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Holy Cross

A Celebration of
Dominican Life in Sligo

1252 - 2002

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Editor: Anna M. Dowdican

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UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

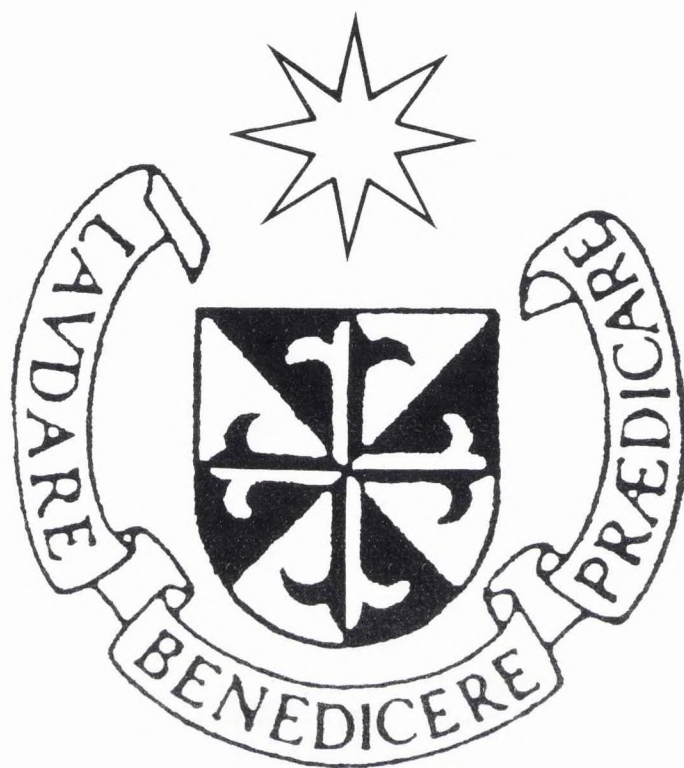
MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT McALEESE

I am delighted to send warm greetings and sincere congratulations to the Dominican Order, Sligo on the occasion of your 750 years Jubilee Celebrations.

The Dominican Friars have served the people of Sligo for seven and a half centuries, a truly remarkable record. It must be with great pride that you celebrate this wonderful occasion which recognises the strong bonds that still connect the heart of the Christian tradition of Sligo today with that of our ancestors 750 years ago. This is also a time of celebration for the people of Sligo and friends of the Dominican Friars who are involved in friary work and ministry.

I commend your work and hope everyone involved enjoys these wonderful celebrations.

MARY McALEESE
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Introduction

It is with great joy and gratitude that I write this introduction to our Jubilee Booklet. A picture is worth a thousand words, and the pictures in this publication tell us about the Sligo Dominican story of the past 750 years. The ruined buildings speak eloquently of living communities; of men and women who worshipped within their walls. They call to mind the heroic people who remained faithful to Christ in the face of persecution and hardship. The pictures of the old High Street church speak to us of the dedication of the people who built it despite their intense poverty. The present day church is an open invitation to become an active Catholic, both within its walls and in daily life. It gives us the challenging message that you and I are the Church, and that together we are asked to make Christ present in the world.

It is easy to photograph buildings and show ruins. However, the story of the past 750 years is about the people who came to our Holy Cross churches. They are the real Church, the everlasting community. During the past seven and a half centuries how many people visited the Holy Cross churches? How many people heard God's word from the friars? How many received the sacraments? How many prayers were uttered in these sacred places? What good influence did these people have in their day?

The long story of the Dominican life in Sligo is due largely to the support which the people gave the friars. Even though these countless faithful are nameless and faceless they are known to God. In this publication we honour them, and acknowledge their contribution to maintaining Dominican life in Sligo. Above all we commend their souls to God.

