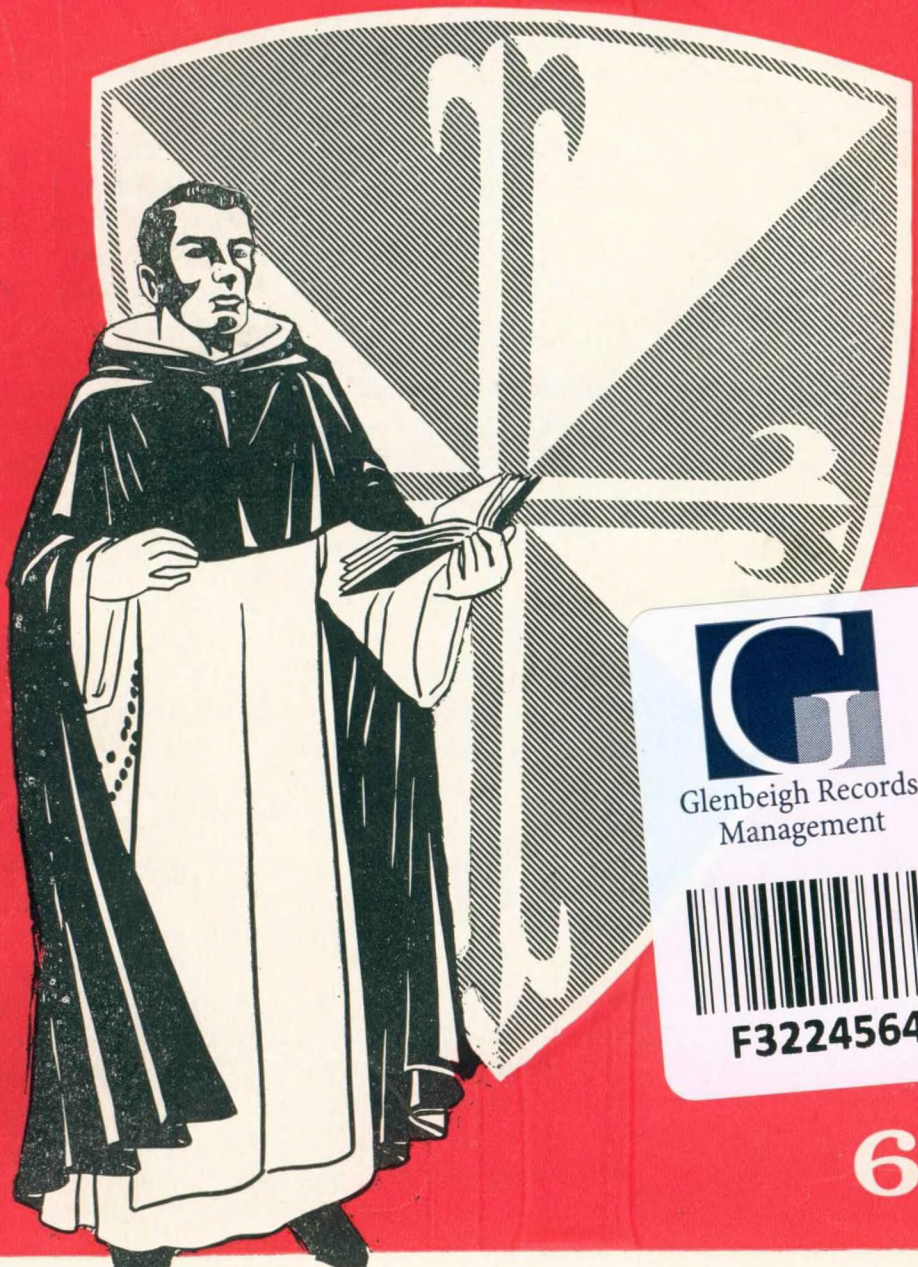
The DOMINICANS IN IRELAND



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I

Three Centuries of Normal Life

It is now more than seven centuries since the Friars Preachers, commonly known as the Dominicans, first set foot in Ireland. The Friars Minor, or Franciscans, followed shortly after. Both Orders came to supply a great want, that of preaching, which had been sadly neglected for a long peroid all over Europe. The monastic institute was very flourishing in Ireland when they came. Great numbers of monasteries for Canons Regular of St. Augustine, for Cistercians and other monastic Orders had already been founded. The monks lived the retired lives we witness at the present day at Mount Melleray, and devoted themselves to prayer and agricultural labour. It was a great work and had an untold influence. The Cistercians generally chose for their monasteries retired villages far from the habitations of men, and their rule of life strictly limited their contact with the people. Their business was the salvation of their own souls; their work for their fellow-men was confined to praying for the living and the dead. So it was also with the other monastic Orders.

The Canons Regular founded hospitals and devoted themselves to that great work of charity, and in many places took charge of parishes. This, of course, to a certain extent brought them into contact with the people.

St. Dominic and St. Francis felt that something else was needed in the Church. Because of the rapidly growing towns and cities, a vast multitude were left without religious instruction. So the idea came to both of them of founding Orders to supply that want by preaching constantly in all places. It was necessary, too, to combat error, for heresies had risen both in the South of France and the North of Italy and had spread rapidly owing to the low state of religious knowledge among the poor. The two Orders, blessed and encouraged by the Pope of the time, multiplied marvellously, and were received everywhere with open arms by bishops, priests and people. Bishops and priests welcomed them as powerful anxiliaries in the work in which they themselves were engaged.

Unlike the monks who preferred retired spots for their monasteries, far away from the din and bustle of human life,

the Friars fixed their abode in the towns or close to them, to be in constant touch with the people. The monks cultivated their land, granted to them by generous donors, and were independent of other support; but the Friars chose a life of apostolic activity and were dependent for their support on the people to whom they preached, by the daily quest of alms. Again, the Friars threw themselves boldly into the intellectual life of the time and frequented the great universities. They produced learned men who taught Philosophy, Theology, and the Sacred Scriptures in the great universities of Paris, Oxford and Bologna, and gave great prestige to their respective Orders.

FIRST FOUNDATIONS

As our concern is solely with the history and work of the Dominican Order in Ireland, we will now follow its fortunes exclusively, from the time it started up to the present day. The first foundation was in Dublin in 1224. The Friars, not finding a suitable site within the confines of the city, which at that time did not extend beyond the south side of the River Liffey, settled down in the suburb known as Oxmantown, on the spot occupied in our own time by the Four Courts. The church was dedicated under the title of St. Saviour. Another foundation was made the same year for them at Drogheda by the Primate of Armagh, Luke Netterville. The Church was dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen. The tower of the church is still standing and forms a picturesque landmark seen from the railway line.

