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Gentle Reader,
Once again Greetings from the Chair and the Committee!
Recently I attended a lecture in the National Library entitled 'Strangers to Citizens' It was a report of the progress of a History Project undertaken by historians of that period who are mainly based in Maynooth College, Co. Kildare. About 10/12 years ago, they, with research colleagues from other Colleges with this specific historical interest, started to scour the archives on the continent for information on the Irish who migrated to Europe in the period 1600 – 1800 – with great success. Following the end of the wars of the 16th century in Ireland a trend of Irish Emigration to continental Europe began. Very large numbers went to Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia and Sweden. They were soldiers, merchants, students, not only for the priesthood, but also those seeking commercial and legal training. Men, women and children left for a multitude of reasons, but wherever they set up home they formed an identifiable Irish community, many rising to civil prominence in their adopted countries. The Project Group has published a number of books since 2001 in this interesting and little known area of historical research that is easily available in good bookshops. It is a fascinating Project, especially from the Archivist's point of view, as the footnoting of the writers archival search in continental archives is wonderful to behold! Through my contact with the Catholic Archives Society in England I have visited many continental archives over the years and have seen lists of Irish names of those who have attended colleges in Europe in that period. It would appear that continental Europe is rich in sources for our history.

At present there is an Exhibition in the National Library on Kildare Street, under this title 'Strangers to Citizens'. It is well worth a visit if you are in Dublin. The entrance is through the Genealogical Office.

As we have another Archives Management Training Week coming up at the end of June into July in Clonliffe College, I am reminded of the Debt we owe to the Archives Department of University College, Dublin, in the person of Kerry Holland, who has trained most of us, perhaps all of us, over the years. She has been a constant and loyal friend to the Association of Church Archives, Ireland. We are immensely grateful to her for her commitment to the Association and her willingness to come to us as we have another group of people to be initiated into archival management and professional procedures.

Yours sincerely,
Dominique Horgan op
Chair. ACAI.

The Servites of Benburb

In 1233 seven rich merchants left their homes, businesses and families in the city of Florence, to seek a place apart and live the simple and demanding life of the Gospel. Since that time the work of the Servite Order was mostly confined to the continent of Europe, especially to Italy where their numbers have always been greatest. Sixty years ago, the Order established its first foundation in Ireland, on the banks of the Blackwater at Benburb, Co. Tyrone. The first American Province was established in 1909 and it was from there that Fr. James Mary Keane O.S.M. came to Ireland to establish a house of the Order in the land of his ancestors.

In 1893 Joseph Keane and Katie Halloran left the area of Maam, Co. Galway and made their way to the Irish quarter of Chicago, where they fell in love and married on 16 May 1900. A son whom they named James Roy was born on 5 August 1901 and two years later a daughter was born. Everything was fine for a few years but disaster struck when Catherine died in childbirth. She and her baby son were buried in Mount Carmel cemetery on 11 June 1906. The loss of his mother affected James deeply. His father remarried after a few years but the new Mrs Keane was cold and aloof. Young Joseph soon realised that he could not bestow love on everyone so he grew selective and careful in his relationships.

He was a bright student and having completed his studies he declared his intention of becoming a priest of the Servite Order. His father, thinking he was too young, insisted that he work for a year. He complied and after a year set off to join the Servite novitiate near Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The monastery owned a big farm and the young men tended crops, grew vegetables and looked after a herd of cows. James once said that the training there made them more fitted to be farmers than priests. On 15 August 1920, aged nineteen, he entered the novitiate, received the habit and the name Peregrine – that of a famous Servite saint renowned as the Patron of cancer victims. Br. Peregrine excelled in the scholastic field and impressed all who met him with his ability to get on with people. Having completed his study of philosophy in Chicago, he was sent to Rome

He was ordained to the priesthood on 8 August 1926. He wired his first blessing to his family as they could not travel to Rome. He was recalled to Chicago and appointed to teach in a new seminary in Illinois. This was a real test of his vow of obedience, as he did not wish to teach. However, he set personal hopes aside and taught an amazing range of subjects. Over the years he advanced in authority until in 1933 he was one of the most influential and powerful Servites in the world. He showed exceptional talent for organisation, and was even instrumental in founding Alcoholics Anonymous.

