

Honoured by An Post

Many Jesuits have featured worldwide on postage stamps. Ireland has honoured James A Cullen SJ, founder of *The Messenger* and the Pioneer Association. The latest is Michael J Kelly SJ, who has spent all of his priestly life in the development of education in Zambia.

Michael J Kelly SJ, an Irish Jesuit missionary who has worked to combat HIV/AIDS in Zambia and Sub-Saharan Africa, featured on a postage stamp, issued on 27 February 2020, as part of An Post's 'The Irish Abroad' series.

The stamp is in recognition of Fr Michael's sixty-five years of Jesuit ministry in Zambia, where he reached in to the hearts of people through education and HIV/AIDS-advocacy. In a letter detailing his personal reaction to the news, Fr Kelly says that he is completely overwhelmed and humbled at this 'magnificent and totally unexpected honour'.

According to the Irish postal service, 'The Irish abroad and those who have Irish roots move centre stage globally each year when Ireland's national day is widely celebrated in centres all over the world. Irish emigrants have made a huge impression on their adopted societies and on world affairs. Two of our five stamp-series on the theme of 'The Irish Abroad' for issue on 27 February acknowledge six such people'.

An Post notes that Fr Kelly, originally from Tullamore, County Offaly, is widely acclaimed for his work as a priest and aid worker. He features on

the stamp alongside two other Irish emigrants: the accomplished author and Tuamgraney, County Clare-born Edna O'Brien and Mary Elmes (1908–2002) from Cork, the humanitarian worker particularly renowned for saving the lives of 200 Jewish children in France during the Holocaust.

An Post added, 'Irish emigrants have made an indelible mark in many walks of life around the world over the centuries and we are delighted to mark their contribution by issuing two stamps that feature six notable examples'. The remaining figures are actor Richard Harris, scientist Dame Kathleen Lonsdale and musician-composer Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore.

Fr Kelly writes: 'I am absolutely delighted that those who left Ireland are being commemorated through this stamp issue, but I'm deeply humbled at the thought that they are being represented, remembered and honoured through me. I think also of the thousands who opened to me the doors of their personal lives and sufferings as they shared with me their HIV-infected situation and their anxieties. They retained hope and dignity through the ministries of HIV/AIDS-workers who came from Ireland,

Éireannaigh Thar Lear
The Irish Abroad

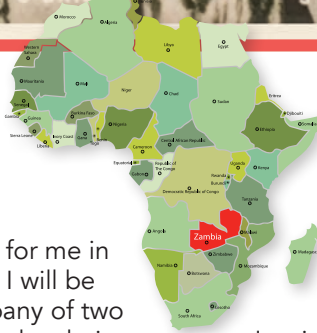


and today, many of them are happily alive and praising God for the people of Ireland.

‘A significant feature for me in this stamp issue is that I will be appearing in the company of two women – Mary Elmes, who during the Second World War enabled hundreds of Jewish children to escape from Nazi-occupied Paris, and Edna O’Brien, the renowned novelist.’

Promoting the situation and role of women has always been cardinal in Fr Kelly’s life, and he is very happy to appear in the company of ‘these two great women’.

He is pleased also to see Dame Kathleen Lonsdale on one of the other stamps, a dynamic scientist who through her discoveries and accomplishments highlighted the



original and creative capability of women. He adds, ‘Really wonderful also to know that the new stamps make a further Jesuit connection by featuring Richard Harris who went to school in the Jesuit school, the Crescent, in Limerick’.

He ends with: ‘It is my hope that my appearance on one of these stamps will bring recognition to the Church and the Society, and also, let me add, to my home town, Tullamore, and my adopted country, Zambia. The Church, the Society, Tullamore and Zambia have made me what I am and I can never be grateful enough to them. I don’t see myself as a worthy son of any of them, but apparently others think differently’. ❤️

Courtesy of Irish Jesuit News