The following year they opened a house in Kilkenny, on a site just outside the town with a small square castle, which they made to serve as the entrance to their church. It was to the Blessed Trinity that the church was dedicated, and there is still to be seen, in a recess in the wall, a symbolic piece of statuary, representing the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, dating from the thirteenth century. The Black Abbey, as the church is now known is one of the very few churches of ancient Catholic times which are still in the possession of Catholics and in which Catholic worship is still performed.

In 1226 the Friars Preachers were invited to Waterford by the citizens of that city, who granted them a small tower and a piece of unoccupied land. The following year they settled in Limerick. Two years later they got a foundation in Cork, on an island now known as St. Mary's Isle, beyond the confines of the

city at that peroid. The founder was Philip de Barry, a Norman Knight. The church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and it is on record that an equestrian statue of the founder was placed in it.

We can judge from the rapidity of these first foundations—six following one another within six years—how eagerly the Friars Preachers were welcomed in the principle cities of the country. After an interval of eight years, which was, we may suppose, necessary for the recruitment of new candidates for the Order, the rapid multiplication of foundations began again. Mullingar was founded in 1237, Athenry in 1241, both Cashel and Tralee in 1243, both Newtownards and Coleraine in 1244, Sligo and Strade in 1253, Trim in 1263, Arklow in 1264, Rosbercon in 1267, Youghal in 1268, Lorrah in 1269, Rathfran (Co. Mayo) and Derry in 1274. Thus we see that twenty-three houses were erected, principally in cities and towns, within the short space of fifty years.

When we consider that the Friars Minor, or Franciscans, were making many foundations during the same period, we are still more surprised at the rapid diffusion of the two new Orders. The two other Mendicant Orders of Friars, the Carmelites and the Hermits of St. Augustine, came at a later peroid, showing the same kind of life and doing the same work of evangelisation. These two later Orders did not succeed in making the same number of foundations as the former, and they never reached the same numbers, but all four worked on the same plan in the greatest harmony.

DOMINICAN ACTIVITIES

Few details about the preaching of the Dominicans have come down to us. But we know that by their rule they were to map out the districts around their houses and preach in every parish at certain intervals. The people, therefore both Irish and English, had frequent opportunities of hearing them and obtaining their ministry in the holy tribunal of Penance. We have a startling testimony in the fifteenth century that their zeal had not abated at that time, for we are told by a contemporary writer that there were to be found then none who preached to the people except "the poor begging Friars." The ordinary preacher among the Dominicans was licensed to preach only within the limits of the district assigned to his house. But certain men of learning, eloquence and experience were licensed

by the Order to preach in any part of the country they were invited to and were known by the name of Preachers General.

The rules of the Order provided well for the theological equipment of its members. Every friary was to have a lecturer who had to conduct daily classes in the Sacred Sciences. Clerical students from outside could avail themselves of the teaching imparted. We may be sure that this privilege was largely availed of in Ireland, where at the time there were few theological schools and few men learned in theology. Bishops showed an appreciation of these benefits.

Archbishop O'Flynn, of Tuam, is said to have built a *Domus Scholarum*, or hostel, for clerical students in connection with the Friary at Athenry. The Dominicans at Dublin had a large school of theology, situated on Ussher's Island, which is said to have turned out numbers of good theologians. When a University was founded in Dublin by the Archbishop, Alexander de Bichnor, the first to receive the doctor's cap were two Dominicans, William de Hardite and Edmund de Kilmardin.

In the fifteenth century the four Mendicant Orders tried to set up a university of their own, as the former one had failed, but the attempt was unsuccessful, owing probably to the jealousy and preponderating influence of Oxford and Cambridge. Unfortunately no further details have been left on record of their work of teaching, to which they must have devoted no small share of their energies, as they did in France, Italy, and other countries. We must console ourselves by the reflection that the work for souls during all the ages is invisible and forgotten in large part and its most permanent records are made in the Book of Life.

THE BLACK DEATH

The thirteenth century saw the rise and the brilliant success of all the mendicant Orders. It was a century of great achievement for the Church in all directions. But in the century that followed there were some very serious drawbacks. The great plague, known as the Black Death, swept through Europe, carrying away from one-third to one-half of the population. It reached Ireland about 1348, and Clynn, the Franciscan annalist, records that on the sixth of march of that year, eight of the Friars Preachers of Kilkenny died of the Black Plague. Parishes were left without priests and the cloisters of monks and

friars were half empty. The natural tendency then was to fill up the vacancies as soon as possible, and in this endeavour many found their way into the churches, monasteries and friaries who had not the necessary vocation, This state of things led to a general relaxation of the Mendicant Orders, The world had found its way into the cloister.

But when the great Schism was healed, widespread reforms were initiated and carried to a successful conclusion in all the Religious Orders. In Ireland it is remarkable as a proof of recovery, that whereas only one new foundation was made during nearly the whole course of the fourteenth century, nearly a dozen were made in the century that followed.

Again, great activity was shown in the fifteenth century by the Mendicant Orders in the building of churches and friaries and the rebuilding of others that had been destroyed by fire or become dilapidated in the former peroid. The abbeys (so-called) of Sligo, Moyne, Athenry, Muckross, Adare, and many others, are a testimony to the healthy activity of the Mendicant Orders at this peroid. Moreover, the towers, which are such a prominent feature of abbeys, even those of older construction, were generally additions made at this time. With all these centres of light scattered through the country, and a systematic preaching which had much in common with the modern style of parochial missions, there must heve been no lack of the Word of God.

Preaching was greatly needed in the fifteenth century. There was a great deal of rapacity, lawlessness and petty warfare, which brought desolation in their train. With English Kings claiming lordship over Ireland and not able to make good their power; with Anglo-Norman nobles making war without restraint not only on the Irish but on one another; and with Irish chieftains making war sometimes on one another and sometimes on the English, how was any real progress possible? Cathedrals and churches were laid in ruins or used as fortresses, dioceses were reduced to poverty, and whole districts were depopulated.

TOKENS OF ESTEEM

The churches of the Friars were very much sought after as places of burial by the bishops, lords and principle citizens. They were anxious that their bodies should rest in places where the public worship of God was carried out with exactness and solemnity. Eight bishops were buried in the Dominican Church

in Limerick. Six of them are commemorated in Latin verse inscribed on their sepulchral monument formerly existing in the church. The following quaint translation is given by Harris, the historian :—

"Six prelates here do lie, and in their favour
I beg your friendly prayers to Christ our Saviour;
Who in their lifetime for this House did work,
The first of whom I name was Hubert Burke,
Who graced the See of Limerick, and Matthew,
With Donald, bishops both of Killaloe;
Christian and Maurice I should name before,
And Simon, bishops late of Fenabore.
Therefore, kind Father, let not any soul
Of these good men be lodged in the Black-Hole.
You, who read this, kneel down in humble posture,
Recite three Aves, say one Pater Noster.
Whoever for their souls sincerely prays
Merits indulgence for a hundred days;
And you, who read the verses on this stone,
Bethink yourself and make the case your own.
Then seriously reflect on what you see,
And think what you are now and what you'll be.
Whether you're greater, equal, less, you must,
As well as these, be crumbled into dust."

