A black and white photograph of a stone archway. The arch is made of rough-hewn stone and leads to a bright, overexposed area, possibly a window or an exit. The arch is framed by a dark, shadowed area. The title text is overlaid on the upper part of the arch.

The Waterford Dominicans

Hugh Fenning O.P.



Eddie Conuay . O.S.B.

The Waterford Dominicans 1226 - 1990

Front cover:

The nave of Blackfriars, framed by the chancel-arch.

Inside front cover:

Blackfriars today, viewed from the west.

Inside back cover:

Our Lady, Queen of Heaven.

Detail from the Rosary chapel at Bridge Street.

Back cover:

Our Lady's altar at Bridge Street.

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The Early Years

When the Dominicans first came to Ireland in 1224, they made two foundations, at Dublin and Drogheda, in the same year. A third house, still famous as the "Black Abbey", was formed at Kilkenny in 1225. And not content even with this rapid progress, a group of pioneers pushed on to Waterford in 1226 to make their first settlement in Munster. Even granting that these first Dominicans were Normans and spoke the Norman-French of Dublin, Drogheda, Kilkenny and Waterford, the pace at which they settled so quickly in so many centres calls for some explanation. Like the sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta today, they had something to offer which the Church in western Europe badly needed. Unlike the parish clergy of the time, they were highly trained preachers. They were also free to move quickly from place to place, whereas monks were bound by vow to stay at home, and had the further advantage of being free from the parish responsibilities which occupied the Canons Regular already well-settled in Ireland. At Waterford, the Dominicans were the first friars (literally "brothers") of any order to reach the city; the Franciscans would come later in 1240. The two groups were popularly distinguished by the colour of their cloaks, the Franciscans being called "Greyfriars" and the Dominicans "Blackfriars". Both were "mendicants", another novelty, because they begged their daily bread rather than rely on landed property or parochial dues.

For all the hurry with which the Dominicans came to Waterford, it took nine years for them to find a home. Matters had been simpler at Dublin where the canons of Christchurch gave them a chapel, or at Drogheda and Kilkenny where powerful patrons took good care of them. For the time being, the Blackfriars probably sheltered with the canons regular of St Catherine's or the Benedictines of St John's whose prior, Walter, became bishop of Waterford in 1227. Perhaps there was no room to fit yet another chapel into the city, for it was still cramped within the triangle of the old Danish walls and covered less than thirty acres.

This nine-year delay most likely had some connection with the extension of the walls of Waterford to the south and west authorised by the king in 1224; Henry III waived all claim to the customs-revenue of the city for a period of four years so that the citizens might "enclose the king's town". This ambitious piece of town-planning was already in progress when the friars came in 1226

and, like similar plans today, probably took longer than the four years envisaged. Curiously enough, when the job was done, the western wall of the Danish triangle (from St Martin's Castle on Spring Garden Alley to the Quay) was left standing, although no longer necessary for defence. The Dominicans obtained a site just ten feet inside it. At the request of the citizens, Henry III permitted them in 1235 to build a friary "on a vacant site under the city walls, where there was anciently a small tower".

The ruins of the medieval church, essentially a thirteenth-century building, still stand on an east-west axis running from Conduit Lane towards Barronstrand Street, slightly north of the narrow street now called Blackfriars. The area covered by the medieval priory is a much more difficult question, but the greater part of the house and grounds clearly lay north of the church. Towards the river, they stretched at least as far as the present cathedral; uphill to the south they bordered High Street and took in part of Arundel Square. The entrance to the priory, a detail mentioned in 1468, stood "opposite the corner of Bothe Street", but where this Danish street of Booths or stalls actually lay is now unknown.

Medieval Waterford has been well described by Canon Power. "Waterford, like Dublin, was really, for five centuries, in everything except air, water and the ground on which it stood, an English town domiciled in Ireland. It was confined within a strong and lofty wall with towers at intervals and with stout gates which were guarded by day and closed at night. Sanitation was bad, epidemics and diseases rife, water supply precarious and public lighting practically unknown. By way of suburbs there was a group of cabins on the marsh-edge without St John's Gate, a second and smaller group outside Closegate, and a third on the hill (Brickin's) beyond St Patrick's Gate." The good Canon's ancestors spent much of their spare time attacking the city, but it remained almost proverbially attached to the crown, receiving various charters in return and the proud title of "Urbs Intacta", the city untouched by Irish influence.

In this situation, the Dominicans were as English, whether by blood or inclination, as any of the citizens. They owed obedience to the Dominican provincial in England or to his vicar at Dublin. From 1285 they received an annual royal allowance of twenty-five marks, raised to thirty-five marks in 1295 and eventually granted in perpetuity in 1400. Similar alms from the royal treasury were paid to the friars of the other "royal cities": Dublin, Drogheda, Limerick and Cork. Yet, these Blackfriars of Waterford were not isolated from their confrères in other parts of the country, since general meetings of the Irish Dominican vicariate were held at Waterford on three occasions: in 1277, 1291 and 1309. Nor were they isolated from the continent,

since one of their number, Geoffrey of Waterford, spent most of his time in France.

Geoffrey of Waterford is remembered as a writer, or more strictly as a translator of three Latin texts into the French dialect of thirteenth-century Picardy. Nor did he work alone, but collaborated in these rather free translations with a Belgian named Servais Copale. The three texts were the "*Secret of Secrets or the the government of Kings*", wrongly attributed to Aristotle; "*The Fall of Troy*" by Darius the Phrygian; and a "*History of the Romans*" by Eutropius. Geoffrey's only reference to Ireland crops up in a passage on the cultivation of vines where he quite rightly noted that they would not flourish in Ireland. Geoffrey of Waterford, almost the only Irish Dominican writer in the middle ages, flourished between 1266 and 1300, but has not been forgotten. He is portrayed in one of the mosaics in the apse of the present church in Bridge Street.

Twice within a few years, the Dominican prior of Waterford was called upon, with two other officials, to act as a papal commissary; first, in 1257, with regard to a dispute between the archbishop of Dublin and his subjects, and again in 1264 when some differences arose between the bishops of Cashel and Lismore. In neither case is the name of the prior supplied. In the meanwhile, the ordinary work of the community went ahead. Their principal work was preaching, but since their church was so small, they must often have preached on more important occasions in the open air, either in the conventual cemetery or at the City Cross in Broad Street nearby. For their support they begged from door to door and received occasionally a bequest. Richard son of Robert, a soldier of Kilkenny, left them twelve pence, for instance, in 1267. Twelve pence would not have fed them for long, but this can hardly have been an isolated case, and in any event the friars were accustomed to quest also (especially at harvest time) in the surrounding countryside. They ventured out, one may be sure, only in times of peace, but Waterford like every friary had its own "questing limits" with a radius of about twenty miles. That area, within which the Dominicans of Waterford regularly preached and begged, was greatly reduced by the foundation of two new Dominican houses at Rosbercon in 1267 and Youghal in 1268. On the other hand, it was both convenient and a boost to morale to have fellow-Dominicans within easy reach; those at Youghal on the road to Cork and those at Rosbercon on the main water-route to Kilkenny.

Waterford was twice "destroyed" by fire, in 1252 and again in 1280. It was a hazard of city life at the time, since the streets were so narrow and many of the houses roofed with wood or thatch. Foreign merchants were blamed for the second fire; they are said to have thrown incendiary devices into cellars "and so spoiled the city that it was long before they could recover themselves". How

Blackfriars was affected by these fires one cannot say, except that their church at least appears to have survived.

Racial Tensions: 1310 - 1392

A curious murder-trial held at Waterford in 1311 involved at least two races, and by implication three. The accused, a clerk named Robert le Waleys, even though of Waterford, considered himself English and pleaded in his own defence that "it was no felony to kill an Irishman and not of free blood". Unfortunately for Robert, his victim, in actual fact, had been a Dane, one John MacGillemory, descendant of an Ostman who had been loyal to Henry II and on that account had been permitted to live within the city in a tower which, at the time of the trial, "was very old and ruinous, opposite the Friars Preachers' church within the walls". The name MacGillemory brings us back to the Danish jarls or chiefs of Waterford who adopted the Irish name Gillamaire, "devotee of Mary", at the time of their conversion to Christianity long before true Englishmen arrived to trouble them.

English towns such as Waterford had no particular grudge against Irishmen who kept the peace, but even so the corporation decreed in 1382 that it was an offence to call another citizen an "Irishman", the punishment being a fine of one mark to be paid to the victim. Their real objection, naturally enough, was to "Irish enemies" and to such Old English as followed Irish law. In 1345, Waterford was attacked by the Old English family of Poer or Power who "burnt, destroyed and spoiled" almost all the countryside around the city, but at a heavy price: some of them were hanged, drawn and quartered, and their heads and limbs displayed at various vantage points around the city. Somewhat later, in 1368, the Powers attacked again, aided by the Irish O'Driscolls of Baltimore, and on this occasion had more success: among the dead were the mayor, the sheriff, the master of the hospital and about a hundred more, including sixty foreign merchants. This old vendetta was carried on in fits and starts until a fleet from Waterford finally crushed O'Driscoll at Inishsherkin in 1538.

Apart from fire and war there was also plague, especially the Black Death of 1348 which claimed almost a third of the population of western Europe. Though Friar Clynn the annalist speaks of the devastation of Dublin, Drogheda and Kilkenny (where eight Dominicans died within a few months), he says nothing of Waterford which cannot have escaped the catastrophe. At Bristol, with which Waterford had such close links, almost half the population died. The plague in Ireland was at its worst in the enclosed sea-ports. Worse still, pockets of infection remained for more than a century after bubonic plague first appeared. From 1348 the English colony in Ireland, largely because of the plague, went into steady decline. The proud city of Waterford

became somewhat less “English” than before, and it is perhaps symptomatic that a Dominican with a purely Irish name, Robert O’Keane, was sent by his superiors to live there in 1392. A family group of that name, Ó Céin, held territory between Kilmacthomas and Bunmahon, west of Tramore. Just a few years later, in 1398, an even more obviously Irish Dominican, Cornelius Ryan, obtained permission to use a room which he had built at his own expense in the convent at Waterford. One can see from this detail how much the Dominicans had declined in matters of discipline, and how little the priory of Waterford had been touched by the movement towards “regular observance” then stirring on the continent. Father Ryan had made his little nest-egg and was determined to enjoy it; leaving the common dormitory he found comfort and privacy in a room built to his own specification.

Bishops and Divines: 1394 - 1491

The diminutive diocese of Waterford, taking in only the city and the formerly Danish lands around it, was united in 1363 to the vastly larger and more prestigious see of Lismore, but this arrangement was not truly complete until the long-lived bishop Reeve of Lismore (1354-1393) went to his reward. The first bishop of “Waterford and Lismore” was an English Dominican, originally of Warwick, named Robert Read, nominated by Richard II, and appointed by the Pope on 9 September 1394. Richard II, a great benefactor of the Order, was accustomed to recite the divine office from the Dominican breviary every day. On 2 October of the same year, bishop Read accompanied Richard to Waterford with about eight thousand soldiers: “the greatest display of armed might ever seen in Ireland during the middle ages”. The Dominican bishop is said to have intoned the *Te Deum* as the royal party entered Christchurch.

Richard came “in certain hope of better and more prosperously ruling the land”, and most of the Irish and Anglo-Irish did indeed submit as this mighty army made its way to Dublin, Drogheda and back again to Waterford. Even three war-lords from Connacht, O’Connor Don, Clanrickard Burke and Walter de Bermingham, were knighted on the royal ship at Waterford before Richard sailed away on 15 May 1395. Whether bishop Read remained behind we do not know, but he became bishop of Carlisle in 1396 and of Chichester from 1397 until his death in 1415. His episcopal register at Chichester still survives; so does his will, but he left nothing to Waterford.

Another English Dominican, John Depyng, so called from his birthplace, Deeping in Lincolnshire, became bishop of Waterford and Lismore in 1397. Apart from being a doctor of divinity, he had also served as prior of London and on several occasions preached before Richard II, which sufficiently explains his

promotion. In all likelihood, he was present in Waterford on 1 June 1399 to welcome the king on his second visit to the city. This time, Richard II had come to avenge the death of his lord lieutenant, Roger Mortimer, killed near Carlow by the O'Byrnes. Once again, the king marched to Kilkenny and Dublin and was just about to "burn McMurrough out of his woods" when events in England forced his immediate return. Richard sailed from Waterford on 27 July; by August he was in prison and by the following February he was dead. Bishop Depyng died exactly one month after his royal protector on 4 March 1400.

A third Dominican, Thomas Bird of Yorkshire, was named bishop of Waterford and Lismore in 1438. He too was a doctor of divinity, but it was not as a theologian or preacher that he caught the attention of the king. In 1438, the very year of his nomination, Thomas Bird took part at Oxford in a "demonstration of German wild-fire", a sort of medieval napalm, in the presence of Henry VI. Since Bird's nomination was based on the belief that the bishop of Waterford was dead, whereas that prelate was alive and well, the good friar had to wait until 1450 for episcopal consecration, not unfortunately as bishop of Waterford but of St Asaph in Wales.

Towards the close of the century Waterford earned its title, *Urbs Intacta*, or "loyal city" by rejecting two pretenders to the throne. The first, in 1487, was Lambert Simnel, crowned at Dublin as Edward VI and acclaimed by the whole country with the exception of the archbishop of Armagh, the Butlers, and the city of Waterford. The second was Perkin Warbeck who laid siege to Waterford in 1495, helped by the Earl of Desmond and even by the bishop of Waterford and Lismore. On the appearance after twelve days of a relief-force from Dublin, Warbeck put to sea and was chased by the ships of Waterford to the coast of Cornwall.