He had always been impressed by his father's reminiscences of Ireland, so he was anxious to establish a Servite house on Irish soil. Christmas 1946 found him in the land of his ancestors, with high hopes and well aware of the great missionary history of the Irish people. Archbishop John Charles McQuaid received him with courtesy, but assured him that there was no place in his diocese for the Servites. He gave him permission to contact as many Bishops as he wished, but warned that the answer would be the same in all cases. Although vocations to the priesthood were many, church authorities did not need or want another Order. He travelled from diocese to diocese but everywhere met with the same refusal.

By 2 January 1947, a disheartened Fr. Keane was down to his last two appointments. One of these was with Most Rev. John D'Alton, D.D. Archbishop of Armagh. Fearing that his answer also would be negative, Fr. Keane wrote to his Superiors in Chicago "*only a miracle will get us into Ireland.*" However, Dr. D'Alton

asked him to present his request in writing and he would present it to the Cathedral Chapter. Fr. Keane's last port of call was Bishop O'Callaghan in Monaghan who informed him that it was providential that he had come just then as Fr. Thomas Soraghan of Moy, Co. Tyrone, had recently purchased one of the most historic spots of Fr. Keane that this should in Ireland- Benburb Castle in Co. Tyrone. With a sense of urgency Fr. Keane met the P.P. who took him to view the manor and grounds. He fell in love with the magnificent setting and saw the immense potential of the house. He then hastened back to Armagh, and to make a long story short, a deal was struck.

Misunderstandings, negotiations mostly by correspondence took much time and effort, so it was not until 15 June 1949 that everything was settled, and this day was set for the dedication of the priory. This date was Pentecost Sunday and was also the 303rd anniversary of the Battle of Benburb. On that day some twenty thousand people gathered for the dedication of the new Servite Priory to Our Lady of Benburb. The Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev. Dr. John D'Alton performed the impressive ceremony. Many members of the Irish Hierarchy and Leaders of religious orders were present. The Prior General of the Servite Order – Most Rev. A.M. Benetti, OSM was there as were many noted statesmen, much to the delight of the people who never expected to see these people in the flesh, and the occasion marked a milestone in North/South relations as well.

Fr. Keane must have felt that the day was the answer to all his prayers and the total fulfilment of a dream. Three young American students had come from Rome and were ordained that morning. It was testament to the persuasive powers happen. He called it "*the culmination of one of the great ambitions of my life.*" Fr. Keane lived until 1975. He had been in an accident some years earlier and as a result he found it hard to concentrate and it was clear that his active life was over. The final years were sad as his talents, his strength and drive had all faded. He had always expressed a wish to be buried in Ireland, so his remains were transferred to Ireland and buried in the little cemetery of the Priory on Saturday 10 April 1976.

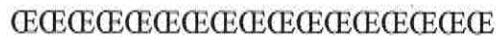
The Priory, like churches of the ages of faith, became a symbol of what might be, a beacon, the legendary city on a hill. People came for lectures, retreats, to pray, to receive a blessing of the relic, or just to walk about the beautiful grounds. They came drawn by history, by religion, by curiosity... It was and remains today a place to go apart, to sort out life or get in touch with the Divine – like going into the desert in the middle of Tyrone. Over the years Benburb has been home to many Servites. It has also been a haven of peace and rest to the many people who have visited and rested and enjoyed the pleasures of its wonderful grounds, but with time the Order had to diversify its mission in Ireland.

In 1969 the first small community moved to a rented house in Rathgar, Dublin. In 1971 a new Vicariate was established but as numbers continued to grow, it was clear that a larger property that would be accessible for the University and Milltown Institute was needed. Many places were considered but as soon as Elm Park House on Grange Road, Rathfarnham was looked at – they echoed Fr. Keane at Benburb in former times "*this is the place!*" Very soon this became an important centre for Servite life in Dublin. In 1974 they were asked to take charge of the parish of Blakestown in North Dublin and the new church there was dedicated in July 1978.

The original Benburb foundation was monastic in nature and therefore, not strictly in conformity with the idea of a Friary. Since Vatican II all that has changed; Benburb Priory has been thrown open and there is a constant search for ways to meet the needs of the multid denominational faith community. Lectures, retreats, conferences, study sessions and publications are amongst the ways Servites have

endeavoured to answer those needs. Benburb is now synonymous with the ecumenical movement. It offers hope and solace to those in physical ill-health, and guidance for those who seek intellectual and spiritual sustenance. In these days of the twenty-first century we can but stare with wonder and uncertainty into a future that invites us to snap the bonds of global gravity and take faltering steps towards the vastness of stellar space. The future is as always, beyond recognition or prediction. Looking back over six decades of richness and diversity, one can but grasp the maxim of Fr. Cyril Farrell OSM, "The Past is Prologue."!