The monks were self-supporting by their labour on the large estates bestowed on them by their founders and subsequent benefactors. The friars, on the other hand, by their very profession, lived on the charity of the faithful. The daily begging for food was for a long period a feature of Dominican as well as Franciscan life. There was also an annual quest, at the time of harvest, for corn, which they ground at home, either in their own mills or in those of benefactors.

The possessions of Dominicans were strictly limited by the Apostolic See to a church and belfry, a friary with the necessary out-offices, a garden and an orchard, out of which they might obtain a large portion of their food. However, property was left to them for special needs connected with the service of the altar. For instance, in Kilkenny, a house was left to provide the wine and bread for the Mass. Later on in the fifteenth century they obtained the right from the Holy See to receive landed property.

At the time of the Suppression they were found in possession of a fair amount of lands and these must all have been acquired within a rather limited peroid. Customs grew up of bakers giving them a loaf out of every baking, of brewers giving them a gallon of ale, "Mary's Gallon," out of every brewing, of fishermen giving them a salmon out of every catch. Those who afterwards got possession of the friaries, when the friars were turned out, actually claimed the salmon from the fishermen as a right. What was formerly freely given as an alms was imposed on the fishermen as a tax.

Life being very simple in those times, as regards food, clothing and lodging, it is not surprising that the country could give, without feeling the burden, abundant support to the friars.

That they were very numerous is beyond doubt, though, owing to the general destruction of records, we cannot fix the number with any certainty. Before the Suppression the Dominicans had thirty-eight houses in Ireland. We know that in the fifteenth century the number of the friars in the Athenry friary was generally about thirty; in Sligo it was about twenty. We can only guess from the size and importance of the other houses what their numbers were. It is recorded that at a Chapter held at Athenry in 1482 there were 280 friars present; at another held in the same place in 1524 there were 360 present. Many must have been left at home who could not attend these Chapters. But an end was soon to be put to Chapters, houses and churches, and to the regular observance of the religious life.

II

Two Centuries of Persecution

The blow which fell on the Religious Houses in Ireland was swift, sudden and complete, as far as the power of Henry VIII. extended through the country. In England the process of suppression was gradual and took some years to effect. There were elaborate false reports made out regarding the lives of the monks and friars, but in Ireland there was no report sent in at all. No accusations of evil living were made. Letters from officials urging the suppression stated that it would bring "much profit to the King," not adding, however, that the money would be spent by the King on wine, dice and women and on armies to subdue the Irish.

The suppression was the despotic act of one of the most irre-

ligious of monarchs. St. Saviour's, Dublin, was suppressed in 1539; the other Dominican houses of Leinster and Munster, as well as a few in Connacht and Ulster, followed in quick succession. The monks, on being turned out, received small pensions, but the friars of all Orders were left to shift for themselves. The church plate, bells, and other movables were sold for the profit of the King. The buildings themselves, with the land attached, were handed over to lords and officials at a nominal rent, while friaries situated in the towns were made over to the Corporations.

As regards Leinster and Munster, the friars almost disappear for a long time from the pages of history. In the course of forty or fifty years they must have almost completely died out as there were no means of replenishing their numbers.

About thirty years later a second Suppression took place in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. This brought in the remaining monasteries and friaries in Connacht and Ulster and took several years to accomplish, as several of them were small and situated in wild and obscure places. In Sligo, on the petition of O'Conor Sligo, the Dominican friars were allowed to remain unsuppressed for a time on the condition that they changed their habit for that of secular canons. However, towards the end of the long despotic reign of that wicked Queen and during the early years of the reign of James I., in which the persecution grew still greater, the Dominicans found themselves reduced to a few old decrepit men, probably not more than fifteen or twenty, who were living and wandering about in disguise amid the bogs and woods of Ulster.

COLLEGES ABROAD

In that hour of despair, a most unexpected revival took place. Father O'Duane, the Provincial, seeing that without new members the Order would soon become extinct in the country, gathered together numbers of promising young men and sent them off to Spain to study for the priesthood, relying on the hospitality of the Spanish fathers for their support and training. They were received with open arms and sent back ordained priests and thoroughly trained in the rules of life of the Order.

A pathetic story is told of the arrival of the first of these young priests. Father O'Duane, who had reached extreme old-age, came to die. When the people of the house he was hiding in began to deplore that there was no priest available

who could give him the last Sacraments and prepare him for death, he said he was quite confident that a priest of his own Order would come to him before the end. The prophecy came true. On the very day of his death who should turn up to comfort him in his last moments but a young priest, just back from Lisbon, the first fruit of his own far-seeing enterprise for the recovery of the Order.

In a short time the young priests from Spain began arriving in large numbers, and by their zeal and courage brought new life to the Order. They had been brought up in a time of persecution, had never known any other state of things, and were more ready to adapt themselves to it than the older men whose memories carried them back to happier times. Father Ross MacGeoghan, one of those foreign-educated youths, was made Provincial and adopted the bold policy of bringing the Order back to Leinster, where it had had no footing for many years. He established small communities in Dublin, Drogheda, Kilkenny and Waterford.

In these towns, the fathers lived together in a rented house, where one room served as a chapel and another as a refectory. They said the Divine Office in common and observed the fasts of the Order. Their ministry had generally to be performed in the houses of the people, though after some time, owing to the increased toleration in the time of Charles I., they were able to open small chapels for the use of the faithful in some of the towns. In the country parts, preaching, hearing confessions and saying Mass were all performed in the open air at the "rock-altars," where the people were accustomed to gather on Sundays and Holydays.

Irish Dominican Colleges were founded at Louvain and Lisbon early in the century to keep up the numbers required for the Irish mission. It was principally to the generosity of the Spanish Kings and people and also to the Belgians that the foundation of these colleges was due. The growth of the Irish Province, under these difficult circumstances, during the short space of forty years, is almost incredible. When Cromwell came to Ireland, it is on record that it could count six hundred members. The fathers were back in the thirty-eight places where they had ministered in old Catholic times, though they did not get back their old churches and friaries, except a few which they were able to repossess and repair at the time of the triumph of the Catholic Confederation.

They took a prominent part in that vindication of the right of public Catholic Worship and suffered for it accordingly under the Cromwellian regime. In the unfortunate disputes that took place among the Catholics, they, with only one exception, took the part of the Nuncio Rinuccini and the old Irish Party. They were able for the first time after a hundred years to go about publicly in the habit of the Order. It was during this short period of liberty, barely stretching over eight years, that the Dominican Nuns of Galway were founded. Galway is thus the mother house of all the communities of Dominican Nuns in Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and of many in South Africa.

