

# IRISH AUGUSTINIAN NEWS



## “HOLLY BOUGH” EDITION – 2012

*And is it true,  
This most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,  
A Baby in an ox's stall?  
The Maker of the stars and sea  
Become a Child on earth for me?  
And is it true? For if it is.....  
No love that in a family dwells,  
No carolling in frosty air,  
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells  
Can with this single Truth compare -  
That God was man in Palestine  
And lives today in Bread and Wine.*  
- John Betjeman.

Dear Brothers and Friends in Augustine,  
As we pause once again to give praise and thanks to the One who lives today in Bread and Wine, I pray that your Christmas and New Year, whether at home or abroad, will be filled with great peace and joy.

Praise and thanks be to God for the many blessings received during 2012, among which I would include:

- The success of the *Bringing Faith to Life* programme which served so well as preparation for the Eucharistic Congress. Sincere thanks to all who planned and participated in the event.
- The April 21<sup>st</sup> celebration in John's Lane, marking 150 years since the laying of the foundation stone.
- The great rejoicing which surrounded Colm's ordination on April 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Kieran O'Mahony's election and installation as Ecumenical Canon of St. Patrick's cathedral.
- The publication of books celebrating the lives and times of Patrick Comerford, o.s.a. in Waterford and James Anderson, o.s.a. in Drogheda, both reminders of our illustrious history.
- The various Ordination and Profession jubilees celebrated throughout the year.
- The celebration of 75 years of Augustinian presence in Chone and the significant contribution made by the Irish friars during the past 35 years.
- Having Lazarus Barkindo remain to minister with us following the completion of his Masters Degree. Perhaps the beginning of a new departure for which the Nigerian province deserves our sincere gratitude.



- As always, a most pleasing aspect of the year resides in the generosity and commitment of so many friars and lay folk, providing such great service in our public churches, parishes and schools. Credit is also due to those involved in more individual ministries, whether at home or abroad.

The year to which we are bidding farewell wasn't without its challenges and difficulties. The fire in Meath Street was a serious misfortune but, thankfully, plans are well advanced for its restoration. The economy is still struggling, confidence in Church and State as institutions has continued to ebb and many people are finding it difficult to meet the bills. A great sadness of 2012 was the passing of Bishop Sheehan R.I.P. We remember him and all who have gone before us with particular fondness and gratitude at Christmas time. We also pray earnestly for those among us who are unwell at this time.

As this provincial term moves towards its conclusion, I give very sincere thanks to everyone - lay and friar alike - for their support, encouragement, co-operation and goodwill over the past eight years. It was greatly appreciated and served to lighten the burden very considerably.

Perhaps we might take time over the holiday season to reflect on the following words of Augustine:

*And when we say he was born of a virgin, it's a great thing, you're astonished. He's God, don't be astonished; let astonishment give way to thanksgiving and praise. Let faith be present; believe that it happened..... He agreed to become man; what more do you want? Hasn't God humbled himself enough for you? The one who was God has become man. The inn was crowded and cramped, so he was wrapped in rags, laid in a manger; you heard it when the gospel was read. Who wouldn't be astonished? The one who filled the universe could find no room in a lodging-house; laid in a feeding trough, he became our food.*



- St. Augustine, Sermon 189.

With fraternal greetings for Christmas and the New Year.

Gerry Horan OSA. (Provincial)



## DROGHEDA



Iggy O Donovan and journalist Eoghan Harris at the launch of the biography of Fr James Anderson.

### BIOGRAPHY OF FR ANDERSON OSA

On Thursday December 13th, broadcaster and journalist Eoghan Harris launched the biography of Fr Anderson at the Augustinian Church in Drogheda. The author is Jim Flynn who lives at Dowth Co Meath where Anderson's friend John Boyle O'Reilly had his home.

Born in 1837 Anderson was the most colourful Augustinian of the 19th century. A notorious political agitator he frequently fell foul of his ecclesiastical superiors and was forced to commute between various Augustinian priories.

The most controversial incident in his life was the Dungarvan election of 1868. Here he supported a candidate against the wishes of the local bishop who in retaliation deprived him of his faculties to operate in the diocese. It is interesting to note that in 1880 Anderson organised a pilgrimage from Drogheda to Knock. We believe this was the first ever pilgrimage to the hallowed shrine in Mayo and took place just months after the alleged apparitions there.

Anderson also fraternised with the Fenians at a time when they had fallen foul of the Church. John Boyle O'Reilly, John O'Leary, and later on Patrick Pearse numbered him as a friend. In 1884 he visited O'Reilly then in political exile in Boston. In the 1890s he even made it to Australia fundraising for St Patrick's in Rome and trying to retrieve something out of the financial and moral morass into which the whole "National Church" project had fallen. When Anderson died in Dublin in 1903 his obituary in the national press was penned by Patrick Pearse.



The Fr Anderson chalice. This was presented to Fr Anderson in Cork in 1870. It was donated by the people of Dungarvan. It is now in Drogheda.