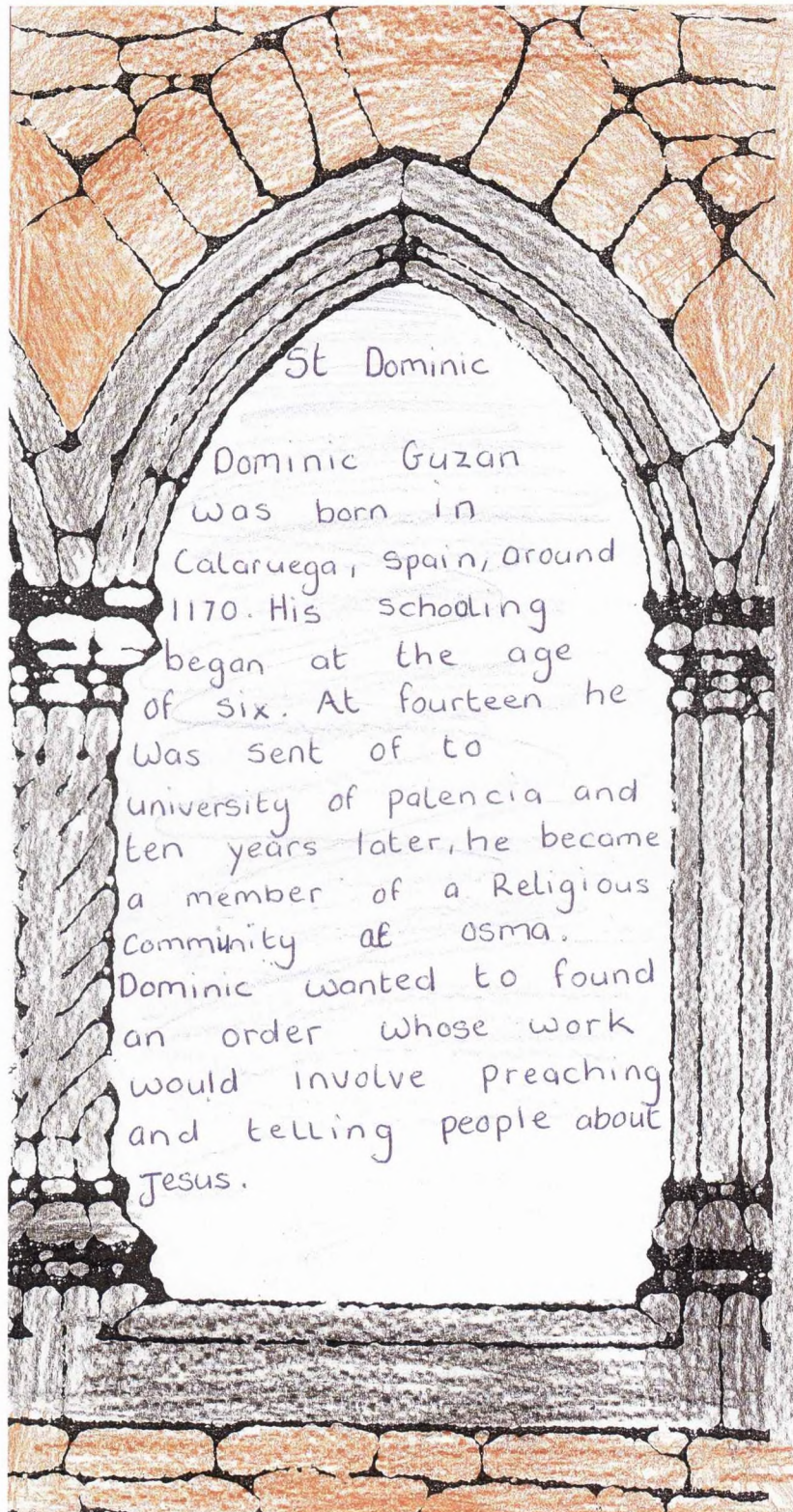
The closeness of the laity and friars continues to this day, thank God. In this booklet we show some of the faces which have been part of the Friary over the past century. In a hundred years from now we too will be part of history. But what we do with our lives will make a difference.

I would like to acknowledge the great contribution to the Friary which has been made by numerous people whose pictures unfortunately cannot be recorded in this booklet. These include altar ladies, readers, and fund-raisers, past and present. Among them also are many people who devoted decades of their lives to the Friary life and apostolate.

St. Dominic was just one man. He could never have dreamed of his world-wide influence on the salvation of souls. The friars and people of 1252 could not have foreseen the fruits of the past 750 years. Who knows what God may do in the future. This booklet captures the spirit of the Jubilee celebrations. But the central focus of our celebrations, as the name 'Holy Cross' indicates, is Jesus Christ, our Saviour. He has been with his Church for the past 2000 years. He is the Lord of the future; it is in His hands. May this booklet be a source of hope for you, may it be a joy to read, and may it strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ who is with you always.



Fr. Ronan Cusack
Prior



From St. Edward's N.S. Jubilee Project



Detail from stained glass window in apse



The Dominican friars arrived in Sligo in 1252. At that time Sligo was a tiny settlement at a strategic bridging point on the Garbh Og. The Norman Lord, Maurice Fitzgerald built a church and priory for them to the east of the town and granted land for a farm and a cemetery.



St. Dominic's vision for the members of his order was lived in the Abbey, where the prevailing atmosphere was one of prayerful silence. Several times daily, the friars went to church. There they publicly prayed the Prayer of the Church, sang hymns, chanted psalms and read the Scriptures. Much time was also spent in private prayer and study. St. Dominic's ideal for his friars was that their preaching would flow from a life of study, prayer and contemplation.



Many people would have come to the Abbey to pray, attend Mass, hear God's word, receive the sacraments or speak with one of the friars. The abbey life continued despite the wars and various shifts of power between clans such as the O'Connors and the O'Donnells. The first half of the 15th century, when Brian O'Connor was Lord of Sligo, was a time of peace and prosperity. In 1414 the Abbey was accidentally destroyed by fire, but restored soon after by the Prior, Fr. Bryan McDonagh, who added the wonderful central tower to the church. Around 1500 the church was enlarged by the addition of the present south aisle and transept, with the priory buildings also being greatly improved. The covered cloister, with its beautiful carved pillars dates from this period. The overall complex indicates the presence of a thriving community in Holy Cross.



The Magomus MacHugh silver pyx made in 1629 for use in carrying The Blessed Sacrament

By 1537 Henry VIII had begun taking steps to suppress the religious houses in Ireland and confiscate their property. But Sligo, being isolated from the rest of the country, under Gaelic rule and having no English garrison in the town, remained safe for another fifty years.

In 1562, Andrew Crean, a member of the local merchant family and Prior of Sligo Abbey, became bishop of Elphin. Under him, Holy Cross became a Cathedral. It was he who erected the Market Cross at the foot of Market Street in the early 1550s. For the greater part of Elizabeth I's reign, the friars were allowed to remain in the Abbey as secular clergy, but not as a religious community.

This was mainly through the intercession of Sir Donagh O'Connor.