SUPPRESSION UNDER CROMWELL

But the short-lived triumph of the Catholic arms was followed by a fierce persecution and long oppression. Cromwell came to Ireland determined to put down the Mass as rank idolatry. Priests were ordered to leave the country: it was death to return. Some hundreds of Dominicans were thus sent into exile; many stayed at home, braving all dangers in their zeal for souls. Others, having gone, returned again in a short time.

A most pathetic account has been preserved of the hardships undergone by one of the Dominicans who braved the terrors of the law, Father Gasper Boyton. In the guise of a herd he minded the sheep of a Catholic gentleman and used to do the work of the ministry by night. Constant exposure to the weather after a time brought on the loss of his sight. Then there was nothing else left for him to do except to go about as a common blind begger, led by a little boy from house to house, and, in return for the food and shelter he received, to hear their confessions and console them in their misfortunes.

Many lost their lives for the faith, both before and during the Cromwellian regime. Others suffered long imprisonment, while, others still, were banished to Barbados to work in the plantations. It is the mercy of God that that cruel regime did not last more than eight years. What would have become of our people if it had lasted much longer, God alone knows.

The restoration of Charles II. to the throne brought some toleration once again. The Dominicans returned to the country and went back once more to their old strongholds. But what a change in numbers there was! Out of six hundred, only about two hundred were left. The rest had died in exile or of hardship at home, or had been put to a violent death. Still the

work of souls—the preaching from parish to parish, the recruitment of new members and the training of novices—was taken up again with renewed hope and vigour, and success crowned their efforts once more. Twenty years later, the Order could count three hundred and sixty members, that is, in the time of James II. The Dominican Nuns had returned from exile and had a flourishing community in Galway again.

We have a very interesting account of the Order at this period and of the work of the fathers from the pen of Father John O'Heyne. He was an eye-witness when a boy of the Cromwellian persecution, joined the Order at a critical period, had to go into hiding for a whole year during the fury excited by the Titus Oates Plot, and eventually died in exile during the reign of William III. His work, written in exile, consists principally of short biographical accounts of the fathers of his own time, most of whom he knew personally. So he is able to throw many sidelights on the religious history of the period. The work of preaching, instructing and hearing confessions went on unceasingly in spite of all difficulties. O'Heyne speaks of some fathers as great preachers in Irish; of others who were great preachers in English, and of some who used both languages with equal facility. Blessed Oliver Plunkett, too, in his letters bears testimony to the preaching gifts of several of the fathers.

FATHERS OF THE ROSARY

The regulations of the Chapters at this time lay great stress on the preaching of the Holy Rosary, which up to modern times was a devotion peculiar to the Dominican Order. Right at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the young men trained in Spain had the onerous task before them of reviving the Order, they were so assiduous in spreading this devotion now universal throughout the Church, that they were usually known by the name of "Fathers of the Rosary."

It is often repeated, perhaps with some exaggeration, that it was the Rosary that saved Ireland for the Faith. However this may be, it is certain that it played an important part. The more obvious factor was the constant preaching all through the country by the friars of the Mendicant Orders. We see many complaints made by English officials and governors in the State Papers at widely different periods of the "swarms of friars who are constantly travelling through the country and keeping the poor people in their superstitions."

The short reign of James II. brought renewed hope to the Irish Catholics. In the Chapters held at this period we find a regulation that the fathers were to wear the Dominican habit within the walls of their houses or friaries. Hitherto that had not been thought prudent or possible. At a Chapter held at Lorrah, Co. Tipperary, one hundred and fifty friars appeared in the habit of the Order. This was in 1688, the year before the battle of the Boyne. That year the Order could count 243 priests, 97 novices and 25 lay brothers, in all 365 members. Such was the progress made within forty years after the Cromwellian persecution.

But the Battle of the Boyne, which again crushed the hopes of Irish Catholics, brought in its train renewed sufferings to the Mendicant Friars. When the triumph of the Williamites was complete, they determined by one great blow to suppress the Catholic Religion in Ireland. All bishops and regulars were ordered to leave the country by a certain date in 1698. If they refused to go they were to be imprisoned and transported. If any returned from exile they also were to be transported. If they dared to return a second time the penalty was death.

Four hundred and forty-four Friars embarked in ships from Galway, Dublin, Waterford and Cork. They were landed in the ports of France, Spain and Portugal, and sought refuge in the colleges of their respective Orders abroad and in the convents belonging to other Provinces. Church plate which they could not carry with them was left in the hands of trusty friends. Many did not obey the law but remained in hiding. O'Heyne gives a pathetic account of the breaking in by officials of the convent of the Dominican Nuns in Galway and the dispersal of the nuns among their friends. Two fathers managed to remain in Galway, Father Gregory French and Father Nicholas Blake. Some were thrown into prison immediately for not obeying the law. Father Nicholas Blake has left some interesting verses in Latin, describing his desolation, of which we subjoin the following translation :

"LAMENT OF A FRIAR LEFT ALONE BY THE IMPRISONMENT OF HIS BRETHREN.

"Alone I live, alone my days I spend;
The heavens receive my lone and fearsome sighs.
The lonely sparrow on the roof am I,
Like to the lonesome dove of mate deprived,
Sadly my plaint I make with heaving breast.
O Guardian Angel, look upon thy charge,

And, midst the heavenly chants, my sighs regard.
Take heart, my soul, and gaze upon the stars,
Whose placid light should bring new hope to thee.
Here, if I bear, with adverse fortune, can I doubt
That heavenly joys will be my sure reward?
Let trouble bring new life to me; these storms
Are but the prelude to the gates of bliss."

SPIRITED SURVIVAL

In 1704, when the Provincial managed to make a visitation through the districts in which the fathers were stealthily pursuing their mission, he was able to record the names of ninety of them besides five who were lying in prison.

Laws became still more stringent, yet there was no means found possible to keep the Friars out of the country. They defied the law and went on with their work. They began setting up chapels in back lanes, generally with no outward sign of what their purpose was. In 1730 the Government expressed alarm at this "further increase of Popery," and ordered the Protestant bishops to make inquiry as to the "number of Popish chapels and mass-houses and the number of priests and friars and the number of Popish schools." The report sent in the following year is a valuable record of the condition of the Church at the time. A detailed report was made by the sheriffs in Galway about the Dominicans. They state that "they also searched the friary in the west suburbs, called the Dominican Friary, wherein is a large chapel with a gallery, some forms, and an altar-piece defaced; in which said reputed friary there are ten chambers and eight beds, wherein, they believe, the friars belonging to the said friary usually lay, but could find none of them. That it is a very old friary but some repairs lately made in it."

Walter Taylor, the Mayor, was voted special thanks in the House for his zeal in searching out Popery, but the following item, taken from the account books of the Galway Dominicans, throws a strange light on the difficulty the sheriffs experienced in finding the Friars:—

"For claret to treat ye Sherifs in their search, ye 11th— 2s. 2d."

