

God of all ages,
You called our Founder, Daniel Delany
to bring compassion and hope
to those who were oppressed and marginalised in his time.

We give thanks for his vision
and for all who have been inspired by his life
over the past two hundred years.

In our own time, millions of people and our planet
still suffer in countless ways.

As we honour the memory of Daniel Delany,
may we too be moved to compassionate action,
bringing justice and hope to those most in need today.

St Brigid of Kildare,
teach us to live with your strength and confidence.
Daniel Delany,
may your vision inspire us to live with love this day.
Amen.



“Let us go forward on the road that has brought us to where we are.”

Phil 3:16



Window dedicated to Bishop Delany - Parish Church, Tullow

2014 - Bicentenary of the Death of our Founder, Dr Daniel Delany

Daniel Delany was born in 1747 to Daniel and Elizabeth Delany (nee Fitzpatrick) at Paddock, Co Laois. The Delany and Fitzpatrick families were wealthy farmers, unlike the majority of Catholic families of the time. Such was the Ireland into which Daniel was born and spent his formative years. His parents and his aunts were firm Catholics and passed on the faith, the richness of his land's traditions, and a deep thirst for knowledge to Daniel. They also taught him to be sensitively aware of the sufferings that surrounded him in his locality near Mountrath. In 1763, aged sixteen, Daniel decided to become a priest and, with the help of a close Protestant friend, he was smuggled out of the country to a college in Paris, where he began his studies. He was often praised for his intellectual brilliance and his sensitive disposition.

In 1770, he returned to Ireland, disguised as a layman as priests were outlawed in Ireland. Daniel was shocked at the prevailing conditions where destitution, violence, lawlessness and crime were rampant. Millions of landless poor contributed to widespread agrarian unrest as they struggled for the rights and privileges of practical ownership. The country remained fettered and oppressed despite the relaxation - but not total abolition - of the Penal Laws. Daniel was so appalled at the state of Ireland that he was tempted to return to France but his mother prevailed on him to stay. His first appointment was as curate to Tullow in 1777. The social and political conditions were harsh and intimidating but in response, he organised a Sunday school for adults as well as children. He tried house-to-house visitation and enlisted the help of the wives and mothers to remedy some of the deplorable behaviour in evidence. When success was minimal, he turned his attention to the youth of the town. He started a choir, teaching them to sing at Mass and at Vespers. He then progressed with prayer and religious instruction. He taught those who were musically gifted to play the whistle and flute for the amateur town band. Music and singing attracted children and adults to the chapel. He initiated classes for First Communion and Confirmation candidates. The numbers for instruction grew and the beginnings of regular Sunday schools were now in place for students of all ages. Attendance increased rapidly and Daniel Delany enlisted the help of young women and men whom he trained with great care. The parish of Tullow was slowly being transformed. Daniel Delany was curate for only six years when he was appointed coadjutor to Bishop O'Keeffe in 1783. Bishop Delany's vision of providing secular and religious education for his people, "*rich and poor alike*", impelled him to explore the possibilities of founding a religious order.

On 1 February 1807 Bishop Delany invited six women to form a religious community in Tullow naming them the Sisters of St Brigid. A year later he founded a community of men, the Brothers of St Patrick. Bishop Daniel Delany died in Tullow on 9 July 1814.

- *What are some current local or global concerns that urge us to take strong and gentle action as Daniel Delany did in his time?*

United in Honouring Our Founder, Bishop Daniel Delany

February:

"Love God and live together in peace and unity." (Daniel Delany)

During this month, commit to taking a slow meditative walk or two in a peaceful place. Carry the gift of God's peace with you and to others with whom you live and work.

March:

"Do everything in a spirit of love and you will not find your hands empty at journey's end." (Daniel Delany)

During Lent choose a practical way of contributing to a concern which feeds the hungry, offers shelter and welcome or focuses on another area of social or ecological justice.

April:

"Fortiter et Suaviter" was the episcopal motto chosen by Bishop Delany.

At the end of each week this month spend time reflecting on how you're living this motto. What blessings is it offering you? What invitation to grow does it hold for you?

May:

"Bishop Delany planted a sapling from the oak tree in Kildare, which today is a tree of many branches." (Watching for the Dawn, 1938)

This month buy a plant and put it in a pot or in the garden. Make time to engage in a deeper awareness of the Divine in nature as you watch it grow.

June:

"From every seed sown and cultivated by pure love we shall be sure to reap a harvest." (Daniel Delany)

Spend time each evening reflecting on your day - what seeds of peace and justice did you sow today? Ask forgiveness for any seeds of hurt or disunity you may have planted.

July:

"Hope is characterised by compassion and justice." (Congregational Forum, 2011)

With all Brigidines, our partners and Associates give thanks for the inspiration of Daniel Delany and the ways in which his vision still inspires people. Decide on a specific way you will offer hope to others this month.

9 July 2014 - 200th Anniversary of Daniel Delany's death.