In 1591, Sir George Bingham took possession of the Abbey, using it as a headquarters to besiege the nearby Castle of Sligo, which was held by the O'Donnells.

By 1595 the community had been dispersed, their property confiscated. After the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 and the resulting Flight of the Earls, the Dominicans faced a hostile world. The 1630s were a time of bitter persecution with Holy Cross now lying in ruins and the friars hiding out in caves or woods.



From Our Lady of Mercy N.S. Jubilee Project - Aaron Benson, Age 11

At this time there was a deep resentment - particularly in Ulster - against the injustices of the Plantation. In the year 1641 these resentments led to the Rebellion which started in Ulster and spread quickly to the other provinces. Mob rule and revenge led to atrocities being committed.

In Sligo, thirty Protestants were massacred in the town jail.

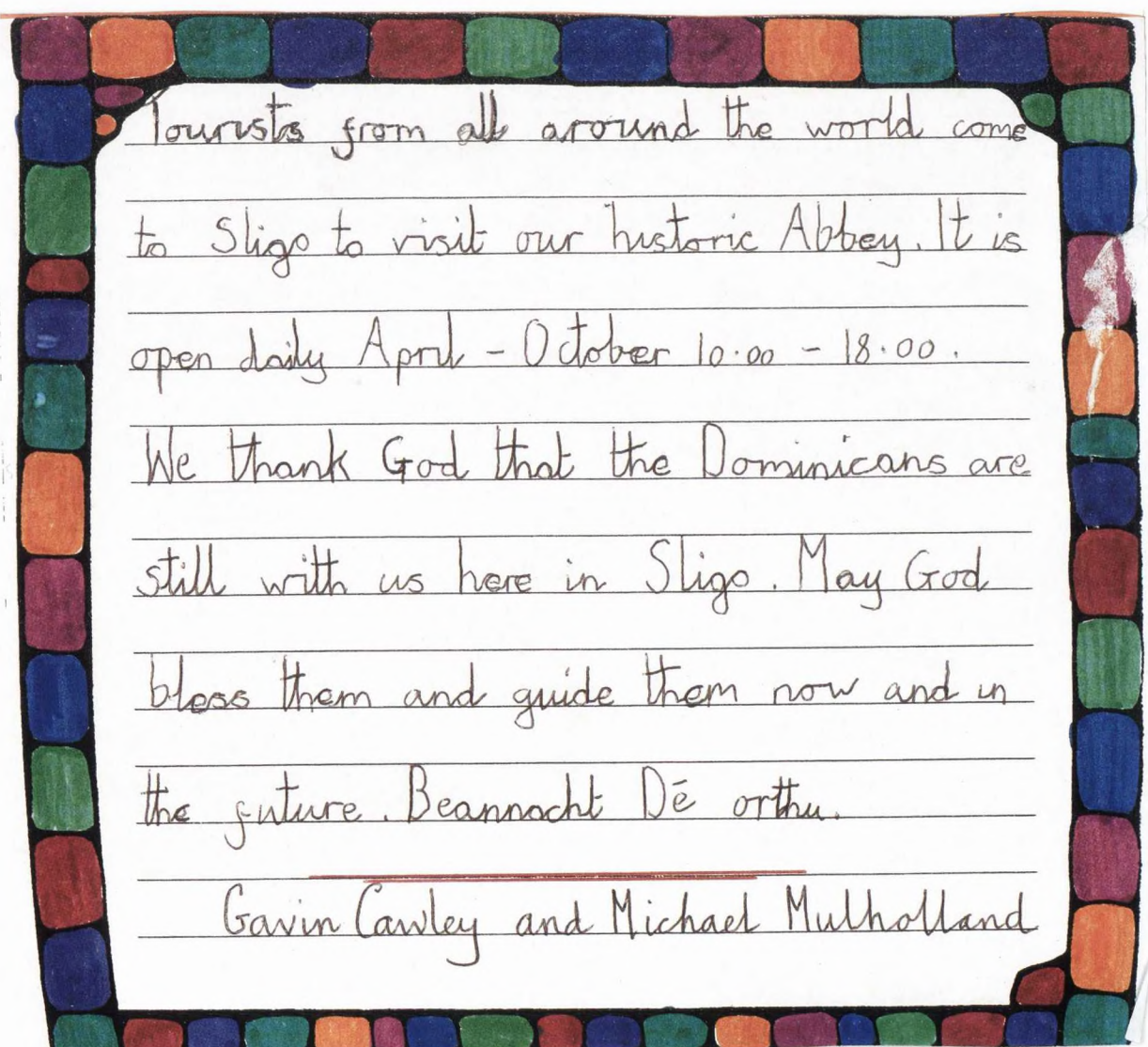
The following year, Sir Frederick Hamilton - the Cromwellian officer in charge of the Manorhamilton garrison - led his troops into Sligo. He slaughtered more than three hundred people and set fire to the town, including Holy Cross Abbey. Hamilton himself recounts how two friars were killed in their habits while trying to escape the fire. He expressed the general belief that other friars had also died in the fire.

Over the next ten years, Sligo was captured and recaptured by native and Parliamentary three times. So turbulent was this era that by 1652 Sligo town was reduced to a heap of ruins.