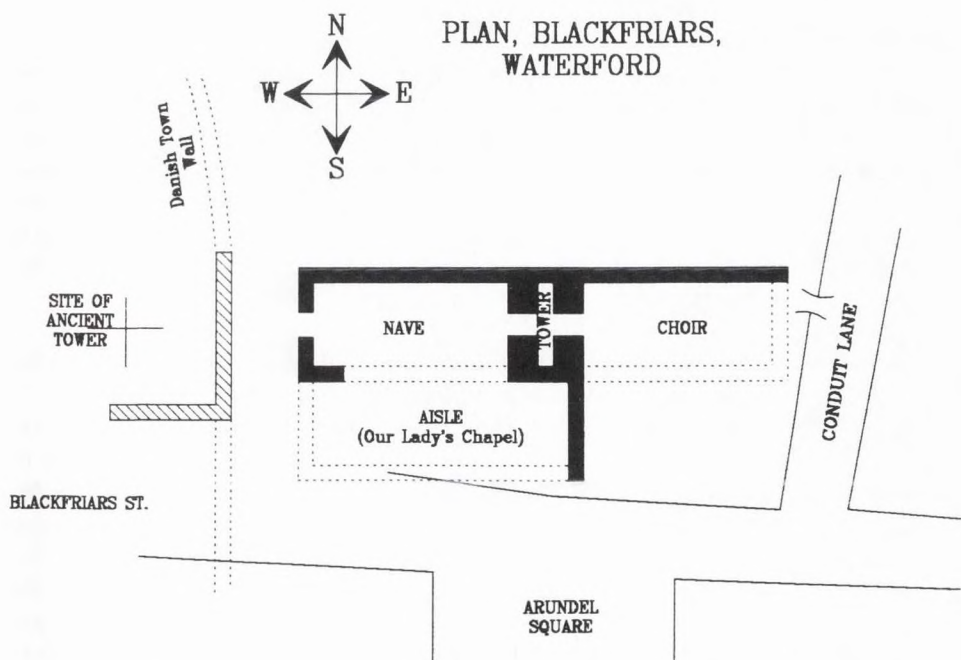
While the Dominicans of Waterford, unlike their brethren at Youghal in 1493, showed no relish for a return to "regular observance", they still respected the serious study of theology, an essential element of Dominican life. Two Dominicans of Waterford, already bachelors of theology, were permitted in 1491 to advance to the higher and prestigious degree of "master of theology" at Oxford or any other university. One, Philip Purcell, had already graduated in England; the other, Thomas Lawless, was permitted on the same occasion to visit Rome.

Church and Tower

The conventual church, which is all that remains of the old Blackfriars, is (apart from the tower) essentially a thirteenth-century building, the usual long

rectangle of nave and chancel, with an aisle or Lady chapel on the southern side of the nave. The western and only door looks out onto a narrow street now unused and blocked off at both ends. This is the famous door, decorated by a raised band of ropework, over which in 1746 the writer Charles Smith read the mystifying inscription P, E, D, I, F, I, E, D and was much ridiculed for his mistake. Even today, one can see that the "re-edified" arch over the door is much less worn, and therefore more recent than the weathered jambs supporting it. The great west window above the door may be a later insertion.

The nave measures sixty feet by twenty-four and was formerly lit by four windows of equal size in the north wall. These have now been blocked up by adjoining buildings, partly and very recently with new bricks of a bright orange colour which do no credit to those who put them there. On the south side of the nave three fine arches in Caen stone once gave access to the aisle, or Lady chapel. Naturally, these arches too have been damaged and filled in, since the aisle itself is occupied by shops on Blackfriars Street. One can still see, however, that the arch closest to the the western door is fourteen feet wide, springing from a heavy round pillar on the east and a slender, semi-circular pilaster with a fine foliated capital on the west.



Plan of the medieval Dominican Church in Waterford

The chancel, or choir and altar area, was about forty-three feet long and probably once reached the edge of the present pavement along Conduit Lane. Since the east wall is gone, and the other two walls have been greatly reduced in height, the windows also of the chancel have naturally disappeared. Sometime about 1490, the tall though not slender tower was built between chancel and nave, rising over an arch about twenty-five feet high to a total height of about eighty feet. The solid base, like the western door, is of limestone, but the rest of the tower is of rubble masonry, rising nearly two storeys above the former roof of the church. The pyramidal spire of timber and slate, surmounted by a cross, as shown in the map of 1673, has long since disappeared. One can still see the doors in the tower which led into the lofts above both chancel and nave, and notice also the Tudor windows on all four sides. At the base of the tower, though now blocked up, there are two facing doorways, one originally leading to the south aisle, the other to the conventual buildings on the north.

All told, the end of the fifteenth century seems to have found the Dominicans of Waterford in good shape, with benefactors willing to pay for such a fine tower, and no less than two members of the community ready to become masters in theology.

Blackfriars Suppressed: 1537 - 1541

Part of the conventual income came from rents on houses and land. William Martin, prior in 1522, made two leases in October of that year, giving Thomas Lombard the four acres known as the King's Meadow at Lisduggan for twenty-four years at an annual rent of ten shillings, and giving Robert Lombard and William Lyncoll, both of Christchurch cathedral, the stream called "the water of Kilbarry" for sixty-one years. By another deed drawn up in 1524, William Martin permitted Robert Gibbs to occupy "a vacant space within the monastery" for sixty-nine years at twenty pence a year.

Father Martin was still prior in summer 1537 when Henry VIII set his mind to the suppression of religious houses in Ireland. Doctor Sall, a Franciscan of Waterford, who was one of the first to preach "against the putting down of churches and making them profane places", was arrested by the mayor in 1538 and sent as a prisoner to Dublin Castle. George Browne, the leader of this great enterprise, formerly provincial of the English Augustinians but now Protestant archbishop of Dublin, reached Waterford with his fellow-commissioners in January 1539. Browne's party was entertained by the mayor and council who seemed at least to accept the royal supremacy and made a show of zeal for the cause by executing "four felons accompanied by another thief, a friar, whom they commanded to be hanged in his habit". The real thieves, in the meanwhile, had more serious work to do.



Western door, with raised band of "ropework".

On 2 April 1539, the prior of Blackfriars was obliged to give a formal account of conventual property, particularly of the leases granted in the 1520s. From this document we learn that the friars owned twenty-four acres; that the stream called "the water of Kilbarry" ran through the King's Meadow near Lisduggan; but "who was the founder of said monastery or the donor or at what time, or by what service held is not known". The Dominicans of Waterford either knew nothing of their history or chose not to talk about it. All they could or would say was that their chapel had been "founded beyond the memory of men".

By 18 January 1541, all was over. The entire property was now leased by James White, recorder of Waterford, for sixty-six shillings. The dean and chapter of Christchurch still held the Kilbarry "watercourse". The conventual premises were rather large, for they included "the Baron's hall with three upper rooms", the "doctor's room", "the little hall with a kitchen and upper room", "the great hall with its upper rooms", five other rooms of which some were rented out, a dormitory, chapter-room and library. Besides all this there were three tenements and a house with its own garden, as well as two conventual gardens. When the household chattels were sold for twenty-four pounds, James White was left with two bells and the problem of getting them down from the tower. The cemetery seems to have occupied the north-west corner of the present Arundel Square. The conventual buildings lay largely north of the church, towards the river, so that a sizeable garden, shown clearly on the map of 1673, ran downhill towards the present cathedral. After the prior's "voluntary surrender" of the property, Blackfriars eventually became the county court-house; part of the convent, by 1764, had become a theatre. The Dominicans never occupied the place again.

Rome-Runners, Friars and Beads

After the Reformation, Waterford proved more loyal to the Pope than to the King. In a phrase said to have been coined by James I, Protestants came to call it "Little Rome". John Bale, bishop of Ossory, who passed through the city in 1553, was one of the first to grumble about the change: "Christ had there no bishop nor yet the King's majesty any faithful officer". Cormac O'Fergus, the Dominican provincial, visited Waterford soon after his arrival from Spain in 1571. Whether he found Dominicans there to welcome him does not appear, but there were certainly some in the neighbourhood shortly after. A Spanish official spying out the land for Philip II in 1574, noted that all the people of Waterford were Catholics and that they were forced to attend Mass in private houses since they were forbidden to use their parish churches. He remarked that the Franciscans and Dominicans of Dungarvan had to escape to the mountains and hide in caves or cellars whenever English troops appeared, but they returned the moment the way was clear and went on with their work as though nothing had happened. The old days of peaceful cloistered life were gone, but obviously the friars adjusted quickly to the change.

The Catholic cause was greatly advanced by the merchant ships of Waterford which, given favourable winds, could reach Spain or Spanish Flanders within a fortnight, carrying young men to colleges on the continent from which they would later return as priests. This new method of recruitment was already well under way by 1577 when the Catholics of the city had reoccupied the churches closed against them only three years before. They had "their altars, painted images and candlesticks", with "Masses infinite in their several churches". Three years later there was "Massing in every corner; Rome-runners and friars maintained amongst them; public wearing of beads and praying upon the same". And that was only part of what the Protestant bishop had to say about the "stiffnecked, stubborn, papistical and incorrigible people of the city of Waterford". The good man had more serious troubles, not least an almost total lack of clergymen to staff the churches of the "reform".

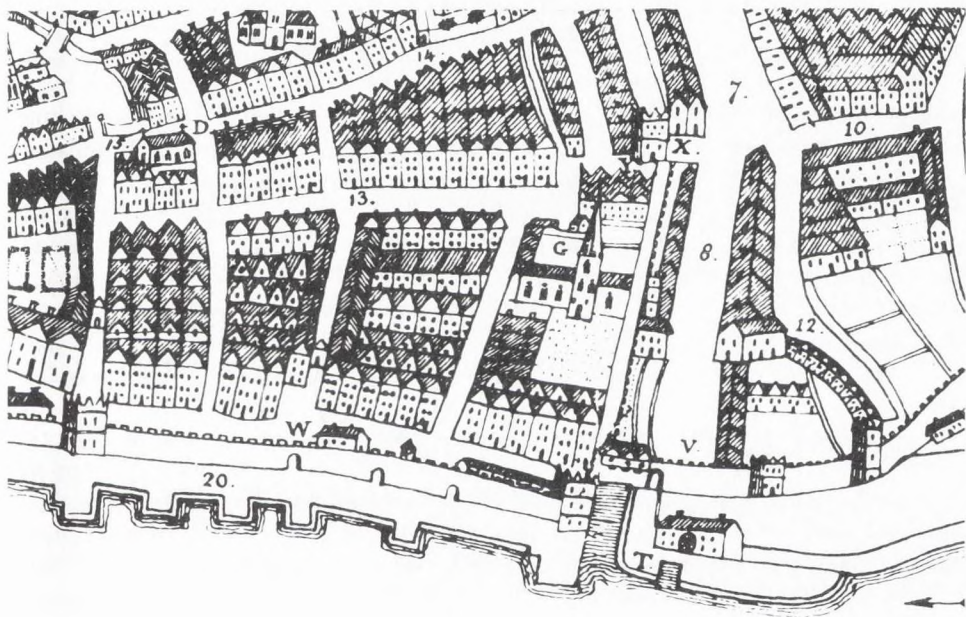
The mood of optimism at Waterford ran even higher in 1603 when news arrived that Queen Elizabeth was dead. Sir Nicholas Walsh, standing at the Market Cross to proclaim the new sovereign, James I, was rudely knocked down and was lucky to escape unhurt. "We took care", wrote a merchant, "to reconsecrate all our churches and to celebrate Masses, preach sermons and

hold processions according to the Roman rite". The leader in all this was Father James White, vicar apostolic of Waterford, who took care to "purify the monastery of St Dominic" at Kilkenny and sent others to "reconcile" the principal churches at Cashel, Fethard and Clonmel. When the Lord Deputy, Mountjoy, arrived on the scene, he found the gates of Waterford closed in his face. A long parley followed at Gracedieu between Mountjoy and the principal clergy of the city led by James White and his Cistercian kinsman Thomas Lombard. Among this delegation was "a pert young Dominican in his habit", an Edmund O'Callaghan who was "remarkable for holiness and learning", but of whom one hears no more. Despite the earnest theological discussion at Gracedieu, Mountjoy took the city. In 1605, all the bishops, priests and religious of Ireland were ordered to leave the country under pain of death. The vicar apostolic, James White, sailed for Bordeaux and made his way to Rome.

Despite this and later decrees of banishment, despite this danger for priest and congregation if discovered during Mass, the number of priests "on the mission" slowly grew and persecution gradually relented. In 1610, two Waterford-born Dominicans, both named John White, were already working in Ireland, while a third named John Nelan, once a student of the famous schoolmaster John Flahy, was preparing to follow them at Salamanca. Waterford got a new vicar apostolic, a bishop in all but name, by 1615. This was Dermot MacCarthy, president of the Irish College at Bordeaux, who decided to stay in France and leave the diocese in the care of a Dominican, Thomas Quirke. Father MacCarthy also prevailed on the Dominican master general to have three of his subjects, former students at Bordeaux, return to Ireland in 1616. All three — Vincent Hogan, John Fox and Thomas Lee — were from Munster, if not from Waterford itself. Another Dominican, Thomas Power, was already at Waterford in 1616 and prior of the community in 1622, with five priests under his care. The famous provincial Ross MacGeoghegan, chief architect of the Dominican revival, came to see them in 1624.

Peace, War and Exile: 1627 - 1651

Fr John Fox, prior of Waterford in 1627, was soon to become prior of Limerick; an early example of the link between the Dominicans of Waterford and Limerick which would last into the 1830s. The others were Richard Strang, Thomas Power, William O'Shea and Richard Barry who was later to be martyred at Cashel. While Strang and Power are clearly Waterford names, there were at this time no Dominican Waddings, Lombards or Comerfords, so numerous among other religious orders. The same list of 1627 names Dominican students abroad and, if surnames are anything to go by, three of them — Gibbon Wall, Dominic Creagh and Richard Power— came from Waterford too.



Waterford city in 1673.

Blackfriars, with steeple, and grounds extending towards river, marked "G"

The appointment of a bishop, Patrick Comerford, in 1629 set the seal on Catholic recovery in Waterford while providing the control necessary for orderly development. A friar himself, bishop Comerford gave the church of St Catherine to his Augustinian brethren who had first come to the city in 1622. The Jesuits, another new group, had been somewhat longer in Waterford, specialising as always in education. Of the older medieval orders, only the Franciscans and Dominicans had returned in any strength. Under the new and precarious conditions of the 1620s, each religious order had a modest oratory, with a rented house or lodgings for the priests. Bishop Comerford reported a passing whiff of persecution in 1630 during which all the "public oratories" of Waterford had been confiscated, religious communities disbanded, and a stop put to sermons and public ceremonies. Nearly half the town was ruinous at the time; there had been a recent plague, while the once proud fleet of Waterford could count no more than "two small barks". "Our townsmen especially", the bishop wrote, "are noted in all Ireland for eating of church livings of most part of this county and other counties too, without leave of them that be interested in them and that carry the burden of the care of souls, as well as if they had the Archbishop of Toledo's rents for their pains."