The fact is that a spirit of disregard for what could not be helped was growing up. The Catholics were poor, weak

and obsequious, and a contemptuous toleration was extended to their wretched chapels and mass-houses by the dominant Ascendancy.

In connection with inquiries into the existence in the country of friars and nuns, an amusing story of the first prioress in the Dominican Convent of Sienna, Drogheda, is handed down by tradition. A license to teach having been obtaind from the Protestant Primate, who was quite unaware of the class of persons he was giving it to, the nuns opened a boarding-school for the daughters of the Catholic gentry. They were known as the "Ladies of Dyer Street." Though they wore secular dress both inside and outside the house, rumour began to spread that they were really Popish nuns, and an official was sent by the Primate to make inquiries. The Mother Prioress, who belonged to one of the best Catholic families in the country, guessing his business beforehand, dressed herself in her very best clothes, came to him with very superior airs, and demanded his business. He was very much taken aback by her appearance and airs but summoned up courage to inquire what work they were all engaged in. She politely informed him that they were keeping a boarding-school for the daughters of the gentry. "But," said he, quite unaware that the grand lady before him was a nun, "there are rumours that there are Popish nuns in the house." "Sir" she replied, "I can assure you that the ladies of this establishment are as much nuns as I am." She did not fail to tell the truth, the exact truth, the whole truth, letting the man make what he could of it. With many apologies for the pain he must have caused by suspecting she had Popish nuns in the house, the official withdrew and left them in peace.

However, it soon became known what they really were, as we see from the reports of 1731, in which one nunnery with nine nuns in it is returned for the diocese.

The numbers of the fathers rose steadily during the first half of this century in spite of great poverty and hardship. The highest number reached was 182, which, with lay brothers and novices, gave the Province nearly two hundred members. There were three convents of nuns—one in Galway, the other in Dublin, and the third in Drogheda—containing in all about seventy nuns.

In the towns the fathers lived in rented houses and in the country they generally took a small holding and built a modest dwelling on it for the use of the community. They spent about half the year going from parish to parish, preaching and saying Mass and hearing confessions at the Mass-houses, or at rude unsheltered altars, exposed to all the rigours of the seasons. They lived entirely by alms and no one was exempted from making the quest. Conditions were really worse than they had been in the previous century; for great numbers of the Catholic gentry had left the country; others at home had been reduced to poverty, and more than four thousand had publicly apostatised within a short period. It is a curious reflection that while the poorer classes of the Protestants were steadily coming into the Church the greater portion of the smaller Catholic gentry should give up that Faith for which their forefathers had suffered so much. The Church in Ireland thus became in the eighteenth century the Church of the Poor. To an outsider everything about it appeared mean and sordid. The rags in which it was clothed concealed from the eyes of the dominant Ascendancy Party the Divine Spark within it.

In 1744, the descent on Scotland made by Prince Charles Edward was made the pretext in Ireland of a new persecution that lasted for a year. Raids were made on the Dominican Friaries in Dublin, Kilkenny and elsewhere. Priests fled in great numbers to Dublin, hoping to hide there in security. The Catholic chapels were closed, and Catholics to hear Mass had to gather again into rooms. A terrible catastrophe, in which many were killed, opened the eyes of the Protestants to the cruelty of their proceedings. A number of Catholics were hearing Mass in a loft in a back street in Dublin when the floor gave way and the whole congregation fell headlong into the stable below. A great outcry was made, the victims were helped, and the public conscience was touched when the true cause of the catastrophe became apparent. The Lord Lieutenant intimated his will that the persecution should cease, and on St. Patrick's Day, 1745, all the Catholic chapels were reopened and never had to be closed afterwards. There were many long years to go through before the fetters were taken off the Catholics of Ireland; still the above date is a landmark, the very first, indeed, of Emancipation from the Penal Laws. It was the dawn, though a very cold and misty dawn, of a new era.

III

Two Centuries of Reconstruction

Though Catholic religious functions were no longer interfered with, great discretion had still to be exercised. The Archbishop of Dublin ordered that all the chapels should be closed after twelve o'clock during the six months of the year in which Parliament sat, and no evening sermons were to be preached. In some of the towns, as in Kilkenny and Waterford, the local authorities would not allow the Friars to live in community, though they did not molest them individually. The same policy seems to have prevailed in the North and other parts, for when De Burgo, the Dominican historian of the Order, visited them he speaks of such and such fathers living in such and such a district. The consequence was that communities being broken up, the fathers found that the best way they could utilise their time was to do the ordinary parochial work as curates and parish priests.

PARISH PRIESTS

This change was made very general by a Decree of Propaganda in 1751. The bishops, feeling keenly the scarcity of the secular clergy, many large unions of parishes having to be looked after by only one priest, obtained powers by this Decree to set the Friars down to parochial work and remove them from parish to parish. Moreover, seeing that owing to the break up of communities, novices could not receive a proper training, Propaganda also decreed that for the future no novices were to be received in Ireland but were to be sent to some Catholic country where there was regular observance. Owing to the extreme poverty of the fathers and to the general poverty of the Catholics of Ireland, there was a great diminution of candidates for the Mendicant Orders. The expense and the risk were too great a burden. So during the latter half of this century we notice a great falling off in numbers.

In the year 1800, the Dominicans could count only ninety-five members. Of these only fifty-three lived in the fourteen houses that remained, all the rest having had to be abandoned. One instance will show how this falling off took place. From the thirteenth century onwards, almost without a break, there was a community of Dominicans in the town of Mullingar. In 1733 a Dominican was appointed parish priest. A house was built for the Order by a citizen and other fathers were encouraged to return and form a community again. In 1756 there were five fathers belonging to the community, of whom

three were parish priests, and one, Vicar-General of the diocese as well. In 1800 they were scattered all over the diocese. Three were parish priests, respectively, of Killiconican, Castlerickard and Farlullagh; five were curates in the parishes of Castlerickard, Slane, Kilpatrick, Mullingar and Farlullagh; three were in the friary at Donore (Donore taking the place of Mullingar), and three others were unattached. Dr. Troy reported in 1800 that out of the regulars 150 officiated as parish priests and curates and all of them assisted the secular clergy. A state of emergency existed, and the Friars, as was their clear duty, stood in the gap. But it meant the abandonment of two-thirds of their houses.

The greatest factor of all in the dearth of priests at this period was the French Revolution. The seminaries in France, Flanders and Italy, where five hundred of the secular clergy of Ireland used to receive their education, were broken up and the students dispersed. The English Government came to their assistance to a certain extent by the foundation of the College of Maynooth. But the same storm destroyed the foreign colleges of the Friars and for many years no adequate provision was made for their students, who had to go individually looking for hospitality in the colleges belonging to other Provinces of their Orders. As regards the Dominicans, the college at Louvain was destroyed and those of Corpo Santo at Lisbon and San Clemente at Rome were greatly impaired owing to financial embarrassment. This failure of provision for students caused a still further diminution of the members of the Province during the first half of the nineteenth century. There seemed to be a very poor future in store for the Mendicant Orders.

