

Church dedication to priests shot dead by British soldiers

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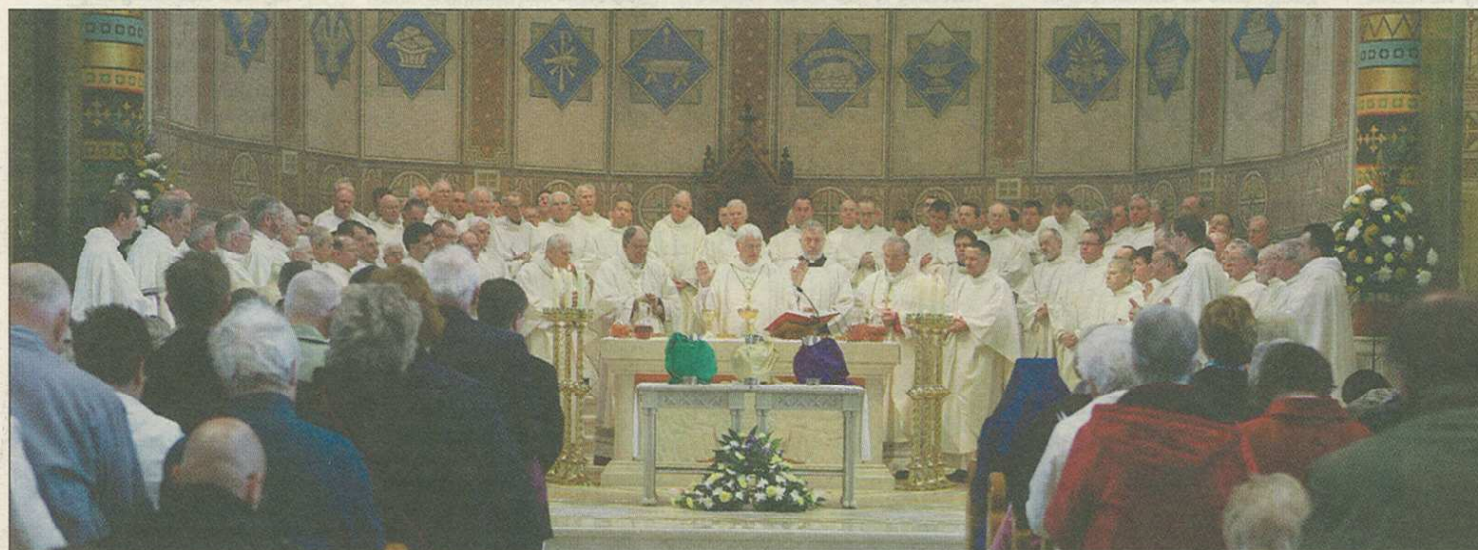
TWO Catholic priests shot dead by the British army during the Troubles were remembered yesterday at the Mass of Chrism at St Peter's Cathedral.

A new brass ambry – which contains the vessels for holy oil – was dedicated to the memory of Fr Hugh Mullan and Fr Noel Fitzpatrick who were killed in separate shootings as they attempted to administer the Last Rites to people injured during street disturbances in 1971 and 1972.

During the Holy Week celebration yesterday, the ambry – which is used to store Chrism, the oil of catechumens and the oil of the sick – was dedicated in memory of the priests by Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor.

An inscription on the front of the ambry – which was designed by Enniskillen artist Bill Maxwell and built in Madrid – recalls that the two priests were shot dead while “ministering to dying parishioners in St John's Parish”.

Fr Mullan, who was originally from Portaferry in Co Down, was killed as he went to the aid of a man who had been shot by British soldiers during clashes on August 9 1971.



■ MASS:

Priests from the diocese of Down and Connor concelebrate the Mass of Chrism, in which an ambry used to hold holy oils was dedicated to two priests shot dead by British soldiers during the Troubles, in St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, yesterday

PICTURE:

Declan Roughan

Serious street violence had erupted following the introduction of internment when hundreds of people were taken from their beds and arrested by British troops.

The 38-year-old heard an injured man calling for help and went out – under a truce flag – to administer the Last Rites when he was shot dead at Springfield Park just a short distance from his home.

Fr Fitzpatrick (42) was killed a year later on July 9 1972 as he went to give the Last Rites to someone injured near his home at Springhill Avenue.

It is believed a British sniper fired the fatal shot, which passed through Fr Fitzpatrick and also killed 30-year-old Patrick Butler, whose body was found in a nearby entry.

A 14-year-old boy, Patrick McCafferty, was also killed as he attempted to drag Fr Fitzpatrick's body to safety.

The families of both priests were present at the Mass of Chrism and watched as Dr Treanor blessed the Holy Oils, which will now be stored in it. Bishop Treanor described the two priests as “heroic”.

“In this celebration we hon-

■ KILLED:

The final resting place of Fr Hugh Mullan in Portaferry, Co Down, where he was born

PICTURE:

Jonathan Porter



our the memory of two of our priests who gave their lives as they brought the hope of God's love, the comfort of divine mercy mediated by their prayerful and sacramental ac-

tions and the incarnate proximity of God's self-sacrificing love to the wounded – priestly service that cost their two lives,” said Bishop Treanor.

Fr Mullan's niece, Geraldine

McGrattan said the dedicated ambry was “wonderful”.

“It brings joy to my heart,” she said.

“It is great for my children who never knew him and for people. There is a place here they can come and see.”

Fr Fitzpatrick's sister Una O'Reilly said it was “marvellous” that her brother, who was from Belfast, would be remembered in such a way.

“I'm delighted,” she said.

“It was long overdue. Nobody in Northern Ireland knew two priests had been killed.”