The increase in the number of friars naturally led to some differences with the diocesan clergy, one of whose spokesmen was Patrick Cahill of the diocese of Meath who framed a set of rather unlikely "propositions" which he fathered on the friars. Among them, for example, was the claim that religious superiors were more worthy than bishops! In 1631 no less than fifteen Dominicans, mostly priors including some from distant Connacht, gathered in Waterford to reject these propositions. Peter Strange was prior of Waterford at the time, but there were other more familiar faces in the group: Thomas Quirke, now prior of Tralee, Thomas Lee, prior of Kilmallock, and Vincent Hogan, prior of Lorrha in northern Tipperary. In the same year, and perhaps to mark the same occasion, Anastasia Maddan presented a fine chalice to the Dominicans "residing in Waterford" which is still preserved at Bridge Street.

The rebellion of 1641, ushering in a long civil war, made life more difficult for the clergy of Waterford without reducing their numbers or putting a stop to their work. After a siege in 1642, the Confederate forces took the city in the name of Charles I and even set up a printing-press there. Carlo Invernizzi, a papal adviser who came to Ireland in 1645, could not speak too highly of the faith of the citizens of Waterford. "The heretics call the city 'Little Rome', intending to insult them, but in my opinion this is a great compliment." Invernizzi also noted that the regular clergy had greatly increased since 1641 and that there were about 400 Dominicans in the country. Then came a fatal division in the ranks of the Confederation when some made their peace with the royalist leader Ormond. Rinuccini, the papal nuncio, disgusted with this development, called all the Irish clergy to Waterford in August 1646. From there they sent gun-powder and money to Eóin Roe O'Neill who thought, as they did, that this "peace" was a betrayal of Catholic and national interests. Before leaving for Kilkenny in September, Rinuccini issued at Waterford his solemn and regrettable excommunication of all who supported the treaty made with Ormond. In 1647 the papal nuncio, again at Waterford, consecrated some new bishops on whose support he could rely. Among them was the Dominican provincial, Terence Albert O'Brien, bishop of Emly, who was to be hanged at Limerick in 1651.

At the time of bishop O'Brien's consecration, there was a community of four Dominicans at Waterford to celebrate the occasion. Certainly they had a house of their own, if not an oratory, for the master general, living in more traditional quarters at Rome, was furious on learning in 1649 that there were "females" in the convent of Waterford. The idea of a lady house-keeper or cook, being quite novel to him, seemed to cry to heaven for vengeance. Meanwhile, the nuncio's censures afflicted even Waterford itself from about May 1648 when all the churches of the city were closed and the clergy forbidden to administer the sacraments. Six months later, bishop Comerford and his clergy

appealed to the nuncio to lift his censures so that the clergy might minister again. Among the signatories of this document was Peter Strange, prior of Waterford in 1648 as he had been in 1631.

These minor difficulties of house-keepers and censures faded into the background when Oliver Cromwell arrived to besiege the city in October 1649. Waterford held out for nine months and finally yielded in August 1650, not so much to Cromwell as to the plague. Several priests died while tending the sick in the dreadful pest-houses from which no one could expect to emerge alive. Among them were two Jesuits, an Augustinian and the Dominican prior Michael Cleary. There was also at least one diocesan priest, Canon Patrick White, who volunteered with Father Cleary when bishop Comerford appealed for priests to serve the dying. Before setting out to console the plague-stricken, the canon and the friar spent three days preparing their own souls by reception of the sacraments. Having heard the confessions of almost all the sufferers, these two heroic priests caught the infection and died together. Bishop Comerford estimated that 5,000 people died of plague within the diocese during 1650. By November, all the Catholics and their clergy were banished from Waterford. The bishop sailed to St Malo, never to return. In 1651, he wrote that "such priests as survived the plague were forced into exile".

Four Martyrs of Clonmel

The Dominicans settled at Clonmel about 1642 with the approval of bishop Comerford, probably on the grounds (true or false) that there had been a Dominican hospice or preaching station there in medieval times. Although rightly opposed by the Franciscans, already settled at Clonmel for four centuries, they did not leave the city until the 1660s. Strangely enough, this upstart Dominican "convent" of Clonmel had more martyrs within two years than many legitimate priories could number in seven centuries. All met their deaths soon after the surrender of the town to Cromwell's forces on 18 May 1650.

The first was James O'Reilly, described as an "outstanding poet", who is said to have come to Clonmel from Waterford to teach catechism. After the raising of the siege, he fled the city but lost his way and was found by the pursuing cavalry while reading his breviary on a hillside near Clonmel. He was promptly hacked to pieces. Since Fr O'Reilly came from Ulster and no one "fled the city" except the garrison and some camp-followers heading for Waterford by night, it seems more likely that he followed the commander Hugh O'Neill whose forces, almost entirely from Ulster, included two O'Reilly regiments. On entering Clonmel on 19 May, Cromwell found that the garrison had left, and in his own words: "very early this morning pursued them and fell

upon their rear of stragglers and killed above two hundred." These stragglers included wounded soldiers as well as women and children with whom any priest would have tended to delay.

The formal articles of surrender guaranteed the lives of civilians in Clonmel, but priests were excepted from quarter and those who sheltered them were liable to heavy penalties. Myler MacCraith, another Dominican and a native of Ballynomasna in the parish of Tubrid, went to Clonmel in 1650 when the siege was over and the city occupied by a Protestant garrison. Having said Mass there, he was giving viaticum to a sick man when he was caught with the pyx actually in his hand. The evidence was clear, the priest's trial correspondingly short, and he was immediately hanged.

Two other Dominicans of Clonmel met their deaths in 1651. Thomas O'Higgin, also arrested for saying Mass and hearing confessions, spent some time in prison before being publicly hanged at the Main Guard in April. William O'Connor, prior of Clonmel in 1648 and at the time of his death, may have died elsewhere, considering that in his case there was neither imprisonment nor trial. He was captured, mocked, stripped naked and killed with a sword.

From Cromwell to King William: 1651 - 1698

The period known with unconscious irony as the Commonwealth, during which these countries were ruled by a Lord Protector rather than by a king, began in Ireland with the wholesale expulsion of priests and friars. Among them were two Dominicans of Waterford, Peter and Richard Strange, brothers even by birth, who in 1651 found refuge in the Dominican convent of Salamanca. Many other friars lay in prison at Waterford in 1652, awaiting transportation to the Barbadoes and elsewhere; those who had "taken" them in the first place were paid a bounty of five pounds. In these circumstances, no priest concerned for his personal safety would have set foot in Waterford, and yet a Dominican from Connacht arrived in 1654 to attend the Catholics there. He was Hugh MacGoill of the convent of Rathfran near Killala, of whom we know only that he had once been a novice-master and was one of the senior Dominicans in Ireland. His ministry at Waterford ended within months, for he was captured and freely confessed that he was a priest. That he was then condemned and hanged goes almost without saying, but there is something particularly moving about the last detail: Father MacGoill was buried "with some ceremony" by the devout Catholics of the town.

Although, during Cromwell's regime, the reward offered for the capture of a priest was equal to that paid for shooting a wolf, there were no less than seventy-four Dominicans in Ireland in 1657. Better still, we have a list of their

names, though not of the areas in which they worked. Among them one finds Thomas Power, already at Waterford in 1627. There is also a Michael White, a Morgan Cleary, and two named William Purcell of whom one was a laybrother. In 1658 there were ten Dominicans in Munster including two in jail at Cork and Limerick. Arrangements were then made to send two more into the province and to order eight others from Spain to Ireland. The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 brought no immediate relief, for the prelates of Munster could write to Rome soon after to say that they were caring for the true faith which lay "like embers under the ashes of an eleven-year persecution".

During the second half of the 1660s, under the more tolerant regime of Charles II, some priests attempted to give the king greater control over the Irish church at the expense of the papacy. Their leader, Peter Walsh the Franciscan, had a Dominican lieutenant named John Reynolds, prior of Waterford in 1667. On his departure for Dublin in the same year, Reynolds was instructed to leave a subprior in Waterford to manage affairs; this was probably Edmund Power whom one finds at Waterford soon after. There seems to have been only a token Dominican presence in the city, even after the arrival of the great Bishop John Brennan in 1671, for there were only two Dominicans there in 1672 and only one in 1678. At least they had a rented oratory, even if not a proper house, for when there were two, each lived with some relative or friend. While mentioning them in a letter of 1672, bishop Brennan remarked: "They are held in high esteem for their exemplary life and learning." One of them was the Edmund Power mentioned above, living at Waterford in 1668 and still active there in 1675. The solitary Dominican of 1678 lived, according to the bishop, "in a private house where he says Mass and hears confessions; he is an exemplary man". A government proclamation of that year ordered all bishops to quit the country and dissolved all convents, priories and schools, but at Waterford the proclamation itself, posted outside the city walls, "was in part taken down and the rest of it besmeared". The people had seen too many proclamations of this kind to be much worried about them, and already sensed that Charles II must soon yield the throne, as he did in 1685, to his Catholic brother James II.

Keeping pace with this political development, the Dominican community gradually increased until there were five in residence in 1687. Two of these, Nicholas Wealsh and Vincent Smith, were novices who left for the continent a year later. The prior of the time was William Dwyer who had charge, as vicar, of all the Dominicans of Munster. His subprior was Hyacinth Wealsh, a priest who was "very painstaking about religious ceremonies". These were the friars of whom bishop Brennan wrote in November 1687. "There is another residence of the Dominican fathers of whom there are four with the prior...The Dominicans teach philosophy to young laymen...These religious (meaning also



Our Lady of Waterford

the Franciscans and Jesuits) live in common. They have public chapels where they celebrate Mass, preach and hear confessions and have their confraternities...The religious, particularly those of St Francis and St Dominic, go about in the religious habit and are beginning to restore their ancient monasteries and to build some splendid chapels, decently and sufficiently commodious for ecclesiastical functions, in the city where they reside."

It is unlikely that the Dominicans made any effort to recover their ancient convent or church at Blackfriars in 1687, but they do seem to have built a "splendid chapel" within the city. Apart from the bishop's testimony, just quoted, there is an interesting detail in the decisions of the provincial chapter, a legislative meeting, held at Lorrha in 1688. Each Dominican in Ireland was told to say one Mass for the "magistrates and our benefactors at Waterford". No other convent in the country is mentioned in those terms, and one of the leading lights at that chapter, one of the four elected "definitors", was none other than William O'Dwyer, prior of Waterford from 1687 to 1689. Add to this that his second-in-command, Hyacinth Wealsh, was so "painstaking about religious ceremonies", and that there were two novices in the house. The existence of a Dominican chapel at Waterford, perhaps on the site of the present cathedral, can hardly be denied. At Lorrha, the mood of the brethren in 1688 was so euphoric that they adapted the Song of Songs — "for now the winter of persecution is past; the flowers appear in the countryside" — and arranged to open a house of studies for young Dominicans at Galway.

The statuette of Our Lady of Waterford venerated in the present church at Bridge Street most probably dates from this time. According to Catriona McLeod, it dates from the seventeenth century and "is the work of a highly skilled sculptor of the Seville School". This wooden statue, said to be of pear or cedar, is only fourteen inches high, and originally had crowns, since replaced, for both Mother and Child. It is brilliantly painted in old Spanish polychrome of scarlet, black and burnished gold. The larger Dominican statue of Our Lady of Galway bears a crown dated 1683 and there is no reason why one should not assign the smaller Waterford statue to the same hopeful period. Artistically, it is in the baroque style and therefore more likely to belong to the end rather than to the early decades of the seventeenth century.

From March 1689, when James II landed at Kinsale, to October 1691 when Limerick capitulated to the forces of William III, Ireland was a battle-ground for the "War of the Two Kings". William O'Dwyer, the energetic prior of Waterford, became an army chaplain and never came back. For that matter, neither did James II who sailed for France from Waterford itself even before the siege of Limerick. The Dominicans survived with a community of three in 1693 and 1695. They even increased to five members in 1696, but that

is the end of our record and (for a while) the end of the Dominicans in Waterford. The Williamite war made few martyrs; even the terms of the Treaty of Limerick were reasonable; but the Protestant ascendancy, once again in the saddle, soon made short work of bishops and friars. By 1696, the regular clergy at Waterford were "living in disguise in private houses". By December of the same year, all the clergy of Waterford were hauled off to jail and later brought before the Protestant bishop and dean to testify whether they were of the regular or secular clergy. Twenty-one proved to be diocesan priests and so were soon released; the eight religious may also have been set free, but they were banished with all the bishops and regulars of Ireland in 1698. In that year twenty-six religious were shipped from Waterford to the continent, some to Lisbon and Corunna, but most to Nantes, St Malo and Dunkirk. Among them were the Dominicans John Coghlan, prior in 1696, who died at Rennes in 1702, and Hyacinth Wealsh, who had done so much for the "splendid chapel" at Waterford. Father Wealsh, in 1704, died an exile at Louvain. One at least, Dominic Carroll, escaped the dragnet, for although he was subprior at Waterford in 1696, he found safety at Limerick where he was appointed prior in 1703.

And so the seventeenth century, so full of hopes and fears, of martyrdoms and splendid chapels, came to an end for the Irish Dominicans with the most complete and effective act of banishment they had ever known. What few goods they had — chalices, statues, books — they entrusted to friendly merchants before boarding ship to arrive penniless on a foreign shore. Yet some remained and others still returned within the year, even at the risk of spending the rest of their lives in a filthy jail.

Penal Era and Golden Age

This is the title of a modern book on the eighteenth century, a “golden age” for those who belonged to the Anglican ascendancy but a “penal era” for anyone else, including Presbyterians. The century opened at Waterford with the building of the “Big Chapel”, now the cathedral, “upon the wall of one of the four chapels of Charles II’s time”, and the diocesan clergy were duly registered in 1704. While the friars were safely in exile, so far as the government was concerned, there were still ninety Dominicans in Ireland in 1703, and eighty in 1709. Naturally, these outlaws were mostly in Connacht, where they were safe enough once they kept out of the towns. There were very few in Munster where, again in 1709, an unnamed Dominican, thought by his confrères at Louvain to be Antoninus Kent, “had been captured in Waterford and sent to North Africa to be sold as a slave”. Whatever the truth of the report, the same priest was living happily at Cashel in the 1730s. Dominic Flanagan, an older Dominican of Lorrha, was captured at a Mass-rock at Kilfeakle, west of Cashel, about 1710. Just before his arrest, he threw his rosary over his shoulder into the crowd; it was caught by one of the congregation whose descendants, the Cranleys of Waterford, still preserved this sacred memento in 1957.