FRESH BEGINNINGS

Yet new life was shown in more than one direction. The Relief Bill of 1778, which gave security of land tenure to Catholics, inspired both the secular clergy and the religious to build on a much larger scale than hitherto. In Penal times it was no use building costly structures on rented ground that might be taken away from them at the will of the proprietor. But now large churches with architectural pretensions and situated in prominent positions began to replace the wretched little chapels of the back lanes. The Friars, owing to the growing scarcity of their numbers, concentrated their efforts in the large towns.

This concentration coincided with the modern growth of the towns and the depopulation of the country parts. The Dominicans in Dublin moved from their "Bridge Street Chapel" to the fine church in Denmark Street, used now for many years as a school. The Dominicans in Cork left their old chapel in Friary Lane for a fine new church in Dominic Street, for many years afterwards the site of the Butter Exchange. In Limerick they moved from the chapel in Fish Lane to the present church situated in Perry Square. The Church in Ireland emerged from the catacombs in which she had been immured for so many years. A new era of church building began, which lasted for nearly a century, taxing the zeal and energy of generations of bishops and priests and the generosity and self-sacrifice of the people. That the Dominicans took ample share in this material reconstruction of the Church is to be seen in every town where they still have a community.

In only one instance have the Dominicans succeeded in getting back their ancient churches. In Dublin and Cork not a vestige remains of these structures. In Drogheda and Waterford the tower of the church is all that is left. In Roscommon, Borrishoole, Urlar and some other places, most of the walls of the church are still standing. In Sligo, Athenry and Ballindoon, however, the ravages of time and man have spared a good deal more. The cloisters both of Sligo and Cashel show a great deal of beautiful workmanship.

The Black Abbey (so-called) of Kilkenny is the only one once again in possession of the Order. Its restoration to its present condition took about a hundred years to accomplish. While the Dominicans of that town were still, as they had been for many years, simply acting as curates in the parochial churches, a Father Meade came from Cork in 1775 and rented the ancient ruins of the church from a Protestant family, who had it at an almost interminable lease from the Corporation. He got them for four pounds a year, as they seemed to be of use to nobody. Father Meade pulled down the ancient choir and with the stones built a small house which was destined to serve the community for a hundred and twenty years. A few years afterwards the transept of the church was taken in hands and roofed and glazed, but owing to various reasons was not used for divine service for thirty-four years. Then a congregation began to gather in and the church became a great centre of devotion. In the sixties the fathers took the nave in hands,

which was in a still more ruinous condition than the transept had been. Besides roofing it, they had to rebuild most of the walls. Other very necessary improvements were made in the Seventies, so it may be said to have taken a hundred years to bring to its present condition. An ancient bell belonging to it, which for more than two centuries had been used as the bell of the market house at Dunlavin, was given back in 1925, and amid great rejoicings was borne in solemn procession through the town.

FIELD OF EDUCATION

During the times of persecution, when Catholic education was surrounded by enormous difficulties, the fathers tried to supply it as far as their means and opportunities allowed. Their efforts were naturally on a small scale and records are wanting. But in one place, Esker, near Athenry, their effords were crowned with great success. In 1678 they opened a school in a wood adjoining their friary which became so famous in a short time that it drew students from every part of the country. Several of these afterwards became bishops or occupied various other ecclesiastical positions, and many gained renown in the legal and medical professions. The students were scattered here and there in the wood and adjoining district. Divided into small batches, each group lived under the direction of a tutor in little wooden or wattle huts constructed by themselves, their food and clothing being sent to them regularly by their friends. In the morning they all came together in an open space in the wood for lessons and dispersed again to their huts when the work of the day was over. The school was begun and ended with prayer. The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin was always recited before the students dispersed in the evening. The school was broken up for a few years, during the persecution consequent on the "Popish Plot," but was resumed in 1683. It was finally closed in 1691, owing to the Jacobite war in Ireland and the eviction of the fathers from their place of refuge.

The history of the Dominican College in Newbridge brings us far back to very humble beginnings. The friary was originally situated in Naas, but the middle of the eighteenth century found the fathers dispersed in various places in the Co. Kildare. In 1756, Father Hugh Reynolds changed his place of residence to Newbridge, where the people built a small mud cabin for him to live in. On his death in 1773, his nephew, Hugh Reynolds, seized the cabin and garden, a not uncommon pro-

ceeding in penal times on the part of relatives of deceased religious. However, on being paid some money, he surrendered the place to Father Eugene Donnelly, who built a better house, the building and furnishing costing in all £109. Mass, which several of the neighbours assisted at, used to be said in the parlor, which had a mud floor. There was no other place for hearing Mass in till 1819, when a small chapel was erected apart from the house. This lasted till 1870, when it was replaced by the present church.

It was a great enterprise of the fathers in Newbridge to open the College of St. Thomas of Aquin, in 1850, a college built on a very modest scale, with accommodation for about twenty boys. Even such a small establishment made its influence felt. The enormous population of Catholics at that time in Ireland was very poorly equipped in the matter of secondary education. Most of the ecclesiastical seminaries then in existence had not developed for want of means, and neither had the other few colleges. Many boys preparing for the priesthood had to get their classical education at the hands of the itinerant schoolmaster. A college had been opened by the Dominicans of Esker a few years before and had failed financially, owing principally to the Famine and the impoverishment of many of the Catholic landlords. Nothing daunted by this failure, the fathers in Newbridge opened their college and though it has had a chequered history from the dearth of fathers free to give their attention to teaching, it has done its share in training men who afterwards became prominent in religious and civil life. A grand new college, perfectly equipped with all modern requirements has since replaced the older structure.

As regards primary education, the fathers opened schools in Dundalk which for seventeen years were the only free primary schools under Catholic management in that town. In Dublin the fathers turned their old church in Denmark Street into schools for the poor. In Galway they erected what was called at the time the "Claddagh National Piscatory School," capable of accommodating six hundred children. The principal idea of founding this school was the teaching of the children of the fishermen, whose dwellings stretch alongside the church, industries connected with their calling, such as net-making and spinning. Before long, however, the industrial teaching was given up and the National Board of Education took the school under its wing, with the Prior of the house as manager. Poor

schools capable of accommodating 300 children were built in 1826 at Esker by the fathers there.

REVIVAL OF THE NUNS

The Dominican Nuns founded in Galway have had a very chequered career owing to persecution. Almost all the members of the first community, founded in 1644, died in exile in Spain. A new community, founded some years later, was driven forth from the cloister in 1698. Banished from the town more than once, a number of them went to Dublin and new foundations were made in that city.

