

Former Man United footballer to become a priest



A former Manchester United footballer is training to become a priest. Phil Mulryne, who was once a teammate of Ryan Giggs and David Beckham, has enrolled at the Pontifical Irish College in Rome.

The former Northern Ireland international midfielder was invited into the priesthood by Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor after leaving the sport and becoming involved in charitable activities.

Mulryne, 34, began his career with the Manchester United youth team in 1994, but despite great talent found it hard to find a first team place in one of the most famous English league sides of all times, with Beckham, Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt all playing in similar positions. He joined Norwich in 1999 and eventually had spells with Ipswich Town, Barnsley, Leyton Orient and Polish side Legia Warsaw.

During his time as a footballer Mulryne dated a model, Nicola Chapman, and was once sent home from the Northern Ireland squad in 2005 after breaking a curfew to go drinking. His career was cut short in 2008 by injury, and he decided to return to Ireland.

However since returning home and becoming involved in charity work he turned his life around. Former Norwich teammate Paul McVeigh said he had visited his friend in Rome and was surprised by the change.

Mr McVeigh said: "To my amazement, and most likely to the rest of the footballing fraternity's, Phil decided to train to become a Catholic priest.

"I was still in contact with him and knew that he had turned his life around and was doing a lot of charitable work and helping the homeless on a weekly basis. Still, it was a complete shock that he felt this was his calling.

"I know for a fact that this is not something he took lightly as the training to be ordained as a Catholic priest consists of a two-year philosophy degree, followed by a four-year theology degree and only after that will he finally be qualified as a priest.

“When I arrived in Rome, I was met by a very contented-looking Phil who took me back to the Irish college where he was to be based for the next four years.”

Mulryne’s mother Sally said the decision to follow his vocation was a “big decision”.

Ed West - Catholic Herald