Chalice presented by Fr Patrick Marshall O.P. in 1721.

The first Dominican prior of Waterford to appear after the exile was a young man named Thomas Burke, perhaps a native of Connacht, in 1713. Patrick Marshall, prior of Waterford from 1683 to 1685, was by this time working in London and sufficiently rich to present two chalices in 1721, one to the Black Abbey at Kilkenny, the other to the "convent" of Waterford, where it is still preserved. Another surviving chalice was presented to the Dominicans of Waterford in 1729 by Thomas and Maria Mulcherin née Nagle. Despite these chalices, it would seem that the Dominicans had no chapel of their own at any time during the century. The official "Report on the State of Popery", drawn up in 1731, offers no detail except that "the five friars in St Stephen's parish are reported to officiate mostly abroad in private houses in the country". Some, then, worked as curates in the city; others preached and quested for alms within the traditional "limits" or territory of the convent. The late Fr Benedict O'Sullivan conjectured in 1967 that their house in Stephen Street, on the far side from Kiely's Brewery, was about six doors up from the junction with Newgate Street; and that this residence of 1731 was none other than the house they had occupied in the 1680s.

And who were the "five friars" of 1731? One was Francis Conmy, prior in 1732, who had been "preaching with great success for ten years". Another was Antoninus Sall, professed in 1682 at Louvain "for the convent of Waterford", who had recently returned to his native city after a distinguished academic career at Rome and Lisbon. In those days novices made profession as "sons" of particular convents rather than for the Irish province as a whole. The staffing, therefore, of the convent of Waterford largely depended on its own "sons" of whom only three were known to the provincial in 1734: Antoninus Sall, James Dominic Ferrall and Robert Elliott. Ferrall or Farrell, a missionary in Ireland from 1719, left for Lisbon in 1735 as confessor of the Irish Dominican nuns. Robert Elliott, stationed at Seville in 1731 and 1743, served at Waterford briefly if at all. The same provincial of 1734 noted that his subjects at Waterford lived in community and had "considerable goods", meaning vestments, chalices, books and no doubt the statue of Our Lady of Waterford.

A new prior called John Newman raised the problem of staffing towards the end of 1736. Apart from old Father Sall, two novices shortly to be professed and Dominic Ferrall at Lisbon, Waterford had no "sons" whatever. And yet the population of Waterford was large and the people much devoted to the Rosary. Fr Newman asked that some sons of other convents be "transfiliated" to Waterford. The master general granted him two in 1737 — Peter Costelloe from Roscommon and Peter Lagnan from Strade, Co. Mayo — while expressing surprise that novices had not been received sooner in such a populous city. Father Newman returned to Kilkenny after his term of office, Father Sall died in 1739, Father Costelloe spent the rest of his life in

Waterford, but Peter Laghnan, the priest from Strade, went to France instead. His place was taken in 1737 by James Sexton, a young priest from Louvain, who soon built up a reputation as "a celebrated preacher at the Big Chapel" and remained at Waterford until his death.

During the last general persecution of the clergy in 1744 the sheriffs searched "a house in Stephen Street called the friary" but found that the Dominican occupants had "absconded". In other words, the magistrates gave friendly warning of their intended arrival so that they might find the house empty. They also submitted the names of the various friars and Jesuits in such a way that it would be difficult for anyone to find or prosecute them; most of the priests were given the wrong Christian names, or ones they seldom used, while all were lumped together as "reputed monks, friars and Jesuits". Among the nine names supplied, one can distinguish three Dominicans: James Sexton, Peter Costelloe and Patrick Bray.

Dominican Nuns in Waterford

The general chapter of the order, held at Bologna in 1725, permitted the establishment at Waterford of a monastery of nuns, no doubt at the request of the Irish provincial, Fr Stephen McEgan, who attended the meeting. Ten years passed before another provincial, prompted by Rome to apply himself to the matter, obtained in October 1736 the written approval of William O'Mara, vicar general of Waterford. Father O'Mara, like everyone else concerned, was under the false impression that the old church of St Catherine, originally a foundation of Augustinian canons regular, had been a Dominican nunnery dedicated to St Catherine of Sienna. On this understanding, the vicar general agreed that: "the having a religious house of nuns of said Order here will be an ornament to the Catholic religion, and means to instruct the young ladies of this city and country in piety and Christian education."

With this permission in hand, the provincial Father Bernard MacHenry sent two nuns to Waterford: Sr Anastasia Wyse of Channel Row in Dublin, member of a prominent Waterford family, and Sr Margaret Browne of the Galway community. Both lived on the interest of their dowries; the capital sums remained in their convents of origin. The two nuns rented a house, perhaps in the area of the original St Catherine's, in which they began to teach girl boarders and after some time gave the habit to Catherine Wyse, a niece of the prioress. After Catherine made profession, with the approval of the new bishop, Sylvester Lloyd O.F.M., the sisters proceeded to admit a second postulant named Mary Pilkington. It was then the first difficulty arose, for while Mary was still a novice the infant community began to doubt whether their monastery had a proper legal title. Failing to find any evidence that there had ever been a monastery of Dominican nuns in Waterford before, the nuns

felt obliged to apply to Rome to set matters right. Bishop Lloyd rallied to their aid in July 1740 with a document approving "proper measures for removing all doubts and scruples, so as to prove an ancient foundation or obtain a new one if necessary". This problem was solved in May 1742 when the Pope himself regularised both the foundation of 1736 and the profession of the novices. The nuns of Waterford flourished until there were six in the community in 1756. It was then a young community, for all save the prioress were under thirty-seven. But nonetheless it was doomed to close in 1758 for want of money. The prioress, Sr Anastasia Wyse, returned to her original monastery in Dublin. Sr Joanna O'Flaherty went to Galway and Sr Charlotte Wyse to Drogheda. Another sister, Margaret O'Dunne, dispersed with the others in 1758, cannot be traced. Sisters Mary Mean and Catherine Ayres, "the sole survivors at Waterford" in 1767, were living with relatives in the city. The death of Sister Ayres was recorded by the provincial chapter of 1789.

At the opening in 1867 of the church in Bridge Street, the provincial met Napoleon Bonaparte Wyse who later wrote to say: "I was much flattered by your allusion to an ancestress of mine, Catherine Wyse, of whom I have an original portrait, whose object in life was to have founded a religious establishment of the Dominican order."

Neither House nor Chapel: 1745 - 1784

The absolute number of friars in Ireland reached a peak about 1741 after which it gradually dropped for a full century. As the penal laws affecting the clergy lost their sting, the friars gradually declined. Most of their rural convents eventually collapsed for want of men and money, so that the friars survived chiefly in the towns. Thanks to their chapels and confraternities they could earn a livelihood without becoming parish priests or curates. They were also able to maintain some sort of conventual existence which both guaranteed continuity and attracted at least some recruits. Such was the normal pattern as, for example, at Galway, Dublin and Cork. The Dominicans of Waterford ought to have survived by the same means, but in fact it is a wonder that they survived at all.

To start with, they had no public chapel of their own at any time between 1698 and 1867. Worse still, their convent or residence in Stephen Street, occupied from about 1720, was closed after the raid of 1744 and never functioned again as a convent in any sense of the word. When the Roman authorities complained in 1751 that Irish friars were not living "the common life", the Dominican provincial replied that while he still had subjects at Kilkenny and Waterford, their convents had been closed six years before. In such circumstances, he asked, how could they live the common life, or would it

even be prudent for them to do so? The arrival in 1747 of a new bishop of Waterford, Dr Peter Creagh, brought little joy to the Franciscans or Jesuits of the diocese. When the Dominicans wished to open a chapel at Waterford in 1752, bishop Creagh refused his permission outright. Whether they liked it or not, each order of regulars at Waterford was obliged by an agreement between the bishop and the Protestant corporation to keep its numbers down to a certain level. The Dominicans were limited to three, and three priests (making allowance for old age and sickness) would not perhaps have been enough to run a city chapel.

All they could do in the circumstances was to assist at the parochial chapels in the city and carry out their traditional quest, which in itself involved preaching and catechising, in rural areas. This quest led to a running dispute with the Dominicans of Rosbercon near New Ross over the right to beg in five particular parishes. The matter was settled in favour of Waterford but the names of the parishes in question do not appear and all one can glean from the record is that James Sexton was prior of Waterford in 1754.

The Dominicans of the city may have been prevented from sharing a house, but at least no one could stop them sharing a grave in the ancient cemetery of St Patrick's. Canon Power has preserved what little remained of the damaged headstone in 1937: "...the remains of the Revd. Father S.Sall, Jas. Farrell, William Sheasty, Ja... Costelloe, James Sexton, Ter.^{ce} O'Connor of the said H. Order, James Daun dep.^{ed} June the... lived in Waterford". Since this inscription was partly illegible fifty years ago, one can understand why some of the Christian names do not correspond to those found in other records.

Fr Antoninus Sall died in 1739 and James Dominic Farrell about 1748. Peter Costelloe, working at Waterford from 1737, died there about 1755. Fr James Sheasty or Cheasty, bearer of an ancient Waterford name, returned sick from Lisbon in 1751 and died young in 1757. James Sexton died in Michael Street in 1773 after a ministry of thirty-six years in Waterford. Terence O'Connor may have been the Dominican called "Vincent" in religion, a son of Waterford and a student at Louvain in the late 1760s. Fr Terence O'Connor died at Waterford in 1775 having fallen from his horse and fractured his skull while returning by night from Passage. Many priests met their death in that way. The last name on our tombstone is that of Fr Duane who did not die until 1815.

Oddly enough, this headstone does not bear the names of the two most prominent Dominicans of the period, nor the name of a second Fr Farrell, the most obscure. Patrick Bray, for instance, resident at Waterford from 1742, was prior at various times, prior also of Rosbercon in 1774, and although "an infirm

gouty man" was elected provincial in 1778. He ruled the province from Waterford, if not from his bed, and died in office before summer 1781. Three autographed books from his library still survive. Most of Father Bray's work of visitation around the country was done in the summer of 1779 by his vicar, Denis O'Connor, who first came to Waterford in 1757 and died there in 1787. Our tombstone does not mention Father O'Connor either. So far as one can judge, he spent most of his time as a pastor in the diocese, at Clogheen in 1759 and later at Ballylooby where a chalice of 1777 bearing his name is still preserved. The famous Fr Nicholas Sheehy of Clogheen, victim of judicial murder in 1766, is said to have been succeeded for a year or two by Fr James Farrell, "probably a Dominican". There was indeed a Dominican named Farrell at Waterford in 1766, but who he was or where he now lies buried one cannot say.

"This Poor Pitiful Establishment": 1782 - 1865

The connection of Waterford with the Dominicans of Limerick revived in 1782 with the arrival of Fr James Anthony Duane, or Daun as he spelt the name himself, a "son" of the convent of Kilmallock, just home after ten years at St Croix in the Danish West Indies. Taking advantage of the emancipation act of the same year, he leased a house in Thomas Street at an annual rent of ten pounds for eighty-eight years. In 1784, Father Duane made over his interest in the house to two fellow-Dominicans, Denis O'Connor and Edmund Bourke, for a hundred pounds. But since Fr Bourke left for Newfoundland in 1785 and Fr Connor died in 1787, the Thomas Street residence reverted to Fr Duane. He was remembered as a "fine old man", methodical by nature, but the two registers he kept — one for the Holy Name confraternity from 1786 and the other for his private use from 1790 to 1797 — have both been lost. When Fr Duane went briefly to Kilmallock as prior in 1787, the other two Dominicans at Waterford, Nicholas Bourke and John Kirwan, were in private lodgings. A friendly Franciscan mentioned in a letter of 1788 that they would "never be able to subsist on this poor pitiful establishment. God help us here".

The "establishment" was the agreement whereby the Dominicans preached and said Mass at the parish chapels of the city. Perhaps they also attended funerals, but they were scarcely ever called upon for baptisms or marriages. They assisted the parish priests "when called upon" but also "quested at chapels and among the farmers". Not surprisingly, Nicholas Burke too set off in 1789 for Newfoundland and the United States to find a means of subsistence, leaving Fathers Duane, Kirwan and a newcomer named Cornelius O'Ryan to struggle on in Waterford. Duane and O'Ryan were then living in Thomas Street and Kirwan "in a private house." In the meantime, the final collapse of the priory of Rosbercon enabled the Waterford Dominicans to

range further afield, performing baptisms at Slieverue in the diocese of Ossory between 1798 and 1801. One of them was a young priest, Augustine Smith, just home from Lisbon in 1799, who was to be Father Duane's sole companion at Waterford in 1801. Cornelius O'Ryan had by then gone to Kilkenny while Fr Kirwan had apparently died.

Neither of the survivors seems to have lived at Thomas Street. Fr Smith, in 1802, lived at "Heathfield", Waterford. Father Duane still owned the house which he sublet to another, so that there was an annual "profit rent" of almost twenty pounds. This he assigned in 1804 to the new bishop, Dr John Power, on the grounds that "the fee paid for said house was not by the Order or for the Order in particular". Under a new arrangement in 1808 the bishop accepted the property in trust so that the profit-rent would "be divided and given by me and my successors to such one or more of the Dominican order as shall reside in Waterford and be there employed on the mission".

The emancipation act of 1782, which had made possible the purchase of the house in Thomas Street, also permitted the opening of Catholic schools, while the French Revolution of 1789 had made the establishment of seminaries in Ireland an absolute necessity. The archbishop of Cashel mentioned in 1791 that "some small academies" had already "been opened in Waterford, Cloyne and Thurles for the general education of Catholic youth". Two academies of this kind were being conducted by parish priests in Waterford during the 1790s but it was not until 1807 that Bishop Power actually built a "new seminary" to replace both academies on the corner of Manor Hill. The Dominican Francis O'Finan, later bishop of Killala, who lived at Waterford from 1805 to 1812, was a lecturer at this college, dedicated to St John. Two other Dominicans, Henry Creighton and Augustine Smith, conducted a third academy located first in William Street, later in Newtown Lodge and by 1810 in Bakehouse Lane. Father Creighton, originally of the English province, had spent twenty years teaching rhetoric, Greek and Hebrew to the Portuguese Dominicans at Lisbon. He first appears at Waterford in 1804 performing a baptism at Slieverue. By 1814 he had removed to Cork where he taught the young Batt Russell who would later establish the Order at Bridge Street. Then he moved on in 1817 to Trinidad where he died penniless in 1820.