Grateful thanks to Fr. Colum McDonnell OSM for above material.



Maundy Money

History was made on the 20 March 2008 when Queen Elizabeth, then in her 82nd year, while making a three day visit to Northern Ireland, distributed the Maundy money to residents there. She was accompanied by her husband, His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who did one of the readings, while Cardinal Brady did the other. The Cardinal also gave the final blessing with the Church of Ireland Primate. The ceremony symbolised and marked another significant step in the Peace Process. The custom of the Maundy money dates back to the days of King Edward I. At one stage the monarch actually washed the feet of some selected people, but when plague stalked the land, other people deputised for the monarch, and nosegays as a precaution against disease, were a prominent feature of the ceremony! Eventually in the seventeenth century that practice was discontinued.

The word 'Maundy' is derived from the Latin – Mandatum, and the opening words of the ceremony are: "*A new commandment I give you.*" In earlier times the monarch gave food, clothing and wine but in Rochester in 1213 King John first gave money, then 13 pence to thirteen poor men, as originally the recipients were of the same sex as the monarch, who gave a coin for each year of his reign. Since the eighteenth century however, it is distributed to as many men and women as the sovereign's years of age. Hence the 82p. given on Holy Thursday last year. It was a most impressive ceremony in which the Yeomen of the Guard carried 82 red and white purses of Maundy money on golden alms trays, which the Queen then distributed to 82 men and 82 women.

The recipients are usually selected from retired pensioners recommended by clergy and ministers of all denominations, in recognition of service to the church and community. The Maundy coins are specially minted in denominations of one penny, two penny (half-groat), three penny piece and four penny (groat) pieces. They are legal tender and no doubt, those who are privileged to receive them will treasure them always, even though they are very sought after as treasures of worth, by collectors. The church in Armagh commemorated the occasion by having a lovely card depicting the little red and white purses printed by Trimprint, Armagh, and no doubt it too will become a collector's item in the future.

In Memoriam
Rev. Edward J. Stirling C.S.Sp.

We were saddened to read of the death of one of our loyal members – Rev. Edward Stirling, C.S.Sp. who departed this life peacefully, on Christmas Day last. He was born in Sandycove, Dublin on the 25th November 1933. He was educated in Blackrock College; entered the novitiate 8th September 1953; studied philosophy and theology in Kimmage, was ordained to priesthood 16th July 1961 and made his consecration to the Apostolate in 1962. Since then he served in Umuahia, Nigeria; Anchorage, Alaska; Mombasa, Kenya; San Francisco as well as having been Prefect in Blackrock College, having served in-between times in Willow Park, and eventually returning to serve an appointment in Rockwell College as teacher and archivist. Many of our members will recall that he organised our summer outing to the Rock of Cashel, the Bolton Library, the Folk Museum, Cashel, and to Rockwell College, where we were treated to afternoon tea in 1996.

We are very happy to quote from the homily given by Joseph D'Ambrosio CSSp at his funeral mass on 30 December. He started with 'Because of the season that is in it, I would like to start with the Christmas Poem called "God's Sense of Humour", appropriate for the occasion. He then went on "Fr. Edward was a totally honest man. Honest with you, me, but most of all, honest with himself. His honesty sometimes landed him in hot water. The same thing happened to Jesus, who said "*I am the truth.*" I think Jesus and Edward are going to get on very well, as both were fearless in telling it as it is. The second thing which impressed me about Edward was the delight he found in simple enjoyments of life. He loved cycling, fishing, gardening, conversation and singing. He was President of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in Cashel, home of the world famous Brú Boru. He never missed a Flea Ceoil. He loved songs, not in a selfish way. He was never happier than when singing for residents and patients in nursing homes and hospitals. He got a civic award from the city of San Francisco for the way he changed life for

those in retirement. His father was Scottish and in the words of the old song "*Many a heart will break in two should he ne'er come back again*" especially round Cashel, Cahir and Clonmel.

He was only happy when he was making others happy. He loved driving the students of Rockwell College to matches, to airports, the dentist, whatever would make life easier for them. And of course they responded by helping him collect thousands of Euro for GOAL-AIDLINK to help the poor of the Third World.

