



Memories

This article was published by student Professor Tony Farrell in tribute to his maths and science teacher Brother Fabian McGrath. I am grateful for Professor Farrell's permission to publish.

I am putting these notes in print out of regard for the Christian Brothers and especially Brother Michael Fabian McGrath. I went to school to the Brothers in Templemore and in Drimnagh Castle between the years 1954-64. I remember particularly Br. Kevin Skehan, Br. Donal Hurley and Br. Leo Canny down in Tipperary and Br. Peter Guilfoyle and Br. McGrath himself in Dublin. Skilled, kind, creative teachers they all were and they left their mark on my mind, my outlook on life and my mentality. They gave their life's work to me and to people like me (the ordinary children of the country), who had no other means of getting an education. My parents only paid £10 a year while I was in secondary. I would like to pay back a little of that debt.



Bro. McGrath

Michael McGrath was born in Keyham, Plymouth, England on the 16th of April 1913 and he was raised in Cork. He went to school to the Brothers in the North Monastery. He entered the Brothers in 1928 and took the name Fabian (Fabe) in 1929. He finished the Leaving Certificate in 1931, with excellent marks, particularly in Maths. After spending a year studying teaching, he began to teach in Scoil Mhuire Primary School in Marino and he pursued the First Year Arts courses in UCD at the same time as an occasional student (i.e. without attending lectures) in the subjects Latin, English, Irish, Maths and Mathematical Physics. He continued like that, teaching and learning, for years. Apart from the Teaching Diploma (for Primary schools) and the B.A. degree (in Latin, Maths, History and French), he got the H. Dip in Irish, a Diploma in Technical Drawing, H. Dip in Ed., and various qualifications in teaching Physics, Chemistry, Botany and in Philosophy. He was Principal of Manor Street Primary School in Waterford from 1941-1944 and then he went teaching in the secondary school in Ennis, Co. Clare until 1955. He contracted TB then and spent two years in St. Patrick's nursing home in Baldoyle. He overcame the disease but he was left fairly weak after that. He returned to teaching and was on the staff of Drimnagh Castle Secondary School from 1957 - 1991. (He retired officially in 1978 but carried on teaching on a part-time basis.). His health failed in 1991 and he was taken back to St. Patrick's nursing home. The Lord called him home to him on the 11th November 1992.

I had Br. McGrath as a teacher in Maths, Science and Religion. I heard from Fr. Flannan Markham (RIP) that he taught Latin as well when he was down in Ennis and that he was great. His health was not good and he always moved slowly steadily. He spoke slowly and in a wonderfully exact manner, each word measured and proper. He gave notes in each subject. We wrote them down from his dictation (but he would write the figures and equations on the blackboard.). These notes here are the ones I took down from him in 1962-64 while I was preparing for the Leaving Cert. As well as the notes, he used to spend time explaining them and he would give us hundreds of problems to practise on.

The syllabus of the schools has changed a great deal since then. In particular, the course no longer goes so deep into Geometry and there is not the same stress on handling expressions and equations as there used to be. Nevertheless, I believe that these notes will be useful to teachers and gifted pupils, from 4th Year (Transition Year) onwards. Also, there is material in them which is taught usually in many of the secondary schools of the world and on which are based questions in the IMO (International Maths Olympics) and knowledge of this material is essential for anybody attempting this competition. As well as that, there is knowledge here that Mathematics graduates don't always have (even post-graduate researchers!) and which would be very useful for them.

I left the notes insofar as I was able the same as I got them from the Brother. I corrected any inaccuracy I found (the fault of the pupil was what was involved, of course: my ear failed or my understanding at the time), but I made no effort to express my own outlook on the material in the notes. I must say, however, that I am happy enough with the layout of the notes, except in the Calculus. I almost left out that last section but in the end I kept the notes entire. There is a pearl or two in each part of them. I brought the text in line with the official standard and the official terminology, as far as I was able. BMG had a term or two that is not now in the dictionaries and I give them in footnotes. I got great assistance from Siobhán Ní Fhoghlí while doing this standardization, but any fault that is left is my own.

I would like to express heartfelt thanks to the people who helped me while compiling these notes: Fiacre "Cairbre, Siobhán Ní Fhoghlí", Richard Watson, Br. DÚnal Leader, Br. DÚnal Blake, Muiris "Drioscail, Grinne O'Rourke, Denise Keenan, David Cooke and above all else, my dear wife, Lise.

Whatever money comes in from the sale of these notes will go towards providing scholarships for students of Mathematics in Maynooth.

AMDG
A.G." Fearghall

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