On the death of Father Duane in 1815 at the age of eighty-four, there was a slight break in the Dominican presence at Waterford. Since the old priest's original priory, Kilmallock, no longer existed, Fr Simon Harrigan, prior of the nearest convent at Limerick, wrote to a layman in Waterford asking that the image of the Blessed Virgin and also the books belonging to the convent of Waterford be sent on to Limerick at once. The old statue of Our Lady of

Waterford found an honourable home on a side-altar at St Saviour's, Limerick, and was credited there with many cures.

With the appointment of bishop Robert Walsh in July 1817, matters took a turn for the better. Father Bernard MacDermott appeared as prior of Waterford in that year, though without any subjects at his command. Another Dominican, Michael Cavanagh, lived elsewhere in the diocese, apparently at Lismore. The new bishop even permitted "the revival of a convent in Waterford which had not existed for more than a hundred years". In July 1819, Fr John O'Connor replaced Fr MacDermott as prior and had a young friar from Connacht, James McNicholas, resident with him at Waterford. Unfortunately, differences arose between the bishop and some of his clergy, so that bishop Walsh went to Rome in 1820 and died there before his case was settled. From May 1820 until his death on 1 October 1821, he was lodged and nursed by the Irish Dominicans at Santa Maria della Pace where Father O'Finan, formerly of Waterford, was then superior.

The year 1826 witnessed the arrival of Fr Michael Molony, a native of Limerick, who was to serve the cathedral until 1865. He came with his mother who, no doubt, served as his house-keeper at New Bailey Street, John's Hill, and from 1830 at Broad Street until her death in 1840. The old Dominican house in Thomas Street was assigned unconditionally to Fr Molony in 1830 by the executors of bishop John Power, one of whom was Edmund Ignatius Rice. He was thus able to sublet the premises to Henry Downes, distiller, and meet some of his own expenses with the profit-rent.

Fr Barthomew Russell O.P. of Cork was less than happy with this minimal presence in Waterford. After a friendly visit to Fr Molony in the summer of 1831, he wrote to a friend: "What a pity it is that a disinterested, active and intelligent member of the order is not in Waterford? The people are most anxious for a Dominican establishment. It is much wanted in the most respectable and rising part of the town. The bishop, Molony tells me, could not, he thinks, be opposed — and yet though Molony is convinced of the necessity and practicability of founding a house, he will not, he says, undertake it, because he does not wish to live in community." In point of fact the bishop, Dr William Abraham, was utterly opposed to the idea and absolutely refused in 1832 to admit a second Dominican, John O'Regan, on his "chapel funds" or establishment. Dr Abraham also denied that he was under any "solemn contract" to do so. As things stood, the bishop could not even provide for all the priests of the diocese then coming from St John's College and Maynooth. Father O'Regan, who was to have been prior of Waterford, went to Rome as prior of San Clemente instead.

This episode drew an interesting comment from Father O'Finan, then resident at the Minerva in Rome. "Who is to replace O'Regan at Waterford where the Catholics are so much attached to the Dominicans? When I look back on the years (1805-1812) I spent in that good city, I cannot but feel sentiments of gratitude and satisfaction. I hope you (the provincial) don't give up the holy idea of founding a church there for our order: you could not choose a fitter or a better place...When lecturer in the Waterford seminary I was acquainted with Dr Abraham. He was then a modest, genteel young man; he certainly did not then promise to be a persecutor of the Dominicans. But, as the old saying is: *"honores mutant mores."*

From 1853, Father Molony lived at the Manor in a house rented from the Christian Brothers. Every day he went down to the cathedral to say Mass. He was greatly venerated by the priests and people of Waterford who considered him an excellent preacher. His personal life must have been very frugal for he left the immense sum of £780, with the house in Thomas Street, to the order shortly before his death on 7 October 1865. He was buried in the aisle on the "epistle" side of St John's, before the altar of Our Lady.

A fine monument in the churchyard of Ballybricken bears the following inscription. "Of your charity pray for the repose of the souls of the Revd Michael Joseph Molony O.P. who died the 7th October 1865. And of his mother Mrs. Molony who died in 1841 [read 1840]. And Br Antoninus Monahan O.P. who died 10th November 1910. Patrick Moloney died 14-6-25. His wife Mary died 25-3-72. Requiescant in Pace. Amen."

Bridge Street: the Order Restored

The story of the restoration which so unexpectedly followed is best told in the unpublished *Memoirs* of Fr Thomas Conway. "At his death Fr Molony had saved several hundred pounds. It may be that he had some expectation of a revival of the convent. If he had the hope, he was the only Father of ours who had such a hope. At the time of the Month's Mind, the bishop, Dr Dominic O'Brien, requested the provincial Father Russell to take charge of all the ceremonies, to celebrate all according to the rite of the Order...A great many of our Fathers came from all parts...After dinner, Dr O'Brien in a conversation with Father Russell, expressed to him his wish that the Dominicans should take their place once more in Waterford — not as before, but to erect a canonical convent. Father Russell did not dare expect such a favour; he and all thought our relations with Waterford were all ended at the death of Father Molony."

The provincial mentioned here was Bartholomew Russell of Cork, chief architect and inspiration of Dominican revival in the last century, who had visited Fr Molony in 1831 and encouraged him, some months before his death, to leave his money to the order. Immediately after the bishop's most generous offer, Fr Russell with some senior Dominicans held an urgent council at their hotel. One was sent out to buy a map of the city. They decided to look for a place in Bridge Street in order to encroach as little as possible on the parish churches and convenience people who might wish to cross the river from Ferrybank. Fr Russell bought an old corn-store in Bridge Street. With that, the Dominicans went home, leaving matters in the hands of a good friend, Fr Patrick Nolan, administrator of St John's.

Thanks to the ingenuity of a local builder named Moran, the old "corn-store" was transformed into a modest, temporary chapel. The house next to it on the southern side was bought to serve as a priory. The two buildings, popularly known as "The Little Friary", together occupied the site of the present convent. Father Russell came back to preach at the formal opening of the chapel for public worship on 31 March 1867, having been assured by Fr Nolan that newspaper reports of Fenian unrest in the city were quite unfounded. The three members of the new community — Fr Thomas Deely, Fr Thomas Boylan and Br Dominic Gogarty — moved into the adjoining house under the banner of "strict observance", introduced into the order by Père

Jandel and fostered in Ireland by Father Russell. Thus Waterford became the last pre-Reformation priory which the Dominicans managed to re-establish.

While these founders of the restored Dominican community were settling in at Waterford, they took no practical steps towards the building of a church. But men of greater talent and initiative soon arrived: Fr James Wheeler in 1868, Frs Patrick Mullins and Patrick Flood in 1871. Fr Wheeler, a born organiser, became prominently identified with the progress of the new foundation and later with the building of the church. The fact that Fr Flood was to become archbishop of Port of Spain says enough about his ability. Fr Mullins was at the time even more distinguished, for he resigned the priorship of Tallaght in order to succeed Fr Deely as prior in Waterford. Another pioneer member of the community was Fr Dominic Slattery, uncle of Frs Thaddeus and Ambrose Crofts. Thaddeus died at Waterford in 1926, while his brother Ambrose became prior of the house in the 1930s.

The active search for a larger site on which to build a proper church worthy both of the Order and of the city, began only in autumn 1871. The first step was to acquire various tenements on Bridge Street and O'Connell Street, then Queen Street, which hemmed in the "Little Friary" on two sides. One of the six properties, Mrs O'Dwyer's tavern, known as the Bridge Hotel, stood on the corner with a frontage on both streets. All belonged to the Corporation, but the matter had to go to the Lords of the Treasury before the Dominicans eventually got possession of the tenements in October 1873 at an annual rent of sixty-five pounds.

This achievement came just in time, for Fr Russell's "corn-store" chapel was on the point of collapse. Mass was celebrated there for the last time on 9 November. All the seats, confessionals, altars, windows and gas-fittings were then removed and the place demolished. Prosser's store in Queen Street was quickly transformed into a second temporary chapel for £186 without the help of any contractor. The priests used "direct labour" by simply hiring men for the day. This second chapel was blessed by the prior on 15 November when Mass was said there for the first time. In the meanwhile, all the other tenements were levelled. Whatever valuable materials they contained were sold at a profit for £251 and the rest dumped on the quay to be used as ballast.

Building the New Church

The penny collection begun in April 1873 brought in only £6 a week, whereas the first estimate for the new church was £8,000. Fr Wheeler rose to the occasion by calling a public meeting in the chapel in December 1873. After his impassioned plea that "the people of Waterford in the 19th century will do

what their forefathers did in the 13th century: will build for the children of St Dominic a church that will be worthy of Waterford and a suitable temple to Almighty God", subscriptions to the amount of £1,200 were handed in. The priests then visited every house in the city, voluntary workers collected contributions systematically, and a group of ladies held a grand bazaar which raised exactly as much money as Fr Wheeler's public meeting.

By the beginning of 1874 plans for the new church had already been prepared by Mr George Goldie of the London firm of architects, Goldie, Child and Goldie. Mr Goldie was no stranger to the Dominicans, for he had recently planned the magnificent sanctuary of their church at Cork. Nor was he a stranger to Waterford, since he had already designed St John's Seminary, the Good Shepherd convent, and an extension to the Ursuline convent. Curiously, he chose a Romanesque design, reminiscent of 17th-century Italy or Spain, rather than the fashionable neo-Gothic. Since the Dominicans of Waterford were enjoying a renaissance themselves, it was natural enough that they should want "the spirit of the Renaissance to be embodied in their church". The result was a most beautiful church unlike any other in the city, the first notable building on the skyline for visitors approaching the city from the north, a church which recalls in stone Waterford's old title of "Little Rome".

The contract for the building was given to Mr John Ryan of Waterford whose initial tender was for slightly more than £12,000. He immediately cordoned off the site and levelled the area, but had to do extensive piling because of the soft subsoil: the river mud which lined this part of the city before the present magnificent quay was built about 1705. On 3 May 1874 bishop John Power laid the foundation-stone in the presence of thousands, many of whom arrived on special trains from Clonmel and Kilkenny or by the river-steamer *Ida* from New Ross. Father Tom Burke O.P., the greatest Irish preacher of the time, paid his first visit to Waterford to give an eloquent sermon on the text: "The Lord loves the threshold of Sion." The fine chalice of 1874 was probably presented to mark the occasion. It is inscribed: "The gift of Mr and Mrs Columb Kennedy, Tubrid Castle, Co Kilkenny, to St Saviour's church of the Order of Preachers, Waterford." The silver trowel used at the ceremony is also preserved at Bridge Street.

The newspaper account of the great day gives a useful description of the church about to be built. "The style of architecture will be the Italian. It will consist of a nave and aisles, 86 feet long by 62 feet wide; a choir and chancel, 33 feet long by 25 feet wide; two side-chapels, spacious sacristies and confraternity room, with a tower rising to the height of 105 feet, the exterior ornamented with a richly decorated front...The interior will have a roof richly framed and panelled with an arcade of seven arches separating the nave from

the aisles, supported by polished grey granite columns, on richly carved Corinthian capitals of the Florentine type. The choir will be covered with a dome, and a smaller one will surmount the Rosary chapel, both to be richly ornamented." The Corinthian capitals mentioned here were carved by Messrs Neill and Pearse of Dublin, the Pearse in question being the father of the patriot brothers Patrick and William who were to die in 1916.



The sanctuary at Bridge Street, unveiled in 1879.

Since the whole project was more ambitious than funds allowed, and part of the site was occupied by the temporary chapel, it was decided to cut out for the time being some features of the original plan: the side-chapels, the sacristy and the upper part of the tower. Between 1875 and 1877 some local families — Henebery, Power and Cody — paid outright for three of the pillars of Cornish granite in memory of their dead, as can be seen from the brass tablets at the base of each. Tom Burke the preacher came again to Waterford and raised £200 by giving two lectures at the cathedral in January 1875. Meanwhile, the ordinary systematic work of house-to-house collection went on, so that the real “builders” of the church, in 1875 as in 1226, were the citizens of Waterford. The completed nave and aisles — which means the whole of the present church from the door to the line of the altar-rails — were consecrated on 2 December 1877 by bishop John Power assisted by two other bishops: Dr Thomas Croke of Cashel who gave his name to Croke Park and Dr William Fitzgerald of Ross who was a close friend of the Dominicans both in Waterford and Cork. Tom Burke preached yet again after High Mass and Fr Batt Russell during the evening devotions. On the spur of the moment, Fr Wheeler held another of his “public meetings” immediately after the ceremony and collected £400.

This first phase in the building of the church left the community with a debt of £2,000, while the contractor estimated that it would cost £4,000 to complete the task. Since “times were bad”, the Dominicans decided to change tactics and do the rest themselves by direct labour under an experienced foreman. In less than a year they completed the tower, built the apse and sacristy, and even provided statues for the façade and clerestory, for exactly half the contractor’s estimate. The high altar, built by Leonardi of Rome, was the gift of true friends, John and Joan McEnery. Mr McEnery, as manager of Downes’ distillery, lived in Thomas Street in the very house first leased by Father Duane in 1782. The same couple donated a magnificent monstrance, still in use, in 1883. Mr McEnery is said to have ended his days with the Dominicans in Bridge Street. St Joseph’s altar was erected by Mr O’Neill-Power of Snowhill as a monument to his wife who died in October 1878 and was buried behind the altar. This too was made abroad by the firm of Robert at Paris.

With the end of all essential work on the church came the last of the great religious ceremonies which had marked its progress: the solemn unveiling of the high altar on 16 February 1879. Bishop John Power again presided while bishop Fitzgerald of Ross delivered a “masterly discourse” lasting fifty minutes. When the screen concealing the high altar was drawn aside, the congregation wondered at “the rare, costly and deftly inlaid marbles...the sublime statue of Our Saviour...and the adoring angels on either side”. Father Flood, who had done so much for St Saviour’s, gave the evening sermon. The

three statues of Our Lord, St Catherine and St Dominic were already in place on the façade. The bell-tower or campanile was complete. Within the nave the "splendid series" of statues of Dominican saints, six on each side, were "lit by the clerestory windows, glazed in intricate patterns of tinted glass".

