

The Furrow

Clear Vision: The Life and Legacy of Noel Clear 1937-2003, Gerry Jeffers. Dublin: Veritas. Pp. 249. Price €16.99.

After the surrender of the Easter rising in 1916, many of the Irish volunteers were marched from the GPO to Kilmainham Barracks before being imprisoned in Kilmainham Jail. By the 1950's these barracks was renamed Keogh Square and provided housing for many of Dublin's poorest families. In the early fifties two teenagers Noel Clear and Jerry O'Sullivan on their weekly Legion of Mary visits to Keogh Square witnessed appalling poverty, large families living in cramped, damp conditions with limited food, poor clothing and footwear and few prospects. These young men felt compelled to take action to alleviate its impact on young people. They committed themselves to opening a youth club.

These weekly legion of Mary visits were pivotal; they had a profound impact on the lives of these young men. *Clear Vision* is an entreaty story of Noel Clear, an Inchicore man, brother, husband and father, a probation officer working with young offenders and a co-founder of St Vincent's Youth Club Inchicore. In later years Noel would go on to become national president of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and Jerry a lecturer in the Catholic University in Caracas, Venezuela.

In the book Noel is described as a humble family man, gentle, possessing the qualities of kindness, compassion, generosity and a deep sense of justice. The story of Noel is a story of a man moved by Faith, Place, Poverty and his love for people, the call to do one-thing rather than nothing. Supported by his family and his Vincentian colleagues,

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Noel identified the theme of his SVP presidency as; "the ability to critique and review is what will keep the Society focused on its mission." He encouraged the SVP to challenge the causes of poverty. Noel set the tone for the SVP to embrace social justice and ensure that the voice of the poor is heard in the corridors of power.

The strength of the book lies in its style, revealing to the reader not only the interesting life of Noel and his family but also an insight into the social and political history of Ireland and in particular the impact of poverty on the development of individuals and communities.

Maynooth

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