I could be close to calling him a saint, but if he was such, he was a very human one. It is said that saints can be hard to live with. He had his faults like the rest of us, and made mistakes as we do. But he recovered; he found his strength in God who is totally understanding. It takes a saint to realise that. He knew that God had pity on our weakness, and that without God's pity Jesus would never have been born in Bethlehem and there would have been no Christmas Day for Edward to die on. He knew his Bible, where it says: "*Love covers a multitude of mistakes*" and in his case he was proved right. He was a man of great love especially for the poor, the lonely, the forgotten, the outsider. Jesus will not forget that.

So I want to end my appreciation of a well-loved person by thanking the Stirling family for giving us Edward, who always made a difference, especially in San Francisco and South Tipperary. I want to thank the Rockwell community, for encouraging Edward in every way to fulfil his potential, which he certainly did. I would like to thank Nurse Ann Mulcahy and Dr. William Ryan of Cashel for their medical expertise. Both will bear witness that as soon as he made even half a recovery, he was off to visit those he felt were worse off than himself. We thank also the Matron and staff of Marian House, Kimmage for looking after him so well during recent times. **Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal, dÍlis.**

Sincere thanks to Brother Ignatius CSSp. Provincialate, Temple Park, Dublin for supplying above obituary.

THE LAST WORD AND THE FINAL WORD

The first issue of **The Word** appeared in March 1953 and featured an article about Stalin, written five months earlier. Very conveniently, he died – we didn't kill him – on 5 March. We Printed 5,000 copies, which were all sold in a few days, making the Soviet dictator the first of many people to whom we are indebted. Born in Britain in 1936 and suspended during World War II, it was reborn as a pictorial and general interest catholic magazine in Ireland in 1953 called **The Word**. The four factors that have made The Word so popular, come from Saint Arnold Janssen, a German, who died in 1909, founder of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD.) A magazine editor himself, he said: "*Firstly, the magazine should be entertaining; secondly impart general knowledge; and thirdly be a source of spiritual instruction.*" He pointed out that it should be a *non-mission magazine*, so that it can bring the mission idea to those who are not easy to reach. This kind of approach was broadminded and truly catholic; it was both universal and all embracing in its outlook. All human life is of interest. All that is true, good and beautiful (cf.Phil. 14:8) is of concern to the true Catholic. Its horizon is literally the world and so is it missionary.

The second reason for its popularity was Paul Hurley SVD, the first editor, Bro. Paul edited, designed, wrote the articles and found pictures for over forty years to make **The Word** the household name it became. A consummate journalist, he is still researching and writing at 86 years of age. The Word was the first magazine to give due attention to images, first black and white, but then glorious colour, long before glossy magazines. One of the articles that caught the headlines was Bro. Paul's interview in 1966 with then Taoiseach – Seán Lemass. Intended as a ten-minute chat, it went on for an hour. When it was published, questions were raised in the Dáil about the propriety of the frank, and not always flattering, comments Lemass made on heads of government, and of state, in Britain and the continent, such as Macmillan and de Gaulle.

Bro. Paul managed to convey a sense of true catholicity of the faith that embraced every aspect of our humanity, from literature to sport, from art to spirituality, and opened up new vistas at a time when narrowness of mind and heart were not unusual in catholic Ireland. The third factor in the huge popularity of the magazine was the network of promoters set up by Bro. Pat Heraty SVD in Ireland and in Britain. Bro. Pat travelled to every town and city and every office, creamery or factory in the country to get promoters – people who would take up to 500 copies a month – distribute them, and collect the cost. Some have been doing this for us up to 40 years. The Legion of Mary also played a huge role in this, when they adopted the sale of The Word as part of their very effective apostolate of printed press.

The Word has always covered a very wide range of subjects, from the AA and Aberdeen to Zambia and zoos. It has regularly had articles on the world's great artists, composers, poets, writers, sculptors, scientists, explorers, inventors and other historical figures. Our circulation peaked at 260,000 in 1970, 170,000 in Ireland and Britain, 50,000 in the US, 30,000 in Australia and 10,000 elsewhere. In the decades when foreign travel was a luxury that few could afford, **The Word** had articles on even the most obscure islands in the Atlantic, such as St. Helena and Tristan de Cuna. In Ireland it was sold mostly by thousands of promoters, of whom we had some in every Irish town. A young promoter later became one of the most distinguished people in the country. President Mary McAleese recently reminded us that as a school girl and promoter, she "*tramped the streets of West Belfast selling it.*"

Another series focussed on justice issues around the world and did much to raise consciousness of the oppression of the poor by the rich. Spirituality was covered mostly indirectly by commentaries on the lives of the Saints. Promoters were inspired by the missionary ideal, which at the time was one of the most significant features of the Church. Irish mothers had copies sent regularly to their sons and daughters in faraway places. Through **The Word** many young people were drawn to our missionary life and many young and not so young came to join us in Donamon, and went far and wide as missionaries throughout the world. We also carried monthly reports on our worldwide missionary work by countless SVD bishops, priests and brothers.