The statue of the Sacred Heart in white Carrara marble which dominated the altar and the church in 1879, was a gift from the Rosary confraternity. On the erection of the present altar in 1951, the statue was removed to the hall adjoining the church and there remained until 1967 when the National Graves Association set it on a pedestal on the Quay as a memorial to the patriot dead of Ireland.

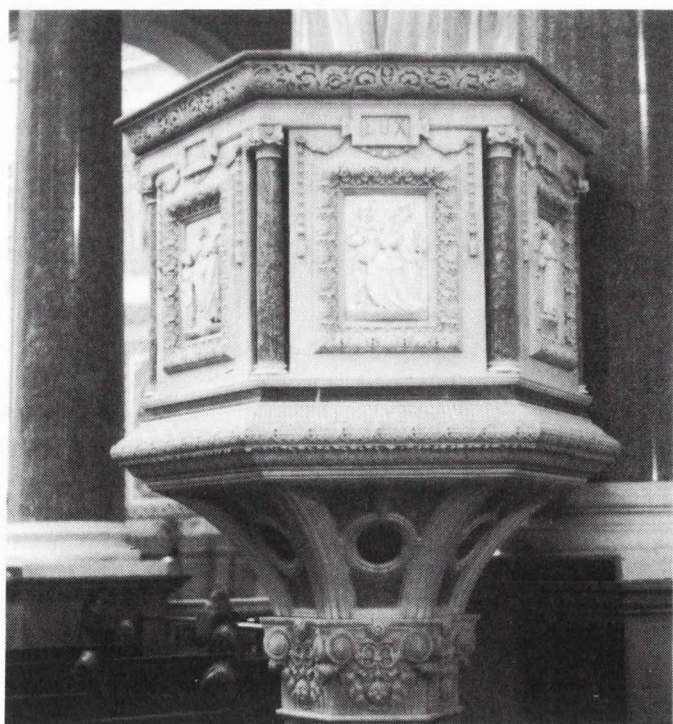
Temporary Quarters

While all this work was being done on the church, the dwelling-place of the community in Bridge Street had become so dilapidated that it had to be abandoned. In October 1877 they took out a three-year lease on No. 3 King Street, that section of the present O'Connell St which runs from Thomas Street to Gladstone Street. Thirty years later, while reporting the death in Trinidad of archbishop Flood, the *Waterford News* remarked that: "During his stay in Waterford the Dominican Fathers dwelt at some distance from their church and might be seen at early morn leave their temporary residence (opposite our office) to begin those labours which were often protracted until a late hour and to be then resumed and end only with night." The present convent in Bridge Street was planned by the community, built by direct labour for £1,000 within the space of five months, and the entire cost defrayed by the people of Waterford with some help from other Dominican houses in Ireland. The community took possession of their new home in July 1880. Cantillon's store, which then stood on part of the present garden, burned down in 1886. Thanks to the generosity of the Corporation, already shown time and time again, the community obtained the site at the nominal rent of a pound a year, although it had been twenty pounds before. Another piece of ground "adjoining Denny's bacon factory" was granted by the Corporation on the same terms in 1891.

Whatever use was made of these sites, the community had no garden whatever until about 1903. Right beside them to the south was the barm factory and bakery of a Mr MacDonald. A new prior, Fr Andrew Skelly, arranged "an exchange of ground" whereby Mr MacDonald was able to set up his premises slightly farther away, receiving £300 as compensation for the disturbance. The advantage to the Dominicans was a larger space for a garden and somewhat fresher air. The wreckage of this bakery, last owned by a Mr Lonergan, may still be seen to the south-east of the garden. The famous

biscuit-makers, Jacobs of Dublin, are said to have begun their career on this very spot behind the houses of Bridge Street. The same Father Skelly travelled to Newbridge in December 1903 to bury Catherine Shields, Fr Molony's last house-keeper who had helped to set up the first Dominican house in Bridge Street, the "Little Friary", in 1867.

No improvements could be made to the church for quite a while after the unveiling of the high altar in 1879. Accumulated debts of £6,000 had first to be paid, and this was done during the energetic priorship of Fr Albert Ryan (1883-1889). He was a born organiser who arranged a bazaar on a scale not previously seen in Waterford and left the priory entirely free of debt. "We can now afford", noted the house-chronicler, "to pay more attention to the church."



The pulpit installed at Bridge Street in 1890.

The two great improvements of 1890, namely the pulpit and altar-rails, cost the community nothing, since they came as free gifts. Miss Catherine Barron of Catherine St, a Dominican tertiary and the last of an ancient family, died in 1888 leaving 375 books to the conventual library, £400 for a new pulpit and other sums for various pious purposes. The beautiful marble pulpit one

can still admire today was designed by Goldie of London and first used on 23 February 1890 by the prior, Dominic Slattery, who preached appropriately enough on "The Word of God". The new marble altar-rails, also designed by Goldie, were put up as a monument to Fr Joseph Wheeler by one of his admirers in Dublin where that good priest, practically the founder of Bridge Street, had died young in 1889. These altar-rails were placed in position on 13 December 1890. Up to this time the floors of nave and sanctuary had been on the same level, but now the sanctuary level was raised and tiled to suit the altar-rails.

There was another ceremony on 26 February 1892 when the present Stations of the Cross were canonically erected by Nicholas Baldwin OFM. They were provided by the famous firm of Mayer & Co., Munich, whose work may be seen in so many Irish churches. Each station cost £13 and each was the gift of an individual donor; their names may be seen on a brass plaque in St Joseph's aisle. The preacher on this occasion was Fr Antoninus Keane, a native of Cappoquin later famous as a pulpit orator in the classical style. The newly appointed bishop, Dr Richard Sheehan, graciously presided even though, during the recent vacancy of the diocese, the Dominicans and Franciscans had broken long-standing custom by opening their churches on New Year's day and Easter Sunday against the wishes of the local clergy.

Father Keane was enlisted again on Rosary Sunday of the same year, 2 October 1892, to preach at the unveiling of the marble Rosary altar, perhaps the finest work of art in the church. Apart from the fact that it was the gift of a deceased donor, Mrs Catherine Murphy, one cannot even say where or by whom it was made. It would do honour to any church in Italy, from which it most probably came. Another, though more modest improvement was the placing of seats in St Joseph's aisle "to be in keeping with the rest".

There was already an organ of some kind in the church at the time of its consecration in 1877. This was replaced in October 1894 by a two-manual organ of thirty notes "built with tubular pneumatic reverse consoles and provided with a single piston hydraulic engine by Spate of Leeds". The organ itself was erected by Messrs P. Conacher and Co. of Huddersfield and Dublin at a cost of £480. Whatever about the technical details of the instrument, described pipe by pipe in the newspapers, at least Mrs Marlowe the organist sat facing the altar rather than watching it in a mirror.

Almost thirty years had now passed since the death of Father Molony, and still the church was not quite complete. Even now it is still being repaired and improved. But it is time to turn from the actual work of building St Saviour's to say something of those who worshipped there.



Our Lady's altar, Bridge Street.

A Century of Quiet Certainty: 1865 - 1965

The first hundred years at St Saviour's spanned the period between the first Vatican Council and the second, between Pius IX and John XXIII. Throughout this time Catholic faith and practice appeared to be securely enshrined in the certainties of orthodox definitions and moral precepts. The faithful who built St Saviour's and thronged the church in those years lived in this atmosphere, as did the priests who served them.

The register of the Rosary confraternity dates from 1867 and that of the Holy Name from 1869, but the Rosary confraternity was not "formally" established until 1880. Normally the first was for women and the second for men, but at Waterford the two confraternities were merged into one — "the

confraternity of the Rosary sodality of the Holy Name" — in 1896. Being so few in number, the men of the Holy Name simply joined the ladies of the Rosary in church. By 1910 the confraternity of the Holy Rosary alone survived; it met every Wednesday evening and numbered "about 1,000 persons of both sexes" of whom the women were "easily in the majority". Membership of these sodalities ensured thorough, systematic instruction in the faith, besides regular reception of the sacraments.

As early as 1890 there were regular Sunday processions of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Quarant'Ore or Forty Hours devotion was begun at Bridge St in 1892 following the lead of Bishop Sheehan who had recently introduced it to the diocese. Much later, in 1906, the sodality of the Blessed Sacrament was established by Father John Kiely who endeared himself in a special way to the people of Waterford. On his retirement as prior in 1911, an ornamental silver door was placed on the tabernacle in his memory. Fr Bertrand Larkin founded the "Angelic Warfare" sodality for boys in 1927, but that lasted only about six years.

One of the advantages of the new Dominican presence in Waterford was that the priests gave missions and retreats throughout the diocese, mostly to communities of nuns but also to entire parishes. Four Dominicans gave a Lenten mission at Ballybricken in 1900. They also preached to the orphans and the sick in the homes created for them by the nuns of the city. These "missioners" often left Waterford to labour in every corner of Ireland and sometimes went abroad to enliven the faith of Catholics in England and Scotland. Since the community at Bridge Street numbered at most four priests and two brothers, with four public Masses each Sunday, it was difficult for the rest to manage when the preachers were away. Bishop Sheehan graciously eased the situation in 1896 by granting faculties to four priests rather than to three.

Upkeep and Improvements: 1905-1928

Since the original slates on the roof of the church were inferior, the rain began to seep through at many points, greatly soiling the walls. At the same time dry-rot was discovered in the floor of the sacristy. The roof was re-slatted in 1905. Mr John Hearne, the builder, put the sacristy to rights in 1908 and also added a fine porch to the church. Messrs Earley of Dublin were then called in "to decorate and beautify the church" following a design supplied by Messrs Ashlin and Coleman, architects of Dublin. This involved not merely repainting the entire church in 1909 but also setting the richly coloured mosaics behind and to either side of Our Lady's altar. Similar work was done by Oppenheimer on the sanctuary floor in 1914. The present spacious sacristy

was built towards the end of World War One. After all this expense it was fortunate that neither church nor convent suffered any damage in 1922 during the three-week "siege of Waterford" despite intense shelling and machine-gun fire.

There seems to have been no heating in the church until 1926 when a central-heating system was installed and electric light replaced the former gas fittings. These comforts were extended to the priory in 1928 as part of an ambitious building programme. A confraternity hall, with living quarters overhead, was built parallel to the church between the "old priory" on Bridge Street and the sacristy area, referred to in the books as "the new building".

Old Blackfriars

From the time the Dominican community at Waterford was restored in 1867, no religious or civic occasion was complete without emotive reference to the ruins of "Old Blackfriars", the visible symbol of continuity and past glories. But nothing was done to preserve or restore the place until 1916 when the Corporation expressed an interest in the matter. Mr Austin Farrell, whose family owned part of the premises for three generations, then waived his family's claim "to the portion of the abbey which adjoined their property and had formerly been used as a bake-house, in order that the Corporation might preserve the ancient abbey for the benefit of the citizens". This generous offer was graciously accepted and led to a ceremonial meeting on High Street between the members of the Corporation and Fr Henry Flood, the Dominican prior of the time, who was given the privilege of entering the ruins first. While this distinguished group had some difficulty "in ascending and descending old lofts, etc.", they took immediate steps to have the place put into better shape.

Mr John J. Fleming, the borough surveyor, set to work "with much more than merely official interest, made a clean sweep of all the ugly intruding tenements and cleared the interior of a century's accumulated debris". When the Waterford Dominicans celebrated their seventh centenary in 1926, they arranged a procession of the various confraternities in the city from Blackfriars to Bridge Street. Visitors to the ancient tower may still see the inscription on stone set up to mark the occasion.

When Woolworths built new premises fronting on the eastern side of Barronstrand St in September 1930, the whole site was levelled, giving a view of Blackfriars from the west and north which may never be seen again. A local newspaper printed a photograph of the scene under the apt caption: "after 100 years, just a peep." On the right of this photograph there is what appears to be an ancient tower, standing west of the western porch, separate from the

church and not much lower than the church gable. During excavation work on this occasion some human bones were found; they "were again buried in the precincts on the instructions of the prior."

Bridge Street in the 1930s

This decade in the history of the priory must have golden memories for those who were young at the time. It began with a pilgrimage to the Rock of Cashel organised by Fr Bernard Hegarty. No less than 3,000 people came by train from Dublin, Limerick and Waterford to be welcomed by archbishop Harty as "members of the Dominican third order". Fr Francis Flavin, a native of Waterford, celebrated Mass within the ancient cathedral where, it was said, Mass had not been offered for three centuries. The Dominicans also organised day-cruises for up to 600 people along the Wicklow and Wexford coast or else towards Youghal and Cobh.

Some months later, in October 1930, the same Father Hegarty arranged impressive ceremonies for the golden jubilee of the Holy Rosary confraternity. Special medals were given to the four survivors of "the less than three dozen" pioneers of 1880: Miss McDonald of Bridge Street, Mrs Bruyant of The Glen, Mrs Breen of Gracedieu Villa and Mrs Neale of Patrick St. The Barrack St Brass and Reed Band played sacred music outside the church after the solemn Mass and took part that evening in a colourful procession through the streets.

The old statue of Our Lady of Waterford, duly restored to Bridge Street from Limerick in the 1870s, received no particular attention until 1932 when a local artist named Dignam spent several weeks removing the layers of inferior paint and paste which hid its glorious original colours. Fr Ambrose Crofts, prior from 1933, commissioned Egan's of Cork to provide a sceptre and two crowns for Mother and Child and then had a shrine made, in Romanesque style, by Messrs Gunning of Dublin. At another great ceremony in October 1934, the old statue was solemnly crowned and the new shrine placed in the church. It is sad to think that Mr Dignam, the true "discoverer" of the statue, did not live to take part in this moving occasion.

It was under Father Crofts that the various confraternities at Bridge St were taken in hand in 1934. The Rosary sodality was henceforth to be for women only. The guild of Blessed Imelda was formed to cater for girls. The men of the Holy Name began their independent career, while it was thought that "the body of collectors would form the nucleus of a male branch of the third order". Nothing was done for boys, though "many regretted the disappearance" of their sodality. Fr Crofts was also led by his interest in the social teaching of the Church to set up the "Society of Christ the Worker" in

conjunction with the Holy Name. No less than 235 people attended the first meeting. Recent labour troubles at Waterford arising from the Builders' Labourers' strike of 1934 made such a sodality particularly opportune.