The Dublin community remained in the city for more than a century and then removed to Cabra, the present centre of many great educational establishments, principally in Dublin, Belfast and wicklow, with a thriving missionary activity in the Vicariate of South Africa.

The original Galway community has kept up with the times and has built a spacious college in accordance with modern requirements where the work of secondary education is carried on with energy and success. The Drogheda community derived also from Galway, through a convent in Belgium, where refuge was obtained, was founded in 1722, and for a period of two hundred years kept a boarding school. In 1922 the nuns, having closed the school, devoted themselves entirely to the Contemplative Life.

Another advance made by the Irish Province was the foundation of the novitiate and House of Studies at Tallaght, Co. Dublin. A great portion of the college at Corpo Santo in Lisbon was sold and the site at Tallaght was bought with the proceeds. The site was formerly the residence, first of the Catholic and afterwards of the Protestant Archbishops of Dublin. The private residence of the last proprietor served for some years as a novitiate, while a barn attached to an ancient tower of the archiepiscopal residence was fitted up as a church. Father Burke, the great preacher, commenced the building of the present beautiful church, but died in 1883, before it was half finished. After his death it was brought to completion as a memorial to him, and his remains were transfered to a memorial chapel erected in it.

MISSIONARY ZEAL

In the Fifties of the last century the modern system of parochial missions and retreats was introduced into the country by some of the new preaching Congregations. It was the same work that the Friars had been doing for centuries of preaching and hearing confessions, and the modern methods differed very little from the ancient. The work was very much needed and the Dominicans naturally threw themselves zealously into it, and according to the number available have taken their full share in it ever since. Father Tom Burke, one of the greatest orators of modern times, was a member of the first band of missionaries sent out.

Still later, foreign and colonial missions claimed the attention of the Irish Province. It was in 1895 that the first Irish Fathers went out to Port-of-Spain, Trinidad though three had already in succession gone out as bishops. Now the fathers look after most of the parishes on the island where there is a population of over 600,000, about one-third of whom are Catholics. Where three priests began work in 1895 there are now over forty priests, and there is work for many more as soon as they are available.

In 1898, three fathers went out to Australia and took possession of the new parish church of St. Lawrence, North Adelaide, which had been offered to the Order by the Archbishop of the See. They were received with great warmth by the parishioners, mostly all Irish, and before long were able to build a house for themselves, the Archbishop helping them considerably in the work. Foundatios in Sydney and Melbourne soon followed. A novitiate and studentate was erected in Melbourne in 1940, a theological school was founded in Sydney in 1947. Two foundations were made in New Zealand, and further development in Australia came with foundations in Brisbane and Perth. This field of Dominican activity was erected into a separate Province under the title of the Assumption in 1951.

The college of San Clemente, Rome, given to the Irish Province by the Holy See in the seventeenth century, houses some of the Irish Dominican students who are engaged in higher studies at the Dominican University in Rome. That of Corpo Santo, Lisbon, is no longer used for students. The community, however, is still kept up, the church is very much frequented, and the fathers have made their influence felt in the religious life of the capital of Portugal.

THE THIRD ORDER

There is very little recorded in the annals of the Irish Province about the Tertiaries, or members of the Third Order of St. Dominic. But one bright example of holiness is preserved in the account given of Sister Honor Burke, who lived for nearly a hundred years with some other tertiary nuns in a house which they had built near the old friary of Burrishoole, Co. Mayo. During the savage warfare carried on in the reign of Elizabeth, she barely saved her life on one occasion by remaining without food or drink for a whole week hidden in the vaults of the church. Many years afterwards, during the Cromwellian period, on the occasion of the friary being attacked and taken, she, with another sister, took refuge on Saints' Island in the Bay, whither they were followed by the English soldiers, stripped of their clothes and flung into a boat with such violence that three of Honor Burke's ribs were broken. She was afterwards carried by her maid to the church and placed in front of the altar of the Blessed Virgin. The maid then went to look for the other sister, who was hiding in a wood, and found her dead. On returning to the church she was suprised to find Honor Burke also dead in a kneeling posture before the altar with her head perfectly erect.

Chapters of tertiaries were formed in many of the houses that had afterwards to be abandoned. But though the fathers left, the tertiaries remained and flourished, as was notably the case at Longford. There was also a large Chapter at Belfast, where the Dominicans never had a house. The tertiaries of those days set an example of piety and frequent approach to the Sacraments at a time when confraternities and sodalities had hardly any existence in the country. The gradual erection of sodalities in every parish terminated the existence of the tertiaries in almost all places where there was no Dominican church.

DOMINICAN BISHOPS

The Holy See has set the seal of its approval of the work of the Friars Preachers in Ireland by appointing great numbers of them to Episcopal Sees. There is not a diocese in Ireland, with the sole exception of Clogher, that has not been ruled by a Dominican bishop at one time or another. Never from almost their first entry into the country till the death in 1916 of Dr. O'Callaghan, Bishop of Cork, was there a time at which

one or other of them was not exercising the onerous office, except for about twenty years at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the Province was almost extinct. At times there were five of them together ruling different Sees. De Burgo, a bishop himself, writing in 1762, gives a biographical list up to his time of eighty-three, including ten Archbishops of Armagh, two of Dublin, and one of Cashel. Since his time we may add the names of six more appointed to Irish Sees and eleven to colonial and foreign Sees, making one hundred in all. Most of these bishops were distinguished for holiness and learning and many had to bear great hardships in times of persecution. The first bishop-elect of New York and the first Vicar Apostolic of the Cape of Good Hope were taken from the Irish Dominican Province.

Regular observance was introduced into the Province in the Sixties of the last century by Father Jandel, Master-General of the Order. Private Life, which had been the custom in penal times as of necessity, gave way to Common Life, the Choral Office was renewed and the habit was worn in the houses. The chanting of the Divine Office has been carried out in the houses ever since with great regularity and fullness.

The work of preparation and of study has been placed on a firm basis. The novitiate was moved to St. Mary's, Cork. St. Mary's, Tallaght is entirely devoted to teaching of philosophy and theology, and is recognised as a house of studies. The college of San Clemente in Rome, precious possession of the Irish Province continues to house our Irish students who attend the various courses in the Order's International college of the Angelicum.

There are now fourteen houses of Dominicans in Ireland. Attached to them are churches in which in almost every instance the Order may well take a pride, for the structures which have replaced the older buildings are architecturally beautiful and richly furnished with all the requisites of Catholic worship.

The Province has thus been well reconstructed internally as well as externally. Let us here express the hope that this reconstruction will be the prelude to further centuries of fruitful Dominican life. We must place all our trust in God Who draws good out of evil. The records of Ireland's sufferings for the Faith show a wonderful intervention of God's Providence. As the seed has been sown in tears, let us pray that the harvest may be reaped in joy.