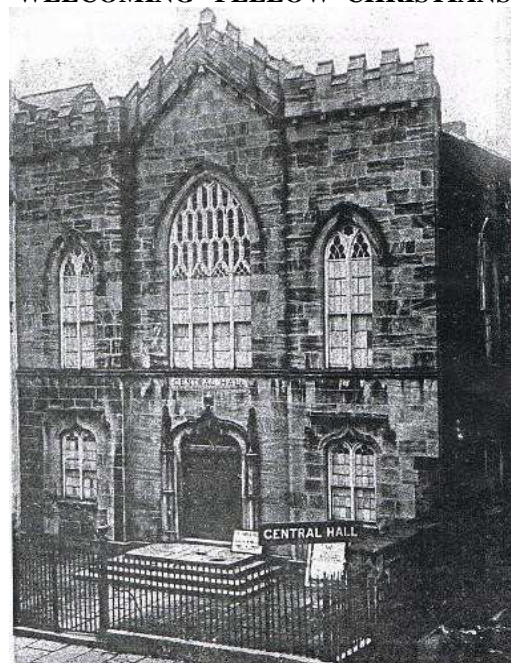
## LIMERICK

### SPY IN THE WOODS

*My childhood years were dominated by the austere statue of Christ the King on the hill above the Glen of Aherlow Co. Tipperary. **The stern face of stone** kept us in check and re-enforced the authority of parents, teachers and priests. These searching eyes saw us stealing apples out of Joe Noonan's orchard. With the all-seeing spy peering out of the woods it was impossible to smoke a furtive Woodbine behind Foley's hedge. He policed the dancing couples on the open-air stage down in the Glen. Apart from those childhood experiences there are other reasons for **feeling uncomfortable with the image and Feast of Christ the King**. It suggests an unholy alliance between politics and religion, the source of so much violence and war throughout history. The divine rights of Kings and Queens have been used to further personal ambitions and ruthlessly impose their version of God.*

Liam Ryan OSA

### WELCOMING FELLOW CHRISTIANS



It was a real blessing to be able to welcome a group of pilgrims from the United Presbyterian and Methodist Church. They were in a historical tour of Limerick Churches last Sunday afternoon to mark 200 years of the establishment of Christ Church, O'Connell St. Time was spent in prayer, historical reviews and Augustinian connections! The Booklet covering the occasion carried old photographs of the various churches visited, including the **Primitive Methodist Chapel seen here on Bedford Row**. In 1922 the church was sold and converted into the Central Cinema. In the most recent development of the building the façade of the old church was retained behind the glass frontage.

In the late 1800's the cellars of the church were let out to a local Wine Merchant, as a store for his wine. This led to a local 'poet' coining the following words;

**There's a well known building in Bedford Row,  
With spirits above and spirits below,  
The spirits above are spirits divine,  
The spirits below are spirits of wine.**

Liam Ryan OSA



## GALWAY

### As I Was Saying...

'Christmas has been destroyed by materialism.' This nostalgic cliché is now as much part of Christmas as is the turkey! But there is another view. Christmas is in fact not materialistic enough! We have spiritualised the feast out of meaningful existence. We have transformed it into an other-worldly fairytale, high on the 'feel good' factor!

Some of our traditional Christmas Carols belong to this fairytale league. For example, "Away in a Manger" includes the highly unlikely lines: 'The little boy Jesus no crying he makes!' Well now, where did they get him? (The fellow who wrote the Carol, I mean, not the baby!) Sure the whole point of the Christmas story is that God took on the whole mess of humanity, screaming, annoying babies included. The stuff of life is now sacred, a treasure. Matter matters, if you know what I mean.

Very early in the history of Christianity, many found this truth too hard to take. Do we really need a God with dirty hands? Some early theologians held the view that Jesus wasn't really human at all.

One writer viewed his humanity as 'God's overcoat', to be discarded at will! The Church eventually condemned this as heretical. But, doesn't our sanitised and spiritualised view of the nativity tend towards the heretical also? If we could only give up our cosy images of the Christmas story, we might begin to see the truly shocking nature of the incarnation. We might realise that the swaddling clothes of the 'divine' baby eventually needed changing!

Some twenty years ago, Fr Denis Crosby was in the habit of 'staging' a live crib on Williamsgate Street, in that archway leading down to the back of the Skeff every Christmas. The actors were often drawn from the Travelling community, complete with a real, living ass! (Sadly, neither Crosby or the Travellers had as yet read anything at all of Joseph Ratzinger's work).

The lambs were taken from the Tarpey farm in Ardahan. It was a wonderful stroke of realism, bringing the Christmas story down to earth. (Admittedly, the incarnational pudding was once slightly overegged when an obviously anxious St. Joseph lit up a cigarette!)

This was in sharp contrast to the nativity scene depicted on the chocolate boxes. We tend to warm our hands before the glowing, romantic traditional crib. Crosby's decidedly unromantic 'Living Crib' challenged us as no other could. In the midst of all the spending, poverty is still at the centre of the Christmas story. If we fail to respond to that, our Christmas story has been reduced to a children's Fairy Tale.