The middle of the century was a time of bitter persecution where simply to be a priest was a capital crime. However, in 1657, the records show that there were still 74 Dominicans in Ireland. In 1669 Fr. Felix O'Connor, Prior of Sligo, was imprisoned, dying in Sligo jail. There followed a short respite in the late seventeenth century. However, in 1698 the Edict of Banishment officially suppressed the friars and ordered them to leave the country or face death. Yet, in spite of the danger to their lives, five Dominicans remained in the area to minister to the people.

During the times of persecution, many Sligo people risked their lives in order to shelter and protect the Dominican friars. Both the friars and the people put themselves in mortal danger as they continued to celebrate Mass in places such as Tobernalt, open fields and peoples' houses.

Later when the persecution was less intense, it appears that Mass was celebrated in the roofless Abbey church. An effort was made to re-roof part of this church in the eighteenth century but was unsuccessful. In the latter part of that same century the Abbey was abandoned completely.



Tourists from all around the world come to Sligo to visit our historic Abbey. It is open daily April - October 10.00 - 18.00.

We thank God that the Dominicans are still with us here in Sligo. May God bless them and guide them now and in the future. Beannocht Dé orthu.

Gavin Cawley and Michael Mulholland

Moving On

1763

The Dominicans moved to
Pound Street in 1763
(Now called Connally Street)
Another chapter in 750
year story of the Dominicans
in Sligo was about to
begin.

by Stephen Mills

From St. Edward's N.S. Jubilee Project



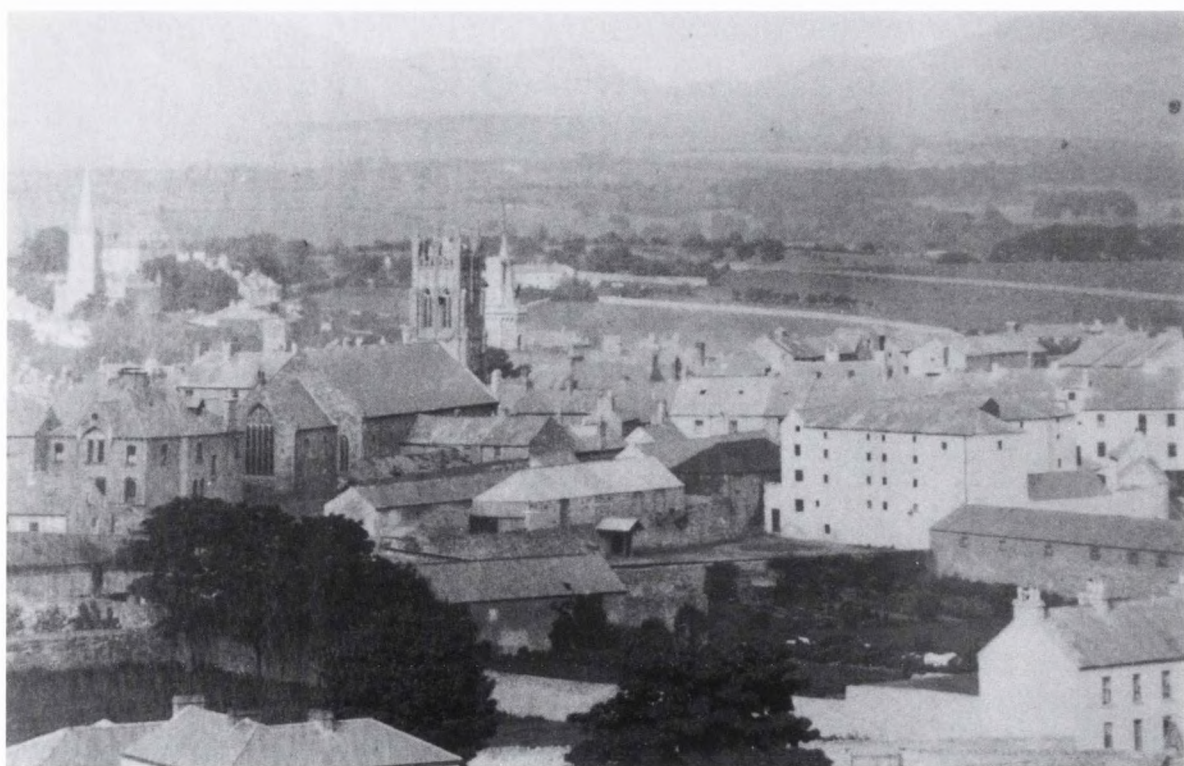
Around 1760 a small thatched stable to the rear of Pound street was rented by the Prior, Laurence Connellan, for use as a chapel. A dwelling house adjacent to the chapel was also leased. The community was small and poor and many benefactors of all denominations donated funds to keep the friary chapel from 'tottering into decay'.

They continued to live in Pound street for more than a century, but as more people began to attend Mass the chapel proved to be too small. By the late 1830's, a lease had been obtained on a new site fronting onto High Street. This site was now the hope for a new church.



Despite the hardship of the Famine the new church was completed in early 1848 and was consecrated on the Feast of the Epiphany. Ten years later a bell tower was built at the front of the church and the following year a bell was brought from Dublin and put in place. This bell of 1859 is the same bell which tolls out from today's Holy Cross Church calling people to prayer.

Sligo Town circa hundred years ago...





A view of the church and priory from the garden c. 1920



Interior view of the 1845 church showing the extension of 1900



By 1900 the church in High Street was too small to cope with the amount of people coming to Mass. The decision was made to extend the church by one hundred feet.