One of the features of Catholic life in the thirties was the "study circle" which enabled committed laypeople to gain a deeper understanding of the faith. Even before Fr Crofts arrived, the St Thomas Aquinas study circle had been founded at Bridge Street in February 1933. Under his leadership it went from strength to strength, for he was deeply involved with Muintir na Tire and the CYMS. The study circle at Bridge St was the chief impetus in the establishment at Waterford of a Catholic Central Library, of which the actual shelves and books were in their own Aquinas Hall by 1937. It also inspired the creation of a second study circle at Ballybricken in 1934.

Church Improvements: 1937-1967

The builder John Hearne, who did so much for Bridge Street, laid tiles on the aisles of the church in 1937. Then Fr Terence O'Donoghue arrived as prior (1938-1942) and devoted most of his energy to the church. It was he who laid mosaics on the floor of Our Lady's chapel and covered the floor around St Joseph's altar with marble. Within the sanctuary, he removed the marble canopy above the great statue of Christ Our Saviour on the high altar and took away the pilasters which broke the curve of the apse. In 1941 he further succeeded in purchasing the priory and church in fee-simple from the Corporation, thereby bringing a very complicated legal process to an end.

Curiously, the church lacked a proper bell until 1948 when the people of Waterford paid for one weighing a ton and a half from the Byrne foundry in Dublin. It was solemnly blessed by bishop Daniel Cohalan at another great ceremony in Bridge Street. By this time Fr Norbert Barry had come as prior (1947-1953). He was able to reap where Fr O'Donoghue had sown and leave St Saviour's almost entirely as it stands today. Apart from installing the bell in the tower and obtaining the beautiful hand-carved statue of Our Lady of Fatima at the end of St Joseph's aisle, his real achievement was in the decoration of the sanctuary. In this he was fortunate to have the collaboration of the gifted Dominican artist, Fr Aengus Buckley.

Fr Buckley, a member of the community from December 1948, began work in St Joseph's chapel which he brightened with a fresco of the Trinity set above the central fresco of St Joseph depicted with two angels on both sides. The faces of the angels are those of some girls of Waterford whose names, from left to right, are Maura Condon, Cora Grace, Bernadette Crowe and Kitty Blackmore. When completed in July 1949, these were said to be the first

frescoes painted in any Irish church. Towards the end of the same year, Fr Buckley finished five frescoed panels in the upper part of the apse: that of the Holy Spirit in the centre with two evangelists to either side.



The next step, carried out between 1950 and 1951, was to cover the lower part of the apse with pictorial panels in mosaic. This was a scheme already ten years old. Some of the original cartoons had been prepared long before by Fr John Heuston, brother of the patriot Sean Heuston, and Mr John Harleng of Dublin, but laid aside for want of funds. The three central panels, showing the Transfiguration, were designed by the Roman artist, Signor Grimaldi, but developed and perfected by Father Buckley before their manufacture by the Scuola Mosaicisti of Friuli in Italy. The work was executed by Signor Martina

of Dublin assisted by Tullio Paoli of the factory at Spilimbergo where the pieces of the mosaic had been made.

The other four panels, two on either side of the Transfiguration group, represent episodes in the religious history of the city. Beginning from the left or Gospel side, the first panel shows a bishop baptizing a Danish ruler, symbolising the conversion of the Danes of Waterford. Then come St Otteran, patron of the diocese, Geoffrey of Waterford the Dominican writer, and Our



The new high altar at Bridge Street, erected in 1952.

Lady of Waterford protecting the city during the Cromwellian siege. In this final panel the artist includes the bell-tower of the modern church in Bridge Street. Only two further touches remained to complete the work: to add the frieze bearing in Latin the great text from St John — "We have seen his glory" — and decorate the tympanum of the chancel arch, immediately over the altar-rails, with a Crucifixion scene in mosaic.

Once all the work within the sanctuary was complete, the great marble statue of the Saviour was removed from the altar so that the mosaics might be seen in all their glory. "They were universally admired", wrote the chronicler, "and now the church may be recognised at a glance as the church of the Most Holy Saviour Transfigured." The high altar itself was then replaced in 1952 by a new one donated by Thomas and Johanna Spencer of Killure. This was designed by the Dublin firm of Kelly and Jones and executed by Early & Co., also of Dublin. The silver tabernacle door presented to Fr Kiely in 1911 was transferred from the old altar to the new. New bronze gates for the altar-rails were provided by an anonymous donor and the Hutchinson family presented a large bronze crucifix to crown the high altar.

Two further touches left the church in 1952 much as it is today. The organ was overhauled and reconstructed at great cost and microphones were installed at Bridge Street for the first time. The statue and shrine of St Martin de Porres in St Joseph's aisle were completed much later, in 1965. The hand-carved wooden statue was the work of John Hough of Newry. In 1967, a temporary wooden altar was installed so that the priests might say Mass facing the people. That temporary altar is still in place, twenty years later, with the happy result that the magnificent marble altar of 1952 has been spared.

Dominicans of Waterford

As has been mentioned already, one result of the return of the Dominicans to Waterford was a great increase in the number of missions and retreats they gave in the diocese. Another happy result was that many young men of Waterford and Lismore actually joined the Order. Fathers Antoninus Keane and Francis Flavin have been mentioned already. Fr Albert Dempsey was an altarboy at Bridge St in the 1880s. To that older generation belonged the brothers Dalton, Antoninus and Augustine, and also Fr Michael Browne of Grangemockler, who became master general of the Order, was named a cardinal and received the freedom of the city of Waterford in 1962. Another of the same vintage was Fr Vincent McEvoy who gave his life and his varied talents to Australia. Fr Aegidius Doolan greatly improved the academic training of young Dominicans at Tallaght.

Three of these Waterford Dominicans were not priests but brothers. Joseph Barnes spent some time at Bridge St but the other two worked mostly in Cork. They were Br Nicholas Wilson, known as "Quaker Oats" because of his great black hat, and Br Antoninus Dowling, sacristan at Pope's Quay for decades, a man of deep prayer and influence who for that reason was sometimes styled "Lord Mayor of Cork".

Fr Nicholas Baldwin also worked in Australia, as did Fr Edward O'Leary of Clonmel. Another native of Clonmel, Fr Michael Delahunty, spent his short life as a teacher at Newbridge College. Fr Harry Hunt, on the other hand, devoted his life to the older and larger Dominican mission in Trinidad. So too did Fr Cathal Hutchinson, now at Athy. Fathers Athanasius Fardy, Joseph Kavanagh and Kevin Deloughry are still at work in Trinidad. Fr Deloughry, though educated at Kilkenny, was born in Clonmel. Of the others still happily alive, Fr Luke Dempsey of Carrick-on-Suir is stationed in Rome. Fr Edmund Wall who did so much for the Dominican orphanage in Dublin is now at St Mary's, Tallaght, where Fr Donal Sweeney of Clonmel is curate of the Dominican parish. Fr Dominic Hallinan of Ardmore has worked for many years past in Cork. Fr Gabriel Bowe lectures at UCD, while the oldest of all, Fr Michael Casey, is now in active retirement at Maynooth after a long lifetime teaching science. Among the students of the Order at Tallaght there is now one from Waterford, one from Ardmore and a third from Clonmel.

Ballybeg: 1968 - 1990

The key to the story of the Dominicans in Waterford over the past twenty years is the discovery of dry-rot in the roof of the church in Bridge Street. It had been noticed as early as 1944 and treated at great expense in 1954, but the full extent of the damage did not appear until 1966. It came to light in the area of the tower while the organ was being restored and the first estimate was a staggering £70,000 to set things right. Fr Gabriel Harty was prior at the time. Under his successor, Fr Colm O'Hagan, after various architects had given their opinions, the provincial forbade the community in 1968 to attempt repairs. They were to acquire another site in the immediate neighbourhood, preferably the Fanning Institute at the top of Bridge Street and prepare plans for a new church and priory. This decision was accepted by the Lay Council of the church, a body recently formed in the wake of the Vatican Council.

The community did in fact apply to the Corporation for the site of the Fanning Institute and received agreement in principle. The matter was reported in the newspapers, but in the event the Local Government Offices were built at the Glen and not a second Dominican church. In March 1969, the bishop Dr Russell put a bold and far-seeing alternative to the community. All the experts of the time predicted that the population of Waterford would reach 50,000 by the year 1980 and that the main "area of explosion" would be around the industrial estate on the Cork Road. If the Dominicans, then, decided to move house, His Lordship was prepared to offer them a small parish between the Cork and Dunhill Roads. This would involve building a church and priory, and perhaps also a day-retreat centre for which there was a great need in the city. It would also require a new school.

Considering the shortage of priests in the diocese, the large number of churches in the inner city, and the pastoral needs of the people in the new suburbs, the community decided in April 1969 to acquire an eight-acre site in the townland of Kilbarry, and in the meanwhile to check the fabric at Bridge Street "lest any tragedy might come from falling portions of the roof". Just one month later, the bishop and senate of the diocese agreed to give the new parish to the Dominicans with full parochial rights. The new priory was to be called St Saviour's, while the church would be dedicated to St Martin de Porres.

The chief casualty of this state of emergency was the fine organ at Bridge Street, dismantled by the Irish Organ Company in 1970 and put into storage at Belfast. It was replaced by an electronic organ. The original intention had been to install the organ in the new church at Kilbarry, but since churches are not built in a day or even a year the organ remained in storage until 1987 when, to avoid enormous expense, it was regretfully disposed of. Also in 1969 it was decided to sell the church-bell but bells are fortunately more resilient than organs. While it may no longer ring, it is still in the bell-tower at Bridge St, supported on timber beams. The fact that dry-rot was most noticeable in the area of the tower and gallery explains this early concern about the bell and organ.

A Parish is Born

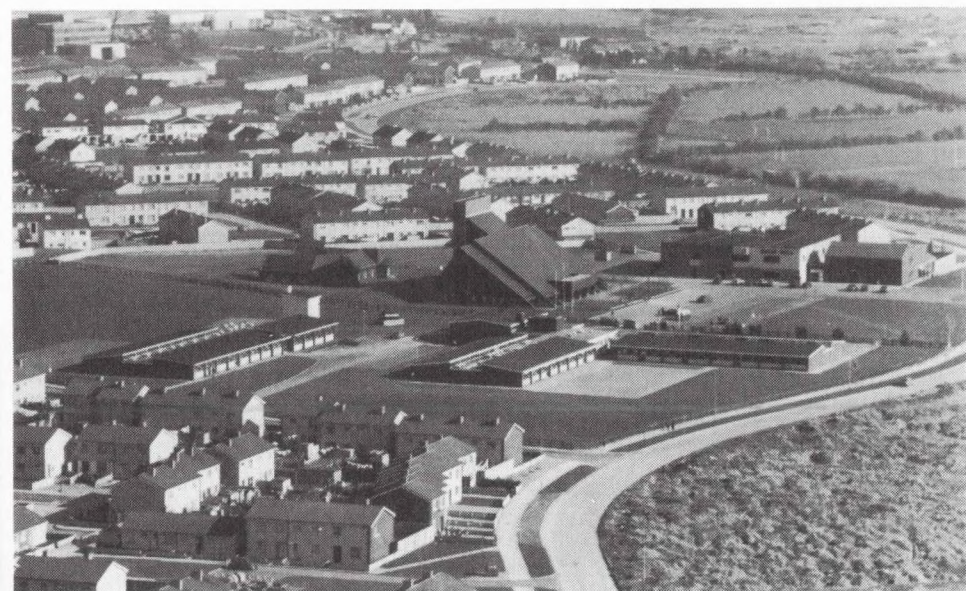
When Fr Colm O'Hagan, who had been so enthusiastic about the new Dominican parish, came to the end of his time as prior, the housing-estate at Kilbarry was still on the drawing board. His successor, Fr Finian Lynch, estimated in 1972 that the church in Bridge Street would be needed for another twelve years or so. On this reasonable supposition he had the church examined, repaired and painted for the best part of £10,000. The "protein treatment" then applied by Asphalt Specialists Ltd took care of the "dry-rot problem" for ten years. Then, between 1982 and 1983, during the priorship of Fr Ben Moran, the dividing wall between church and priory was stripped of plaster and injected with fungicide before being plastered and painted again.

On 20 May 1975, the bishop Dr Russell presided at a special Mass in Bridge Street to mark the inauguration of the parish of St Saviour's, Ballybeg. Fr Ambrose McCarthy, already prior since 1973, was named parish priest. The ceremony was attended not only by the mayor and corporation, but by some of the pioneer tenants of Ballybeg itself. At that time, only sixty-six corporation houses had been occupied in the new estate, but there was no lack of confident forecasts. Within seven years, it was announced, Ballybeg would have about 1,600 houses, two schools, a church and a retreat house, shopping units and about forty acres of public parkland.

The chief problem was to provide a primary school, but after two years of intense correspondence with the authorities Fr McCarthy could do no better than send the children in autumn 1975 to Holy Ghost House, a disused hospital for the aged on the far side of the dangerous Cork Road and about a mile from the childrens' homes. The building, very old and out of repair, reminded one of *Oliver Twist*, but teachers and pupils settled in as best they could, adapting the ancient refectory, kitchen and "sisters' parlour" to accommodate three classes. The Hospital Board most generously offered the

premises at an annual rent of one pound. There were forty-two children on the roll. Then Fr McCarthy died suddenly at the age of forty, just four months after his appointment as parish priest, having given of his best to Waterford. Two months later, on 4 December 1975, the final contract was signed by Dr Michael Russell, bishop of Waterford and Lismore, placing Ballybeg under the pastoral care of the Dominican Order.

Fr Paul Hynes (1975-1978) was the first parish priest to establish a temporary presbytery at 31 Glencarra, Ballybeg in September 1976. Fr Michael Hickey, the first resident Dominican, was succeeded by Fathers Eamonn Mullen, Philip Pollock and William Cleary. Fr Hynes bought almost three acres from the corporation as a site for church and priory and by the time he left Waterford that priory was almost complete. His greatest achievement was to acquire eight acres for a new school and to see that school completed before his departure. While still struggling with the preliminary paper-work, he found and bought a prefab school, sufficient for two or three classes, and had it brought from Killea near Dunmore East to Ballybeg. That was in the summer of 1976 and marked the second stage in the foundation of St Saviour's primary school for boys and girls. There is a touching memento of those pioneering days in the form of a small booklet brought out for the First Holy Communion of eighteen boys and girls on 22 May 1976. The Mass was held in the "Church of the Holy Ghost House" on the Cork Road.



Ballybeg: the new church (centre) with open country to the south.

