



Reverend Seán Sylvester Heslin

November 27, 1942 - April 24, 2023

Reverend Seán Heslin

11/27/1942 – 04/24/2023

Ordained to the Priesthood June 11, 1967

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Father Seán Heslin. On the front page of the June 16, 1967, edition of the Florida Catholic, there are photos of five young Irish priests newly ordained to serve the Sunshine State. It is easy for the eye to go straight to the fourth photo down. Among the solemn photos of the other priests is a mug revealing a bright-eyed, young man with a huge smile. That would be Father Heslin — a fixture of spiritual strength and humility for the Orlando Diocese for six decades.

Bishop Peter Birch of Ossory ordained Father Heslin for the Diocese of St. Augustine (which encompassed most of the state) June 11, 1967, at St. Mary's Cathedral, Kilkenny, Ireland. The sixth of eight children, Father Heslin was born Nov. 27, 1942, in Drumcauskeen, Cloone, County Leitrim in Ireland. He attended Rossan National School there, St. Mary's Apostolic School in Moyne, County Longford, and made his seminary studies at St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny.

When the Diocese of Orlando was established in 1968, Father Heslin began teaching at Bishop Moore Catholic High School in Orlando. During that time

he also served as director of Scouting for the Central Florida Council of Boy Scouts of America. His parish assignments included:

Parochial Vicar St. James, Orlando, 1967-1968

Parochial Vicar, St. Margaret Mary, Winter Park, 1968-1972

Parochial Vicar, St. Peter, Deland, 1972-1974

Pastor, St. Paul, Daytona Beach, 1974-1984

Pastor, St. Joseph, Winter Haven, 1984-1992

Pastor, St. James Cathedral, Orlando, 1992-2001

Pastor, Our Saviour, Daytona Beach, 2001-2015

In early 2002 Father Heslin met the serious challenge of recovering from being attacked by a stranger in the church. Father Heslin, seriously injured, miraculously survived the attack and asked the community of faith to forgive his attacker. In keeping with his humble and forgiving nature, he said, "I feel no hostility or animosity toward him (the attacker); I hope and pray he can get whatever help he needs." Once released from the hospital, he returned to minister to the people of Our Savior Catholic Church until he retired in 2015. He continued to serve as pastor emeritus and remained active with the parish community until his health declined.

A man of prayer, Father Heslin would be found with prayerbook in hand, in-between ministering to the parish community. In an interview Father Heslin said, "There is no substitute for working with people. The priesthood is about dealing with people. You're involved in their joys and sorrows; you're there from birth and at death. You have to listen with a sympathetic ear to the needs of anybody. Listen to all people, not just parishioners . . . When I finally stand before God, I hope the Lord can say to me that I treated everybody fairly. That I was the same to you whether you were rich or poor, educated or uneducated," he said.

In September 2022, Father Fred Ruse, Vicar for Senior Priests, remarked about a recent visit with Father Heslin, “Sean was a joy to be with as we talked about a photo of his parents on his wall which pleased him greatly.”

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon him.
May all the souls of the faithful departed
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen

Previous Events

Viewing

MAY 2. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Church of Our Saviour
5301 N. Atlantic Avenue
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931

Funeral Mass

MAY 2. 10:30 AM (ET)

Church of Our Saviour
5301 N. Atlantic Avenue
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931

Reception

MAY 2. 11:45 AM (ET)

Church of Our Saviour
5301 N. Atlantic Avenue
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931

Graveside

MAY 2. 1:30 PM (ET)

Queen of Angels Catholic Cemetery
1901 Queen of Angels Drive
Winter Park, FL 32792

Tribute Wall

RP

“ *RIP Father Heslin. I enjoyed the times you would come out on the playground at St Paul's and kick the soccer ball around with us or shoot hoops. Not many people have an influence on people but you certainly did.*

Robert Price - May 09, 2025 at 10:00 PM

LA

“ *Father Heslin is a part of our fondest childhood memories in DeLand, where he was very popular and beloved. He was always cheerful, kind, and attentive. We always looked forward to seeing him, and recall him visiting our home. He had a great sense of humor which endeared him to all, and an attentive manner which has had us happily recalling him in the decades since. He is loved and missed, and is surely spreading cheer where he is.*

With our deepest heartfelt condolences to his family and friends,

The Allocco & August families

Lynev Allocco August - April 02, 2025 at 11:58 AM

CD

“ I was a student attending Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach when Fr. Seán was pastor at St. Paul's. As the son of Irish parents who grew up on Long Island playing Gaelic games, I would spend some of my Sunday afternoons pucking a hurling ball back and forth with him. My grandmother flew in from Ireland for my graduation and he joined my parents, my grandmother and I for my graduation brunch. I kept in contact with him throughout the years, but I never made it back to Florida to see him before he passed. He was such a fine priest and I will never forget his lovely Leitrim lilt for as long as I live. May he rest in gentle peace. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis. Le comhbhrón, Capt. Kevin M. Mac Donnell

Capt. Kevin M. Mac Donnell - December 06, 2023 at 01:25 AM

AS

“ my family grew up with father heslin in daytona beach at st pauls. he lead the restoration of the church and was a guiding force for our family; may his soul rest in peace. art sample

art sample - May 17, 2023 at 04:29 PM



“ My mothers maiden name was Heslin. She always wondered if our families from NYC were related.

Joseph Branch - May 04, 2023 at 06:15 PM

VN

“ His sermons at Our Saviour's were usually short yet very profound — love God and go out to love one another. May God welcome him in heaven.

Vic Nicolai - April 30, 2023 at 07:30 PM

RV

“ Our hearts are saddened to hear of dear Father Heslin’s passing, and joyful that such a pure, sweet soul is being greeted with anticipation in Heaven. We have such wonderful memories of Father Heslin here in downtown Orlando! He married us on February 4, 1995 and we so enjoyed his wisdom, smile & true graciousness as a role model for our family. God Bless and Rest In Peace, Father Heslin... Roberta & Bill Vose

Roberta E. Vose - April 30, 2023 at 12:09 PM



“ Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of Reverend Seán Sylvester Heslin.



April 28, 2023 at 06:10 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Reverend Seán Sylvester Heslin.



April 28, 2023 at 06:01 PM

SM

“ *My families thoughts and prayers are with you and your wonderful family at this most difficult time. Father Sean Heslin you will always be a special part of our family because you baptized my daughter Grenadette Patrice Meyers Bittenbinder in St. Peter’s Catholic Church here in Deland, Florida in 1972. You came to our home for dinner that afternoon. We will treasure you forever. Thank you for the gentle kindness you showed each of us. May God hold you near. He is so very proud of you and the works you have done these many years. Thank you,*
Sue Kendrick Meyers



Sue Kendrick Meyers - April 27, 2023 at 11:04 AM