The quality of the print in the magazine was a huge factor in its success. Up to four and a half years ago, it was printed by the SVD Brothers at the Divine Word Missionary motherhouse in Steyl, Holland. The printing press there was the most modern in Europe and the Brothers were the most dedicated and professional of printers, whose quality of printing was regarded by experts as unsurpassed anywhere. Incidentally, the fact that the magazine was printed in Holland and shipped back to Ireland for distribution from the Irish motherhouse in Donamon, Co. Roscommon, meant that the editor had to be five months ahead with each issue. After the closure of the Dutch press, **The Word** has been printed primarily by Boylan's, Drogheda, who maintained the high standard set by our Brothers.

Many readers were first attracted to **The Word** by its interesting pictures, about 60,000 of which, on a vast variety of topics, appeared in its pages in the last 55 years. Some were taken by the world's greatest photographers, like Yousuf Karsh and Sebastiao Salgado, and our own Heinz Helf, SVD. Only one issue ever got lost; when a ship sank in a storm in the English Channel. Readers were also attracted by our various series of features, such as the *Cities of Europe*, which ran for about 14 years; on most *Irish Towns*; and on almost all the *Third World Countries*. One of the longest lasting for almost twenty years, was *Saints of the Month*, while nearly every issue for over fifty years had an article about the Bible and its place in our lives. For many years we published interviews with leaders in politics, industry, art, agriculture, trade unions, entertainment, sport etc.

In 1993 under the editorship of Fr. Tom Cahill SVD, new features were added to the traditional policy. These included articles on moral issues, very often before they became popular subjects, such as euthanasia and designer babies. Others were the series of articles on the Sunday Readings at mass, intended to help lay-readers in particular. Many people first became aware of ecological issues by reading about them in *The Word*. A new editorial team took over responsibility for *The Word* in April 2004 with Ms Sarah MacDonald as editor and Gabriel Carbonne doing the layout and Fr. Vincent Twomey SVD as Editor in Chief. New features included more attention to sport, unsung heroes and theological topics, and editorials that tried to address some of the issues of the day. It received the PPAI award for best religious magazine – one of the many awards the magazine has received over the years.

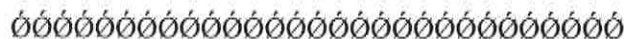
An article on conscience started a controversy in the 'Letters-to-the-Editor' page in *The Irish Times* that lasted almost four months, last year. Another article that was externally popular was on a morally more acceptable (and more efficient) method of helping infertile couples have children than IVF. Despite all these efforts, the circulation of *The Word* dropped to 30,000 by 1998, and this year to 17,000. Why?

One reason for this is that people who no longer go to Mass on Sundays are unlikely to buy a catholic magazine on Mondays. Irish society and the Irish church have changed radically also since the Seventies. Travel, glossy magazines, specialist

journals in history, music and art all do far more comprehensively what **The Word** did in its own modest but still remarkable way. The practice of the faith has declined and the missionary spirit has almost vanished or has been transformed into concern for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, which lay groups address with increasing zeal.

Our Superiors felt that they could not invest any more of our decreasing finances, given the times in which we are living. It was a hard decision. **The Word** was in the process of becoming a source not only of good reading of a general nature, which it always was with remarkable consistency, but also a source of theological and spiritual inspiration. Today, the Irish church needs a forum to engage with an increasingly secular world that is nonetheless searching for truth, goodness and beauty and to engage with those who are searching for truth, goodness and beauty and to engage with those who are searching for a reason for the hope we have as Christians. (cf. 1 Pet 3:15)

This article was compiled by Noel Ruane svd.