This extension included a beautiful sanctuary with marble high altar and railings, vivid stained glass windows and intricate mosaic work. The aesthetic quality of these new features added to the mystical atmosphere of Holy Cross. Over the next thirty years more mosaic work was added, so that this church became a building which spoke of the mystery of God and touched many hearts.



1937 mosaic - 'The Flight into Egypt'



1952: The Seventh Centenary celebrations. The friars and people walking in procession through High Street en route to Holy Cross Abbey.

1952: The Seventh Centenary Celebrations. Fr. Hilary O'Neill unveils the commemorative plaque in Holy Cross Abbey.





The walls of the 1845 church were not as strong as they appeared. It was estimated that to repair it would cost almost half as much as to build a new church so by 1970 a decision was taken to demolish the old ediface and construct a new one. The demolition took place the following year, with Mass being celebrated in a prefabricated building in the Market Yard.

It was possible to preserve the old apse and high altar with its mosaic walls.

This area is today still in use as an oratory.



The Concelebrating priests of the Solemn Jubilee Mass 2002 in the sanctuary of the 1973 church.

The new Holy Cross church was opened on the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, 1973
by Bishop Dominic Conway.

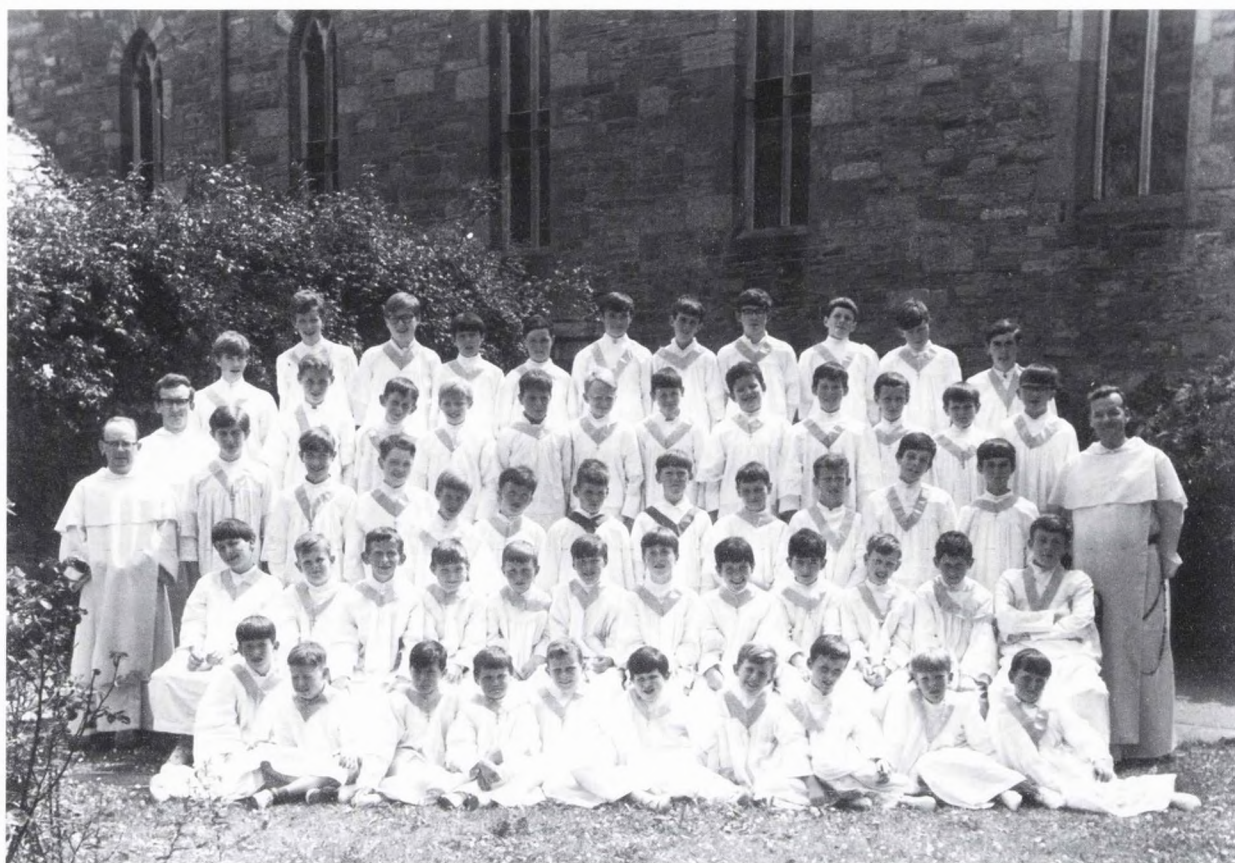
The buildings may have changed but it is the same Mass which has been celebrated in Holy Cross Abbey from 1252 to the present day in Holy Cross church, through times of joy and tribulation. The word 'Mass' comes from the Latin word 'mittere', which means 'to send'. At the end of every Mass since that first Mass - the Last Supper - Christ sends us out on a mission. We are called to create not a building, but a living church, through love and service of the Lord and one another.



The altar boys about 1906. Included Fr. Glendon, Fr. Murphy, Bro. Dominic and Fr. McSorley.



Altar boys' outing to Bundoran 1944. Included: Joe Ryan, Bro. Francis, Fr. McArdle O.P., Prior; Fr. P. H. Pollock O.P.



1971: The altar boys. Included Bro. Philip Kerrigan and Fr. Thomas Jordan.



1996: The Friary altar servers with Fr. John Cunningham



2002 *The Friary altar servers.*



The Collectors ca. 1935.



