

It was the time of Pope John Pauls visit to Wales, I was on a binge.

I pushed open the door of yet another rowdy establishment and a rush of warm air heavily tainted with beer and tobacco rushed passed me. Johnny stood at the bar dressed in faded jeans and sweatshirt. Johnny, a Melyn boy. For generations a Melyn boy had three options, he became a criminal, an exile or a working class drunk. But Johnny, fom the Melyn, had taken Holy Orders and become a Roman Catholic Priest. I had attended the same Roman Catholic School as Johnny and I could't imagine a more unlikely candidate for the priesthood. Johnny was on holiday from his parish in England.

The people of the Melyn were stangely proud of Johnny and his calling, and showed it by subjecting him to a lot of good humoured banter. When I entered the pub he was talking to Martin Fally -down , a resident irishman who had earned this tag because of the noted unsteadyness of his feet after imbibing.

Their conversation was being constantly interupted by calls to Johnny "Hey, Johnny, your boss is in Cardiff then" - "How's your love life Johnny"? "Hey, Johnny, What's it to do with you at the pole if a man wants to muzzle his horse". to add effect to this last question someone offered Johnny a packet of contraceptives. He accepted them with a huge grin, he the procured a pin and pierced the sheaths through the wrapping, handed them back to th donner and advised him to rush home and make passionate love to his wife (but he didn't put it quite as delicately as that) and so it went on. Eventually Martin weaved his bleary way to the other end of the room and I joined Johnny for our usual friendly arguement on Catholicism a faith I had shed years ago.

Time passed, we became very inebriated, and I found that through my alcoholic fuzz

Johnny was getting to me. My old fervour was returning, "faith of our fathers", and all that. I tried to fight against it, but then, when I was at my weakest, it happened. Onto the T.V. screen came a showing of the Popish Events at Cardiff that day.

All the hubbub in the room ceased, all eyes watched in deference and respect as Johnny's Boss rode around some stadium in his milk flat. You could have heard a pin drop, - until, Marting Fally-down - fell down - taking a table and glasses with him. Bellows of anger erupted at this sacrilegious incident. Martin was launched through the door and quiet returned to Johnny, "Johnny - Father Johnny, Blessme, - give me your blessing". Johnny's boozy featured contacted with Joy. "Outside Terry, Outside", he shouted. The packed bar room hearing this, forgot their religious fervour for the moment, and, thinking a fight was imminent. They followed us out to the street. But their fervour returned, and expanded when they realized our intent.

Johnny bade me kneel for his blessing, I attempted this but owing to my drunken state and arthritic knee I pitched violently forward, between his legs, butting him hard in the pubic region as i shot through. This caused him to double up and fall on me " You clumsy bastard". This sudden shout, the pugnacious priest, we lay ther end to end, Johnny tried to raise but was too drunk and stunned to do so. The watching crowd began murmuring, sides were being taken, and, I think Johnny realised something must be done. To avoid riot. So twisting his prone body he proceeded to impart his blessing from this strange position, his hand rising and falling in the general direction of a vanalized litter bin. The crowd were deeply moved by it all, and afterwards helped us to ur feet telling us how honored they felt at being allowed to witness this sacred rite. Next morning with a terrible hangover and badly bruised face, I hated everthing Catholic. I dont really know what Johnny felt