Fr. Myles Rearden CM (1939 – 2009)

Myles was a native of Sunday’s Well, Cork city. The local church was St. Vincent’s, and Myles was educated in Castleknock College, as his father had been. I taught him in class during his final three years there. While in the Vincentian seminary in Blackrock, Co. Dublin, he read Philosophy for his primary degree in UCD. After ordination he pursued further studies in this subject in Oxford, and was then appointed to All Hallows College to teach Philosophy and be Junior Dean. He next had a period teaching in Nigeria, then further studies in Rome, after which he was appointed one of the two Spiritual Directors in Maynooth College. He then had a period in Tanzania, where he worked with Sisters of a German community, with a Vincentian spirit. He needed to learn Swahili for his ministry, and was soon proficient enough to write two books in that language – a brief biography of St. Vincent and an introduction to the Spiritual Life. On his return from Africa he was once again appointed to Maynooth. At the same moment I “headhunted” him, successfully, for my assistant in our archives. Over the last year his health had been gradually deteriorating, but he continued his work. He died at his desk in Maynooth. He wrote many articles, a few books and some letters to newspapers. The latter were mostly disagreeing with something that had appeared in the paper. Readers might be interested in his latest article which appeared in the March edition of ‘The Furrow’ – a rather erudite compilation on ‘Turning Dawkins’. As a boy he had been an enthusiastic Scout. Well into his adult life, in a totally different context, I met his former Scoutmaster. A word he used about Myles as a Scout was “dedicated”. That word applied to anything he did.

Go ndéana Dia trócaire ar a anam uasal, dílis.

Tom Davitt CM.

The Nun of Kenmare

A new book about a brief but dramatic, period in the controversial life of the famous 'Nun of Kenmare' has lately been published. Margaret Anna Cusack spent two remarkable years in Knock, a short time after the apparition there of Our Lady in August 1879. The book was launched by Monsignor Joseph Quinn at Knock Shrine Book Centre on Thursday 15 January last.

Born of a Dublin Protestant family and educated in England, Margaret experienced a period of deep bereavement following the deaths of her fiancé and that of her father shortly afterwards. She turned to religious life in an Anglican Sisterhood in London, for several years before converting to Catholicism. There then followed twenty years as a cloistered Poor Clare nun in Kenmare, Co. Kerry, where under her name in religion, Sr. Mary Frances Clare, she gained an international reputation as an author and fundraiser during the famine times of the mid 1870's. She was a woman of enormous energy and business acumen but was always afflicted by relationship difficulties.

Her time in Knock 1881- 1883 has been shrouded in controversy for over 100 years as so many of her sympathisers relied mainly on her own very partisan autobiographies rather than on the opinion of those who had closer dealings with her. Her efforts to establish schooling and industrial training for girls in Knock and to build a magnificent 'Abbey' came to a sudden end but her eventual departure from Knock was a relief to the Parish Priest and the Archbishop of Tuam. However, her fledgling religious community, founded at nearby Churchfield House, eventually blossomed to become the international Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace.

Subsequently, after further disagreements with Church authorities in England and in America, Sr. Mary Frances Clare left her congregation and spent the remaining ten years of her life avidly opposing the Catholic Church and her doctrines. Margaret Anna Cusack died, a rather tragic figure, in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, in June 1899.

Sr. Catherine Ferguson, a Sister of St. Joseph of Peace, carried out extensive research into the story of the Nun of Kenmare, for over twenty years, with particular reference to the Knock episode and she has now published the results of her work. The book, *Margaret Anna Cusack, The Nun of Kenmare, Knock 1881 – 1883* published by Gael Books, Warrenpoint, makes a fascinating story, eminently readable, with great insight into the social life of East Mayo of one hundred and twenty five years ago. It is a story not told until now. The book is available at Knock Shrine Book Centre and at selected bookshops at € 11.50.

Fr. Kieran Waldron, P.P., Killrerin, Barnaderg, Tuam, Co. Galway.



Why does Loreto celebrate 400 years when it can claim less than 200?

A complex interweaving of history, politics, development of nations, methods of government, administration changes within the Church, awareness of differing cultures and traditions, psychology and social sciences ... the unravelling of history over the years.

Mary Ward felt God's call when listening to an elderly servant in her relative's house, telling tales of religious life. She had never seen a monastery or a convent since England had been engulfed in "religious" wars for many years and although her family were staunch Catholics, she knew the dangers this involved for them all – Masses celebrated surreptitiously whenever a priest, usually a Jesuit was available, a hiding hole for him, and all needed for the celebration to disappear into in case pursuivants entered, fines and arrests made for sheltering a priest, or confiscation of land. Many years later, many events later, in 1609, Mary left England with several like-minded young women and founded a school in St. Omer for English catholic girls whose families were anxious to avail of such education not available at home. This is what we are celebrating, with the many thousands of pupils in our schools throughout the five continents of our world today.