Judging by your response to the 'Giving Trees', this challenging aspect of Christmas is still a deep reality. Even in these straitened economic times, your response was really and truly fantastic. Because of that generosity, a few more people will feel a bit more cherished this Christmastime. And it may keep the odd baby quiet! On their behalf, thank you.

**-Dick Lyng OSA.**

## GOOD COUNSEL COLLEGE



*Leinster Schools Junior Golf Champions, Paul Murphy, Dylan Farrell, Ronan Whelan and Michael Ryan with Teacher/Coach Mr Teague.*

While the school has, over the years lifted many trophies in hurling, football, showjumping, athletics, swimming and many other sports, the Junior Golf team last week brought the first Leinster Golf title to the school with a comprehensive victory against the best in Leinster at Kileen Castle. Playing outstanding golf, these very talented young golfers, pictured above, drew right away from the opposition to finish 5 strokes clear. Their coach Mr Teague was justifiably proud of the boys' efforts and is already planning a tilt at the All Ireland title which will be played on the Balmoral course in Antrim early next year. Well done to them and best wishes.



**Jack Breen and John Hennebry OSA**

Another notable sporting achievement was that of Jack Breen Barron who won a silver medal at the European Continuous Sparring international held recently in Dublin. Already an Irish champion in Points Sparring, Jack proved that he is in the very top league with his performances in this competition. He is currently a high brown belt holder and hopes to one day make the black belt grade.

– Good Counsel College Newsletter.

## MAIDUGURI DIOCESE

As I have a few moments to spare let me send you a tribute penned by the late Fr Chas O'Reilly in Maiduguri on the day after Bishop Cotter's death. That will be 25 years ago on 15th March 2013. Chas was moved to put his thoughts to paper the next day. I don't think the poem was ever circulated in Ireland, so --for the record -- he wrote as follows.

It had to come I guessed -- but unaccepted  
It came, not unexpected  
During a hush in the dusted rush to the market, bartering.  
Life -- your noble strife -- with faltering health  
from surging hope bereft.

To flickering hope still kept alive  
by faith which answers death  
and blossoms forth in joy through sorrow.  
'Dum spiro, spero' was your motto in life --  
but in death more relevant.

When darkness clouds round the term  
of life's ambivalent sperm.

Affirm, by clutching heaven's hem  
Victory to them who cling to Him!  
Whose death we sing to let Life ring,  
the Paschal hymn Exultet.

Sure to be sure, your death will bring  
sorrow to the common weal.  
Borno burnt, and green Abbeyfeale  
to take them with you  
through the void -- appeal --  
Filled hopes astride, on view  
with dreams as yet unsatisfied.  
Called aside to have your hopes fulfilled.

And life goes on for us, awhile  
Another Spring!  
Your fisherman's ring will now be worn --  
Nigerian again, again.  
Praise God we sing, Easbog bas ar son na slua  
Saol is ath-fhas tre Easbog nua!

Again the billowing dust abounds  
Swirling round, life's market bound.  
Heedless swarm in the hush of the sound.  
A new era is born.

The reference above to 'the Fisherman's ring' above comes from the Bishop's wearing all his life a simple brass ring given to all the bishops at the Second Vatican Council by Paul VI.

Chas knew Tadgh inside out. Almost all his life in Nigeria was spent in Maiduguri Diocese. Indeed he was the last Irish Augustinian to serve there. He would turn in his grave if he witnessed the present situation, the devastation wrought by Boko Haram.

I was there for 4 days last month, with the Nuncio on a long

planned visit. We also got to Biu, Pulka, and Shuwa -- but with Police and Army escort where ever we went. It is a garrison city, under seige, but life carried on and all the missions are still staffed. There were major Liturgies in St Pat's Cathedral (on a Sunday) and in Shuwa, where all the priests had gathered. We also had a Mass for a pusillus grex outside the ruins of St Monica's parish church in Biu.

Late have I loved thee ! Ray Hickey OSA Abuja, Nigeria.

## ST AUGUSTINE'S PROIRY DUNGARVAN

Once more our Dungarvan Sale of Work came out tops! For some weeks beforehand, volunteers met together, organising and putting up posters around the town and shoving fliers into letterboxes. Later they would visit the houses and collect whatever was offered. The newspapers carried a short notice, which traditionally initiates the Christmas spirit and shopping spree in the town. Come the night and everything came together in a swirling crowd of hopefuls crowding the stalls, and buying tickets for the Wheel of Fortune and Grand Draw. It all seemed chaotic, yet it worked because we collected a sizable amount for our Missions. Many, who didn't or couldn't come, sent in their donations adding to the total amount and all gratefully received. How long this tradition keeps going remains to be seen; the majority of our volunteers are in the upper age bracket. But hopefully it will survive for many years to come.

Séamus Humphreys OSA



Seamus Humphreys, Francis Aherne, Sean Murphy and Matt Cooney OSA.

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Greetings from Cork. On behalf of staff, David Moran, Peter Galus, John O'Connor, Francis Aherne and myself, a big thanks for the many contributions I received over the last few days. At this busy time of year all your efforts are deeply appreciated and made this edition possible. Thanks to Iggy O'Donovan and Good Counsel College for photographs.

Wishing you all an abundance of peace and joy.

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