1944. A Collectors' outing to Bundoran.



1932: Community and Visitors: Seated - Fr. Murphy O.P., Fr. Finbar Ryan O.P., Provincial, Fr. Gillet O.P., Master General, Fr. Garde O.P., Fr. B. Costelloe O.P., Prior, Standing - Bro. Benedict, Fr. McSorley O.P., Fr. H. Gaffney O.P., Bro. Assistant to Master General



1907: Frs. G. O'Farrell O.P., F. Gallagher, O.P., J. B. Thayne O.P., P. J. O'Hara. All except Fr. O'Farrell Sligo-born Dominicans.



1971: Community and Visitors on the occasion of the last Mass in Old Church, May 12th.
 Seated: Bro. Philip Kerrigan, Fr. Walter O'Brien O.P., Fr. B. Farrell O.P., Fr. F. Hynes O.P.,
 Provincial, Fr. T. Jordan O.P., Prior, Fr. J. Gannon O.P., Fr. N. Murray O.P.,
 Standing: Fr. R. Hannigan O.P., Fr. T. Monaghan O.P., Fr. B. Casserly O.P., Fr. A. Kiely O.P.,
 Fr. H. O'Neill O.P., Fr. B. Curran O.P., Fr. Ephrem C.P., Fr. M. Quigley O.P., Fr. A. Leonard O.P.,
 Fr. D. Murphy O. P.



The Community in 1974 - Br. Philip Kerrigan, Fr. Kevin Mulligan, Fr. Thomas Lawson, Fr. Kieran Duggan, Fr. Antoninus Delaney, Prior, Fr. Bernard Casserly and Fr. Pius Doherty.



1989 - The Community: L - R: Fr. Albert Leonard, Prior, Fr. Ronan Cusack, Br. Hyacinth Moore (visitor), Bro. Philip Kerrigan, Fr. Laurence Curtin, Fr. Kevin Mulligan, Fr. Raymond Collins.



St. Dominic's Day 1995. L - R: Bro. Philip Kerrigan, Fr. Edward Conway, Prior, Bishop Christopher Jones, Fr. Ronan Cusack.



1973: Friary Senior Choir with Fr. Thomas Jordan, Prior, and Musical Director Miss Breege Butler



1973: Friary Junior Choir with Fr. Thomas Monaghan, and Musical Director Miss Breege Butler



1984: Friary Junior Choir. Included Fr. Louis Hughes, Prior and Fr. Francis Downes.



1996: Friary Senior Choir with Musical Director, Miss Gale Henry seated centre



Eucharist Ministers 1985 with Bishop Dominic Conway and Fr. Louis Hughes, Prior



Eucharist Ministers 1989 with Bishop Dominic Conway and Fr. Albert Leonard, Prior



Eucharist Ministers 1995 with Fr. Eddie Conway, Prior



Eucharist Ministers 2002 with Bro. Philip Kerrigan and Fr. Ronan Cusack, Prior



Holy Cross Collectors 2002



Altar Servers 2002 with Sean Kelly, Sean O'Reilly, Sacristan and Holy Cross community



Friary Girls' Choir 2002 with Mrs. Una Somers and Mrs. Mary Gallagher, Musical Director



Some of the members of Sligo Youth for Life 2002 with Fr. Ronan Cusack



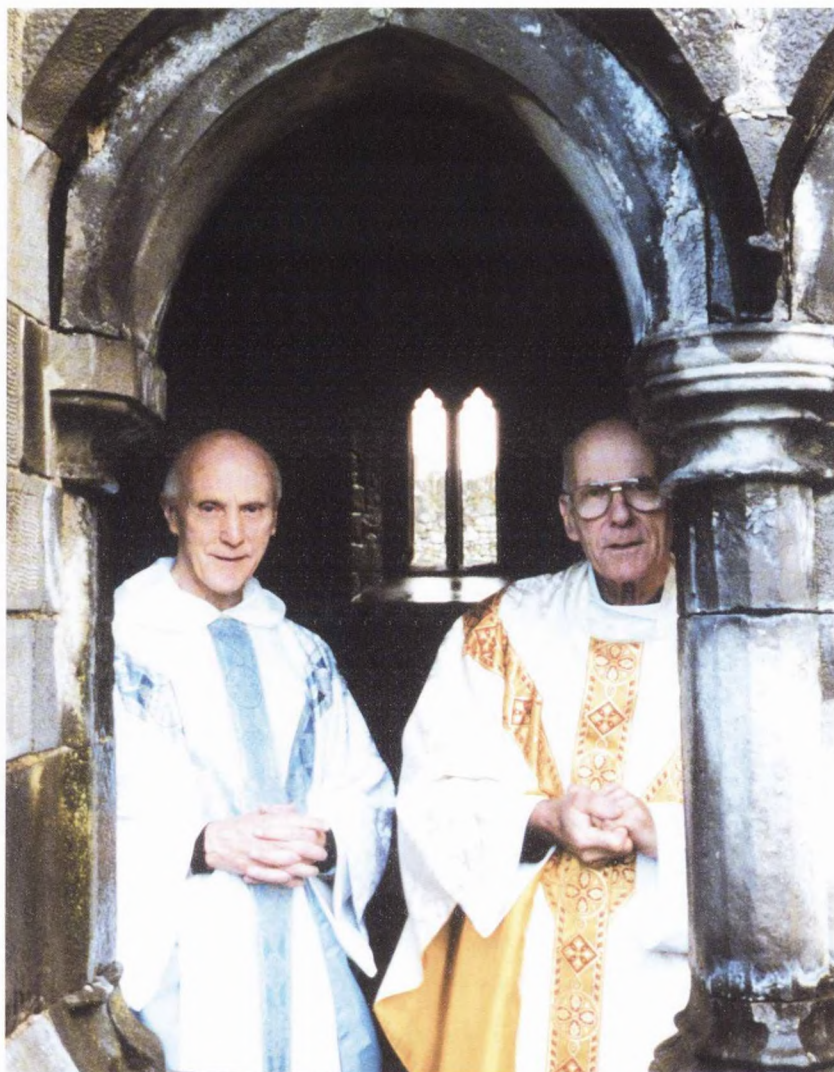
Back row: Fr. Seán Cunningham, Bishop Christopher Jones and Fr. Ronan Cusack with some of the Friary Readers. Seated: Some members of the Altar Society