What is the connection between Mary Ward and Loreto? Isn't Frances Ball the one who founded Loreto?

That's a good question. Mary Was English, a Yorkshire woman in fact, born into a wealthy family in 1585. Frances, later called Teresa, was Irish, born into a wealthy family in Dublin in 1895. Both Mary and Frances knew the value their parents placed on their catholic faith and the risks they took to preserve it and pass it on to their children. Both knew from experience the persecution inflicted on those who refused to bow to the demands of their anti-catholic governments which had reduced their catholic land-owners, professionals, labourers, to real devastating poverty, unable to claim their human rights in almost every sphere of life, unable to develop to a decent standard of living, denied the steps by which to rise – freedom, security, education, nutritious food.

Mary Ward felt God called her to begin an apostolic religious life, unheard of in her time – a community of women living not in an enclosed monastery under obedience to a male Superior, but governed by a woman, free to go out of their convent to work, especially in education, for the spread and defence of the faith, ministering to the needs of women and living an ordinary simple style of life, following the Rule of St. Ignatius, founder of the Society of Jesus, and like them directly subject to the Pope. This plan met with great opposition and she was arrested, imprisoned, on a charge of heresy, schism, and rebellion against the Church, and her congregation suppressed. (*the Bull, issued in 1631, Pastoralis Romani Pontificus read – "we destroy and annul them, and command all the Christian faithful to regard them as suppressed, extinct, rooted out, destroyed and abolished....."*) This in spite of her letter to all her sisters to "obey without question in the event of suppression." Many left the group then, but in time the handful of survivors gathered in Munich, Rome and York, where Mary died in 1645 during the English Civil War, and they eventually became a network of apostolic women inspired by the Ignatian charism, dedicated to the improvement of women's position in society and devoted to the 'disgraced foundress', whom they were not allowed to claim as founder until 1909. In 1686 the Mickelgate Bar convent, York, opened to meet the needs of the women in that locality, through education and visiting the sick poor. 1618-1749 Europe was almost constantly at war, depopulated by famine, disease, emigration, and debt. But Mary Ward's followers were indefatigable in their efforts to gain recognition and approval of their way of life. Eventually their Rules were confirmed and approved in 1703 by the *Brief Inscrutabili of Clement XI, and in 1749 Benedict XIV's Apostolic Constitution, Quamvis Justo, confirmed the office of General Superior, but forbade the acknowledgement of Mary Ward as founder.*

1808 saw the secularisation of the Institute in Munich, and from 1809-1840 no General Superior could be elected and the numbers dwindled. In spite of difficulties and the Penal Laws, the Mickelgate Bar convent continued its work of education and assistance to the poor, and since Ireland too was torn and impoverished by religious and political wrangling Catholics found it safer to send their girls overseas by sailing boat to England for their education than to risk life on the country roads infested by armed bandits. This is why Frances Ball followed her sisters to the Bar Convent, York in 1803 while her brother was educated by the Jesuits at Stoneyhurst. As with Mary Ward, Frances was much sought after in marriage to her mother's delight, but was drawn instead to serve the Lord by prayer and ministry to the poor. Because of their diminished numbers the Superior of the York convent could not agree to sending personnel to make an affiliation in Dublin, so Dr. Murray who had been Frances' spiritual director for years and saw in her the qualities needed to found a branch of the Institute in Dublin for the education of girls, sent her to York to be trained there. She shrank from this responsibility and was happy to remain teaching in the York school until two companions had completed one year's novitiate training and could travel back to Dublin with her. During her time in York Frances had transcribed the Rules and Customs (*based on the 1707 Ignatian text*) followed there and elsewhere by Mary Ward's sisters. She made her vows some years before the Superior in York, believing the Institute in Europe extinct, had requested the Bishop to accept full jurisdiction over the community, and to arrange for new Constitutions to be written for them – (*the Gilbert Constitutions which showed no trace of the Ignatian text they superseded.*) Dr. Murray had acquired a house in Rathfarnham for Frances and her two companions to begin their work, and on their first evening there they decided to call the house Loreto after the holy family's house in Nazareth. All future foundations continued this practice so the sisters and their ministries were known popularly as Loreto while their full name as Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) was retained for formal use.

