual parish clubs in return for an advantageous central purchasing arrangement. Provisions for priests set up in his time included the George Andrew Fund and healthcare arrangements to provide for the sick and retired priests of the Archdiocese.

Many will remember his work in helping to set up an Inter-Diocesan Car Scheme for priests, and Inter-Diocesan Fuel Management Limited (IFM) to negotiate gas and electricity tariffs with suppliers. Though he worked most of his days in the office on Brownlow Hill, he spent many evenings visiting parish priests to help them negotiate the bureaucracy generated by the increasing demands of the Charity Commission, Inland Revenue, and Customs and Excise. It was this aspect of his work that gave him the most satisfaction.

In addition to his work within the Archdiocese, Monsignor M<sup>c</sup>Kenna advised many others within the Church in England and Wales. For many years after he ceased to be Episcopal Vicar, he continued to do work for, and to advise, the Bishops' Conference. His friendship with Albert Gubay, an Isle of Man resident and construction and retail magnate, resulted in Mr Gubay leaving the bulk of his wealth in trust for charitable purposes when he died in 2016.

The Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation has since funded many Catholic projects throughout England and Wales. In recognition of his service to the Church, he was made a Chaplain of His Holiness in 1987, and a Prelate of Honour in 1992.

Michael McKenna was born in Liverpool on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1937, the son of Vincent and Grace McKenna. After the death of his mother, he was largely brought up by Marie McKenna, one of his aunts. He received his early education at St. Charles' School, Aigburth, and then at St Francis Xavier's College. On 9<sup>th</sup> September 1950, he entered St. Joseph's College, Upholland, alongside 30 boys of similar age, to begin his training for the priesthood according to the traditional model of the pre-Conciliar Church. Six of these, including Michael, were ordained priest in the college chapel by Archbishop John Carmel Heenan on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1963. They were ordained during the period of the Second Vatican Council and began their priestly ministry amidst a period of significant development.

Following ordination, Fr McKenna was appointed to the parish of Saints Peter and Paul in Crosby, assisting Monsignor Joseph Turner, who had been the seminary rector at Upholland for the first eight years of his training. After four years in the long-established parish at Crosby, he moved to the new town of Skelmersdale to immerse himself in the establishment of new parishes communities and in the development of team ministry. During his time as Episcopal Vicar, he was Administrator at St Mary's, Highfield Street, Liverpool, for a short period. Subsequently, he was chaplain to the Redemptoristine Sisters at Gillmoss, whilst living in Upholland. He returned to parish ministry in 2000, succeeding Canon Dick Firth as parish priest at St. Gregory's, Chorley, and relished the contact with parishioners again. Speaking of those to whom he brought Holy Communion at home, he remarked that, ***"If I ever get to heaven, it will be because of them."*** He had a great capacity for friendship, maintaining many lifelong friendships with his distinctive handwritten cards, even as his eyesight was failing. In 2016, he retired from active ministry, moving the few yards to the lodge at the end of the drive at Weld Bank. He died on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2024, aged 87 years, in the 62<sup>nd</sup> year of the priesthood.

May he Rest in Peace.