



Sean O'Connell – a Profile

As reported in the November edition of *Catena*, Sean O'Connell of **Brentwood Circle** was awarded the Benemerenti medal. Sean (baptised as "John Pius") is in Brentwood parish. For so many years he has given of himself in service to others. Having been a teacher at Bishop Ward School, there are now many pupils who give credit to him for the guidance which he provided. He has been a Knight of St Columba in the Council of Brentwood parish for many years. However, it is as a Catenian that his prominence in so many deserving works is commendable. Having joined the Association in 1971, Sean, along with others, was instrumental in forming the new Circle in Brentwood in 1976. He played an active role, thereafter, in its development, becoming its President in 1984. Then, following his election to Provincial Council, Sean was to the forefront of many of the ventures which were launched nationally. One remembers especially that which was adopted by the Association – its 'vocations to the priesthood initiative'.

It was not surprising, therefore, that in due course, Sean became in 1999/2000 President of Province 2 which stretches from Central London to Norwich. He has been one of the strongest advocates and promoters of the Association's involvement in the annual pilgrimage to Walsingham and making it a specific Catenian event. Sean's prominence in the affairs of the Association then resulted, seven years ago, in him being elected as Director of Province 2. Significantly, Sean's impact has been registered on the Bursary Fund Committee which has done so much to advance the interests of young Catholics up to the age of 25. This has been particularly effective in providing financial assistance to those who, often as students in gap years, have gone abroad to give their help in charity ventures.

Apart from Sean's Catenian involvement, he has contributed much to the community, parochially and further afield. In 1975, following the death of his sister-in-law and brother-in-law in a motoring accident, he and his wife Joan took into their home three of the bereaved children, who were their twin nieces, Patricia and Paula, and their nephew, Cierān, thereby complementing their existing family of two daughters Una and



Sean, Joan and family

Catherine and brought them all up together as one family. The following year they then had to face up to the ordeal of Cierān being involved in another accident which necessitated him having his leg amputated. Nevertheless, smilingly, they worked their way through all their difficulties, successfully seeing them all through school and university. Both Sean and Joan are ideal role models, leading by example and never letting the grass grow under their feet.

On his retirement as a teacher Sean became Bursar to the community of Ursuline sisters in Brentwood, in which capacity his work was much appreciated. As a thespian Sean had appeared over the years in the Cathedral Old Time Music Hall players and was renowned for his part as "The Galloping Major". His acting repertoire was extended when he also appeared in revues with some of the clergy such as Fr Gerry Hughes and the late Fr John Gordon. Together they provided much enjoyment to many parishioners from the surrounding parishes. Over the past nine years, Sean has been much involved with the Daughters of Charity at the Marillac Hospital, Warley. Here, he serves Mass both on Sundays and during the week, acting as MC at community funerals, the Easter Triduum, etc. He has always made himself available to provide assistance to both the sisters and priests whenever he has been called upon to do so.

Mike O'Gorman

John Lights Up Ealing!

The Christmas lights in West Ealing were switched on by the Deputy Mayor for the London Borough of Ealing, Cllr John Ross of **Ealing Circle**, accompanied by his wife Nicky, the Deputy Mayoress.



Pictured from left are: Monica Phillips, wife of Anthony of Ealing Circle, The Deputy Mayor and Mayoress, John and Nicky Ross

Julie Becomes Dame of St Sylvester

For her work in Catholic Adult Education and as founder and National Director of Project Rachel, Julie Kelly was invested as a Dame of the Order of St Sylvester by the Archbishop of Sydney, George Cardinal Pell. Julie is wife of Mike Kelly, a member of **Ku-Ring-Gai Circle** and Province 21's founding President.

Project Rachel is the Australian version of America's Rachel's Vineyard - the ministry helping men and women heal from post abortion trauma and grief. Julie said that it was astounding that she should be honoured in this way.

The Church had said "YES" to the work she had been doing and affirmed it so strongly. Mike Kelly was President of Area Council, Australia East, when Grand President Pat Coker (RIP) came out to inaugurate Waverley Circle 311 and Pittwater Circle 312, thus bringing the number of Circles to seven and the establishment of Province 21. (The following month, Pat inaugurated City of Lichfield Circle 313). So Mike became the first President of Province 21.



Pictured left to right, Julie Kelly, Cardinal Pell and Mike Kelly