Members of Sligo Active Retirement Association with Fr. Seán Cunningham O.P., 2002

Jubilee Mass at Holy Cross Abbey 3rd November 2002





Fr. Seán Cunningham O.P. and his brother Fr. Thomas Cunningham C.S.Sp.



Some of the congregation leaving the Abbey after Mass

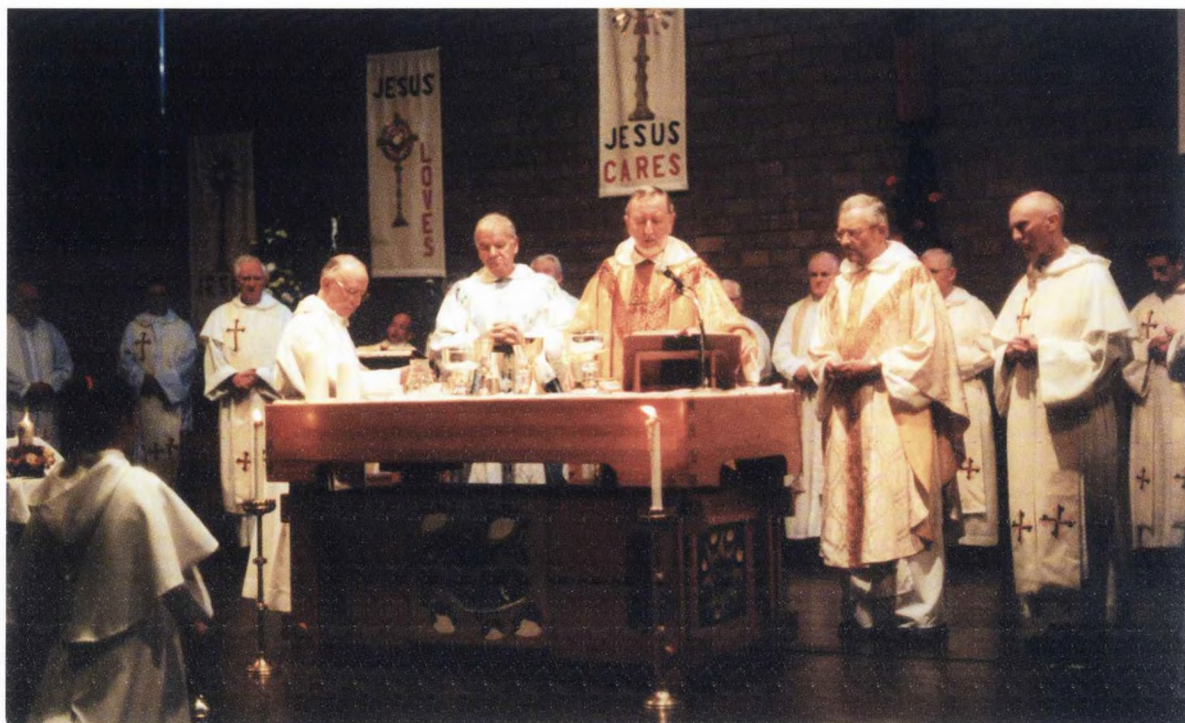
Opening of Jubilee Photographic Exhibition 7th November 2002



The lighting of the Jubilee Candle



Solemn Jubilee Mass 24th November 2002



L-R: Fr. Thomas Jordan, Ex-Prior of Sligo, Fr. Joseph Kavanagh, Vicar Provincial, Fr. Louis Hughes, Ex-Prior of Sligo

Civic Reception in Sligo Town Hall, 24th November 2002



Seated L-R: Fr. Joseph Kavanagh O.P., Vicar Provincial, Fr. Ronan Cusack, O.P., Cllr. Tommy Cummins, Mayor of Sligo



Br. Philip Kerrigan O.P. signs the Visitors' Book. Also in picture Lady Mayoress Mrs. Cummins and Fr. Seán Cunningham O.P.