DOMINICAN PUBLICATIONS

ST. SAVIOUR'S, DUBLIN

The beginnings of the modern Irish Dominican apostolate of the Press date back to 1897 with the first number of *The Irish Rosary*. This popular periodical (now bi-monthly with "Doctrine and Life") was one of the first in the field of Irish Catholic monthly magazines. The early bound volumes are still treasured in many Catholic homes. From what was then known as the Irish Rosary Office a large number of pamphlets devotional, biographical and historical were published in the early years. These were later followed by larger books covering a wide field of Catholic thought.

The Confraternity of Blessed Imelda for Fervent First Communicants having had a remarkable development in schools at home and abroad, the need was felt of a special magazine devoted to the Eucharist for children. *The Imeldist* made its first appearance in 1912.

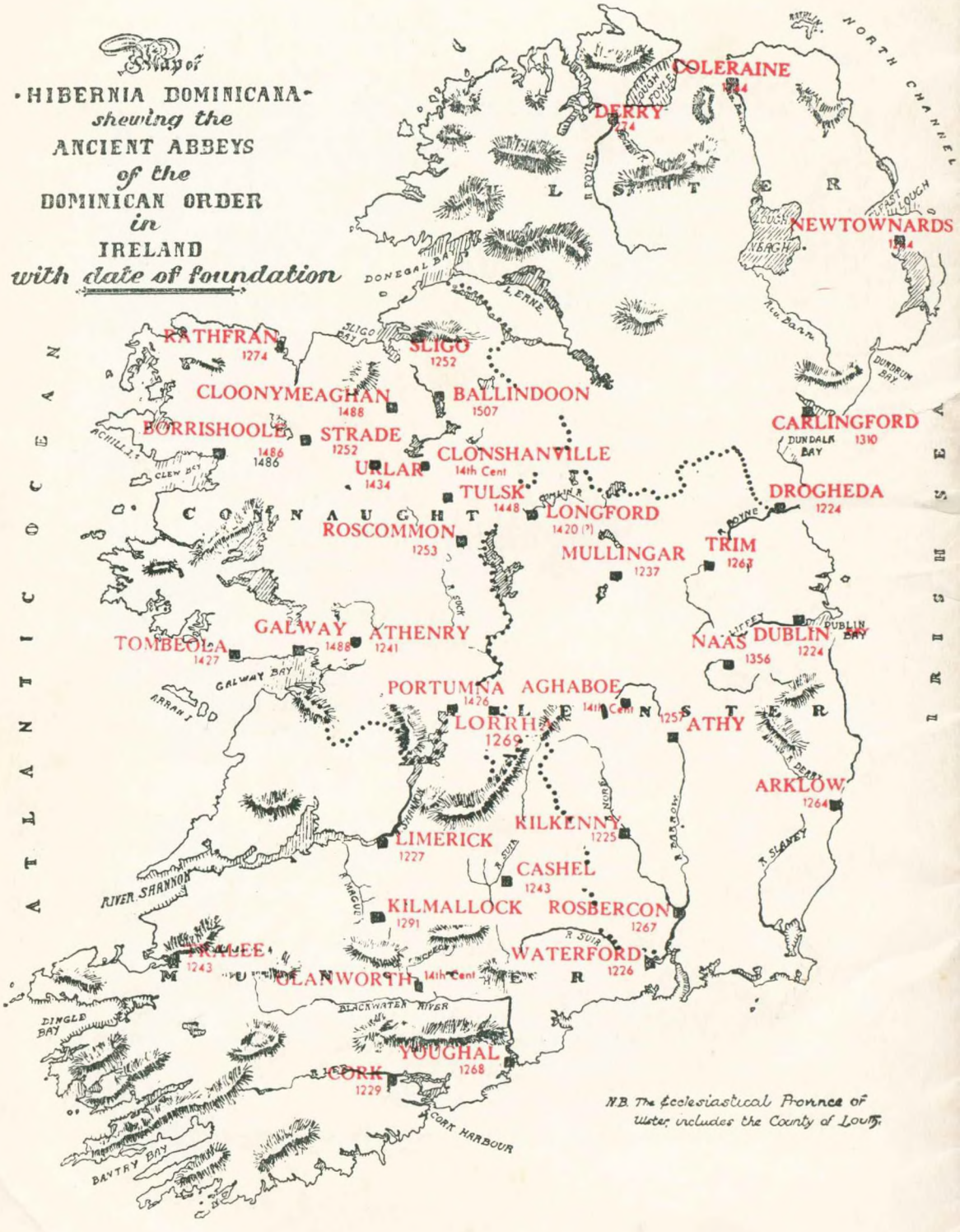
The Lantern with its sub-title of *Monthly Bulletin of Catholic Instruction* appeared in 1934 in response to the desire of many priests and teachers of having an adult source of doctrinal teaching to supplement in the homes what catechetical instruction began in the schools.

The Dominican Bulletin began publication in 1940. Its purpose was to provide items of interest for members of the Third Order. In 1954 it became amalgamated with the new missionary monthly, called *The Blessed Martin Magazine.*

Doctrine and Life—the most recent of Irish Dominican periodicals—for some years occupied a special section of *The Irish Rosary*. In 1951 it became a bi-monthly entirely devoted to fostering in souls the life of Sanctifying grace.

In spite of difficulties down the years since 1897 the apostolate of the Press continues to occupy a large part in the work of "The Dominicans in Ireland." Dominican Publications to-day carries on the tradition of doctrinal and cultural teaching bequeathed to the Order by St. Dominic, its father and founder.

WRITE FOR OUR CATALOGUE


Essay of
·HIBERNIA DOMINICANA·
shewing the
ANCIENT ABBEYS
of the
DOMINICAN ORDER
in
IRELAND
with date of foundation
ATLANTIC OCEAN
IRISH SEA
NORTH CHANNEL
COLERAINE
DERRY
NEWTOWNARDS
KATHFRAN
SLIGO
CLOONYMEAGHAN
BALLINDOON
CARLINGFORD
BORRISHOOLE
STRADE
CLONSHANVILLE
URLAR
TULSK
DROGHEDA
LONGFORD
ROSCOMMON
MULLINGAR
TRIM
GALWAY
ATHENRY
TOMBEOLA
NAAS
DUBLIN
PORTUMNA
AGHABOE
LORRH
ATHY
ARKLOW
KILKENNY
LIMERICK
CASHEL
KILMALLOCK
ROSBERCON
WATERFORD
YOUGHAL
CORK
CONNAUGHT
LEINSTER
MUNSTER
RIVER SHANNON
DONEGAL BAY
GALWAY BAY
DINGLE BAY
BANTRY BAY
CORK HARBOUR
BLACKWATER RIVER
DUBLIN BAY
DUNDALK BAY
N.B. The Ecclesiastical Province of Ulster includes the County of Louth.