

## **BIOGRAPHY**

### **CANON JAMES JOSEPH CUNNANE (SEAMUS)**

Canon James Joseph Cunnane (Seamus) BA was born in Carlow Ireland on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1929. After a local education and a time in the civil service he entered All Hallows, Dublin for his ecclesiastical studies in 1948. Having volunteered for service in the Menevia Diocese, Wales he was ordained priest in June 1955. He subsequently served curacies in Bangor, Holywell and Rhyl, being then appointed as Parish Priest to Cardigan in January 1962. He had found the scene for his life's work. He was pastor here until his retirement in August 1999 and continued to be a known presence in the town until his death in October 2021, aged 92 years.

In 1971 with the encouragement of Bishop Petit he built a remarkable modern church on a prominent site and made a home for the recently restored shrine of Our Lady of the Taper. Over the years he built up the regular pilgrimages to the shrine, at times coming into a holy rivalry with Penrhys. He was not only devoted and zealous in his care for the parishioners, and the embellishment of the shrine Church, but also became deeply involved in the town of Cardigan in both practical and scholarly ways. He learned to speak good Welsh, discovered previously unknown plans of medieval Cardigan, and was influential in the restoration of Cardigan Castle as a public monument. He also served on various Diocesan committees and was rural Dean from 1978 – 1994. He also restored contact between Cardigan and the Benedictine Monastery of Landevenec in Brittany, whose monks had taken refuge in this area during a period of persecution in France. With his great energies and intellectual certainties, Canon Cunnane was not one to easily give way, and with his continuing concern for the parish this sometimes led to some tension with his successors as Parish Priest.

However, all was happily resolved in his final years and he had the grace to say concerning major changes to the church. "I often thought of doing that myself".

He died in peace in a place he loved and among his own.