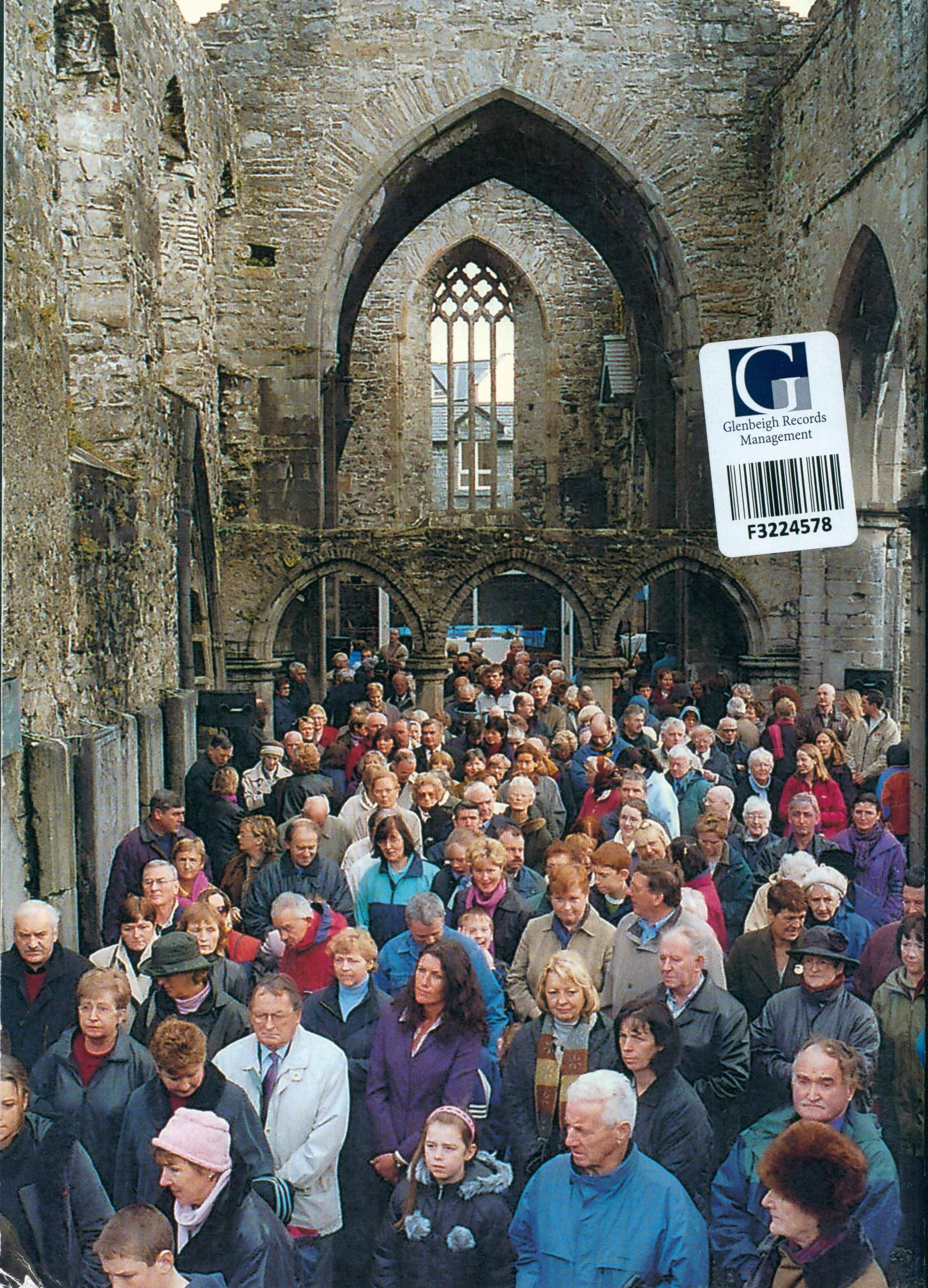
Some choir members with Mrs. Mary Gallagher, Musical Director (centre) Sinéad Fallon, Louise Lynch, Zita Harrison, Gráinne Davey



Bishop Christopher Jones with Fr. Ronan Cusack, Fr. Seán Cunningham and Fr. Leo Donovan O.P. after the closing Mass of the Jubilee Celebrations

Acknowledgements

The Organisers of the Jubilee celebrations.
The Faithful who attended the celebrations.
The Dominican Friars who came from other priories to our celebrations.
The Holy Cross Altar Ladies.
The Priests who celebrated our Jubilee Masses.
The Visiting Choirs who sung the Masses.
The Preachers of the homilies.
The Readers, Eucharist Ministers and Gift Bearers.
The Guest Speakers at various events.
The Benefactors who contributed generously to meet the expenses.
The Photographers who have left us a pictorial legacy.
The Friary church and house staff.
Bishop Jones for celebrating the Closing Jubilee Mass.
Fr. Hugh Fenning for his book "The Dominicans of Sligo."
Miss Fiona Gallagher for her Power Point Presentation.
Miss Anna Marie Dowdican for the Photographic Exhibition, the layout of
'The Dominicans of Sligo' and the Jubilee Picture Booklet.
Mrs. Mary Gallagher, Mrs. Una Somers and the Friary Choir members for their
generous presence.
Mr. Fergus McGloin, Mr. John Corcoran (Duchas) and Fr. Dominic Gillooly for
their contributions to the Mass in Holy Cross Abbey.
Mrs. Sheila Crowley and Miss Niamh Crowley for the Jubilee Carol Concert.
Mr. Sean O'Reilly and Mr. Vincent French for their hidden work in the sacristy
and for all their work behind the scenes.
Mr. John McMorrow for the video tapes of the main ceremonies.
Westprint and Craftsman Press for our Book, Booklet and Flyers.
The countless people who helped in many ways.
Those who prayed for the success of our Jubilee events.
God, the source and reason for it all.



Glenbeigh Records
Management



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