Mary Ward had been motivated by concern for the plight of women in her own country, so it was with Frances. The Penal Laws were very much in force in both countries, so each community faced great opposition from the prevalent anti-Catholic, anti-feminist atmosphere of society. In order to open a school, Frances had to take the Oath of Allegiance to the King and get a licence from the Protestant Minister of the parish. Loreto Abbey Rathfarnham began 4 November 1822 with 13 boarders while 50 workmen were still in the house. The following May a free school opened for about 200 local children, and a Sunday school for women and those employed in the nearby mills. T.B., cholera, influenza, and devastating storms took turns but failed to thwart the growth of this small seed.

Frances kept up a close correspondence with the sisters in York, often ending her letters 'with affection to each at Mickelgate' or 'I am indebted to all at Mickelgate.' In one letter she wrote 'the first 10 years spent at Rathfarnham House no nuns ever thought of quitting this enclosure until convents were offered to us...' Yet by Shrove Tuesday 1847, 48 members had been sent on missions, and although 'we have refused 14 places offered for foundations' in January 1849, she wrote to York for prayers as 'on this day I am to decide on accepting the 21st filiation from Mickelgate Bar York.' This union of all the houses was dear to her heart, and her letter-writing and personal interest in each of her sisters proved a great bonding for all. In 1842 she wrote to Teresa Dease in Toronto, 'M. Philomena Frizelle in India has received the last rites of the Church. I ask her to obtain that we may be all united under one head.'

The Constitutions Frances brought from York were approved by the bishop and printed in 1832. Over the years each Superior of a new mission house carried a copy with her, thus preserving the Ignatian style of religious life in each community. In 1861 the Archbishop obtained from Propaganda a rescript which decreed that all the Dublin houses were to be subject to the superior-general at Rathfarnham. With Dr. Cullen's encouragement Teresa Ball began drafting new Constitutions, which would provide for the expanded Institute by legislating for the relationship between the different houses and Rathfarnham. By this time

foundations had been made in India 1841, Gibraltar and Mauritius 1845, Canada 1847, Manchester 1851, as well as many in Ireland itself. These Cullen Constitutions received papal approbation in 1861. Frances Teresa Ball loved to found when asked to do so. Although 46 sisters had died before her, by her death in 1861 she had missioned 54 sisters, usually in their twenties or early thirties, and often only a few days after their profession, to open 33 new convents. Her successors continued her warm relationship with York and her openness to foundations further afield.

While some communities in Europe were secularised during the 17th and 18th centuries, further expansion from the various mother-houses across the continent took place, and Australia in 1875, the Transvaal in 1878, Spain in 1888, welcomed the Sisters from Rathfarnham.

The York community presented a further petition for papal approbation of the Institute, prepared by Fr. Morris, S.J., which was granted in February 1877. M.S. Somers in Rathfarnham wrote 'Thank God your good bishop has obtained this great blessing for you and through you for us all; it is a new link to unite us in grateful love to York to which we owe our existence and so many blessings.' Several biographies of Mary Ward were written during this time, but they were put on the Index until 1928, and she was not publicly acknowledged as the foundress of the Institute until 1909. Several times the Irish branch had to insist on their union with the Institute

So our celebration of 400 years is a time to remember with gratitude the way the Lord has guided us through many difficulties from governments, bishops, and human nature itself. It is a time of renewal, of understanding better our charism and how it fits in to the 21st century with different needs to be met and greater calls for education of all kinds. The wonderful Eucharist in York Minster presided over by Cardinal Murphy O'Connor was proof of the power of forgiveness and reconciliation – Catholic and Anglican prelates side by side, with government officials, CJ and Loreto sisters, teachers, parents, past-pupils, friends from many countries, joyfully participating in remembrance of the supernatural foresight, heroic perseverance and deep faith of this' incomparable Yorkshire woman, whom England in its darkest and bloodiest hour gave to the Church.' In Mullingar we too celebrated Eucharist, presided over by Cardinal Brady, with representatives from our 35 Loreto schools in Ireland, Gibraltar, Sudan and Australia, united in thought and prayer with the 70.000 pupils in our 150 schools throughout the world today. In October an even bigger gathering will take place in Rome as representatives from all our Loreto Provinces, Canada to Australia, join with representatives from the CJ Provinces, Korea to Chile, to celebrate and hear words of encouragement from the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, himself a former pupil of our sisters in Bavaria.

Mary Ward said, 'I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much.' If we 'do well what we have to do', and live up to her values of freedom, truth, justice, sincerity and joy we will surely make a difference in our needy society today.

Paula Doolin, IBVM

SUMMER COURSE IN ARCHIVES 2009

This course will take place in Clonliffe College
from Monday 29 June to Friday 3 July 2009

There might still be place for a late entry!