By this time the number of houses at Ballybeg had increased within a year from 66 to 250, with another 131 under construction. A parish council was formed, the members of the St Vincent de Paul society were already helping the needy, the Boy Scouts had a new local troop, and a local branch of the Pioneer Association was being established. Masses were said on weekdays at 31, Glencarra, and later in a pre-fab on Ballybeg Square, but on Sundays in McInerney's canteen where the parishioners celebrated their first midnight Mass at Christmas. Sunday Mass was then transferred to the Burmah Garage on the Cork Road where Fr Philip Pollock even gave a retreat during Holy Week. A more conventional venue was later found at the Regional College. For baptisms, weddings and funerals, the people of Ballybeg went in to Bridge Street. There was no longer any danger of the roof falling in, since structural engineers had just declared in 1976 that they "saw no reason to be pessimistic regarding the useful life" of the church. This was fortunate indeed, since the infant parish needed all the help it could get from Bridge Street.

The foundation stone of the new priory at Ballybeg was blessed on 2 December 1976, but work on the actual building was not begun until the end of 1977. The architects were Messrs Fewer, McGinley and Tritschler. When Fr Hynes left Waterford towards the close of 1978, the building was practically complete. It was finished under his successor, Fr Pat Lucey, and first occupied by a Dominican community — Fathers Pat Lucey, Eamonn Mullen and Vincent Mercer — in July 1979. Weekday Masses were celebrated there for three years until the opening of the new church, while Sunday Masses were held in the assembly hall of the school.

Two details about Bridge Street may be mentioned here. In autumn 1977 the front part of the priory was leased to serve as offices for the Waterford Circuit Court since the old Courthouse in Catherine St was undergoing repair. The Dominicans, with some of the community living at Ballybeg, had room to spare, while the rent helped to pay some parish expenses. While this unusual arrangement ended in 1983, the community did not recover full use of the priory until 1985. The second was a genuinely religious occasion on 10 August 1980 when His Lordship Dr Michael Russell ordained Br Paschal Gunning a deacon in what was perhaps the only ordination ceremony ever held in St Saviour's.

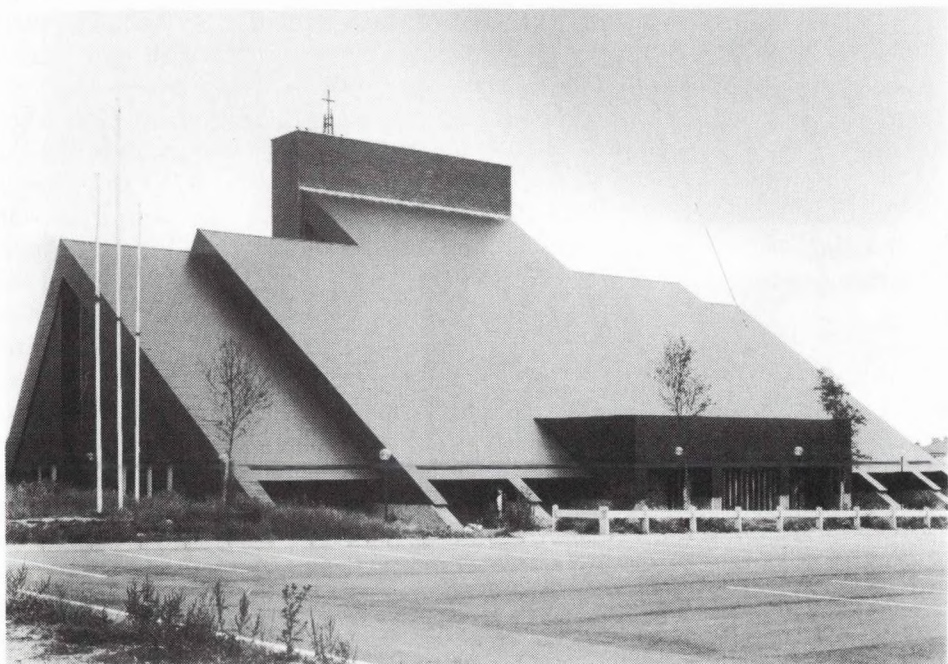
The New School and Church

Because of increasing numbers, the school was transferred from Holy Ghost Hospital to the McInerney canteen near Ballybeg Square and then into prefabs until October 1977 when a proper school with sixteen classrooms and an administration block was finally ready. The formal opening took place in

June 1978 when the Minister of Education came to “turn the key” and the bishop, Dr Russell, to bless the premises. Scoil Ar Slanaitheora, as it was officially called, was designed by Messrs Harvey, Jacobs and Associates, architects of Waterford. The cost was £300,000 and the number of pupils on the rolls 300. Although only the first stage of a larger complex, the school could already boast a library, a medical room, a spacious recreation hall, staff accommodation and the “general purposes hall” then being used for Mass on Sunday.

Even at that time plans were afoot for the second stage of development which would in effect have doubled the size of the school, but the classrooms were overcrowded long before their number was increased. Enrollment surged to 550 by 1980 and to 620 in 1981. Teachers and children had to wait until autumn 1982 before another eight classrooms and a second administrative block were ready. At the moment, in 1990, there are twenty-four classrooms, twenty-seven teachers, about 780 pupils and plenty of room for everyone.

The building of a church at Ballybeg, postponed until the number of residents in the parish would warrant the expense, was taken in hand by Fr Pat Lucey in 1979. The architects employed were Edward Brady and



The church of St Saviour, Ballybeg, dedicated 1981.

Associates of Dublin who had already extended the Dominican church of St Mary's in Tallaght and built that of St Aengus in Tymon North, also in Tallaght, where Fr Lucey had been curate-in-charge. The contractors, Matthew Wallace Ltd of Wellington Bridge, Co. Wexford, builders of the much admired Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, Mount Sion, moved on site during October 1980. The estimated total cost was almost half a million pounds.

The whole parish turned out on 13 December 1981 for the solemn dedication of the new church of St Saviour, despite the torrential winter rain and snow which forced many Dominicans travelling to Waterford from other houses to turn back on the road. His Lordship Dr Michael Russell performed the ceremony, assisted by the Dominican archbishop, Dr William Barden of Isfahan in Persia. The two prelates anointed and blessed the altar and walls of the church. The preacher for the occasion was Fr Joseph Kavanagh, a native of Waterford and Trinidad missionary. He referred in his sermon to two other Waterford Dominicans who had served in the same West Indian island. In one country parish he had come across a chalice bearing the initials of Fr Albert Dempsey, while the house in which Fr Kavanagh lived had been built by Harry Hunt. Within a year of the dedication another Dominican of Waterford stock, Fr Stephen Hutchinson, was ordained a priest at Ballybeg itself.

When Father Barry arranged the sanctuary at Bridge Street in the early 1950s, he little thought of the revolution in liturgical practice and church architecture which would follow the Vatican Council ten years later. St Saviour's, Ballybeg, had the immense advantage of being built in 1981 when the architects could take into account all that had been achieved around the world, and avoid many mistakes made elsewhere since 1965. The steeply sloping roof, coming to within a few feet of the ground, and the high wall behind the sanctuary were said at the time to "bring a new architectural dimension to churches in the diocese". The priest at the altar now faced the people, and the altar itself rather than the tabernacle was the focus of attention. The tabernacle, set to one side, was placed on a free-standing plinth. A baptismal font, the source of Christian life itself, marked St Saviour's out as a parish church, which Bridge Street had never been. Instead of a pulpit there was a lectern or "ambo", a word now more familiar to altarboys than to elderly priests. The fact that the altar, ambo and baptismal font were in granite from the Dublin mountains gave them a solid simplicity reminiscent both of the sacrifice of Abraham and the Mass-rocks of penal days.

Some other details emphasise the "post-conciliar" character of the church. The stations of the cross, cut in Portland Stone with gilded figures, begin with the Annunciation rather than the Agony in the Garden, and end with the Resurrection rather than the burial of Christ. They are the work of

Interior of St. Saviour's, Ballybeg.



Mr and Mrs Chris Ryan who also made the altar, the baptismal font and the stand for the Paschal Candle. The confessionals are so designed that the penitent may speak "face-to-face" with the priest. One also notices that there are no altar-rails, partly to facilitate the giving of the Sacrament in the hand and partly to bring the congregation as closely as possible around the altar. The church, built to hold almost 800, also has shrines in honour of Our Lady and St Martin de Porres, besides some rooms for parish meetings and a kitchen.

One of the most striking aspects of St Saviour's church is that it stands on the extreme edge of the city, flanked and backed by housing estates but facing south over open fields. Those fields, occupying half the parish, were to have been covered with houses ten years ago, but times have changed and estimates have been revised. The Dominican parish of Ballybeg now contains only 783 houses, half as many as were envisaged even in 1975, and the church of St Saviour's stands, so to speak, at the gate waiting for the other half of its congregation to set up house and home. Yet it is there, which is the main thing, a house of God among the people of Ballybeg, a place where they find the strength and courage to face these difficult times.

There should be a monument somewhere to the "unknown benefactor" of Ballybeg, representing all those anonymous men, women and children who gave so freely of their time to make the parish what it is. Among them are a hard-working organisation which built St Saviour's Sports Hall in 1981, and the Good Shepherd Sisters who first arrived to help in the parish in 1978. On their initiative the Parish Centre was opened in 1986 to care for infants during the day, to serve as a local surgery for doctors and provide a meeting-place for parish associations of all kinds.

Among these benefactors was the large and generous congregation of St Saviour's, Bridge Street who have shown almost heroic virtue since 1969, consistently supporting an infant suburban parish while being told every so often that the roof over their own heads was ready to fall in. In God's providence, that roof lasted long enough to enable the parish of Ballybeg to grow to maturity, and by all the evidence that same roof need never fall at all.

This account of the Dominicans at Ballybeg, weighed down perhaps by too many dates already, may fittingly end with another one. On 28 February 1990, the Dominican residence became a house of the Order in its own right, legally independent of the priory in Bridge Street, on the installation of Fr Pat Burrows as parish priest and superior. So the decision of 1969 to move from Bridge Street to Ballybeg has led, not to a change of address, but to the birth of a second Dominican community in Waterford. Long may it prosper.

St Saviour's, Bridge Street: 1985 - 1990

While so much energy and care was being given to Ballybeg, the fabric of church and priory at Bridge Street received less than adequate attention until a thorough overhaul began in 1985 during the priorship of Fr Eddie Conway. The first step was to reopen the front of the house on Bridge Street and put the bureau for religious objects in the front hall, making both house and bureau more accessible than they had been when approached only through the garden. The next step was to replace the electric wiring of the house which was



Saint Saviour's, Bridge Street.

found to be "in a positively dangerous state". Only then was it possible to refurbish the domestic oratory, the kitchen, refectory and library, and make the house more habitable than it had been for quite some time before.

Aquinas Hall, built in 1928 between priory and sacristy for the use of confraternities and later the venue for Father Crofts' "Aquinas study circle", had been divided into parlours. Now it was restored and pressed into active service for socials and the meetings of various groups: the Legion of Mary, the Franciscan third order, the Dominican Youth Choir, and students of Scripture. It is also used by an association called GROW which helps people suffering from depression and by the Waterford Art Group whose members may sometimes be seen sketching in the church, inspired by the colourful mosaics and frescoes of the apse.

The lighting system in the church, installed as far back as 1926 during the seventh centenary of the Dominicans in Waterford, was completely changed in 1986 and extra lighting provided especially in the side-aisles where there had never been electric light before. The roof over Our Lady's aisle was stripped and replaced since both the slates and the felt underneath them had deteriorated. Over St Joseph's aisle, the roof needed only fresh felt for the slates were in excellent condition. In both cases, the beams under the roofs were sound. Despite all the talk and fears about dry-rot, Mr Liam McGarry, structural engineer, was able to assure the community in March 1987 that he could find "no serious fault" either in house or church, and no trace of the famous fungus was later found except on a six-foot beam in the roof of the nave.

The most spectacular part of this restoration was, however, on the outside of the church, in O'Connell St and Bridge St where "work in progress" sometimes stopped or diverted traffic. After the twelve church-windows along O'Connell Street had been storm-glazed, the wall was freshly plastered and the stonework steam-cleaned. On Bridge Street, the entire façade and tower underwent the same treatment, to the dismay of the pigeons but to the satisfaction of a local newspaper: "Decades of grime wiped off church", said the headline. And indeed, the statues of the façade had never looked so well since they were first set in place in 1878.

The only reason for all this trouble and expense was, of course, to provide a proper and decent setting for the worship of God. Religious services at St Saviour's are much like those in any Catholic church, one feast yielding to the next as the year goes round, but there are some annual events not to be found in every church. Between 3 and 11 February each year there is a novena to Our Lady of Lourdes which has been held time out of mind and for which

Brother Paschal builds a grotto within the church itself. A special preacher, invited for the occasion, gives a short talk each day during morning Mass and a sermon each evening at a Mass concelebrated by the community. The sacrament of the sick is administered during Mass on one Sunday within the novena. The same program is followed during the novena to St Martin, introduced to Waterford only in the 1950s, which begins on 26 October and ends on 3 November. Both novenas are enlivened by various choirs and by no less than two bands: the Barrack Street Concert Band and the St Patrick's Brass Band. Every October about 200 members of the congregation take part in the annual Dominican pilgrimage to Knock.



Restoration of the façade, 1987.

Some other religious events have been witnessed at Waterford in Bridge Street alone. The international "Youth Year" of 1985 was brought to a close in fine style on 21 November with a special Mass in St Saviour's arranged by a society called "Group-Link" which is devoted to the care of deprived children. Young people of all denominations crowded the church to the doors for this concelebrated Mass at which the preacher was the Rev. William Bowder, Church of Ireland rector of Piltown. Almost a year later, on 23 October 1986, Fr Slavko Barbaric O.F.M., spiritual director of the visionaries of Medjugorje, came to St. Saviour's with his German interpreter to say the Rosary with the congregation in the evening and preach the message of Our Lady during concelebrated Mass.

Early in 1988, His Lordship Dr Michael Russell graciously designated the shrine of Our Lady of Waterford as one at which the indulgences of the Marian Year might be obtained. That year has come and gone, but the congregation at Bridge Street still pray after Mass each Saturday morning that through the intercession of Our Lady of Waterford they may obtain "the grace to be always faithful to the teaching of Her Son, and to die blessing His holy will".

Priors of St Saviour's, Waterford

1541	Fr William Martin, last prior of Blackfriars.	1695-1696	Fr John Coghlan
1622	Fr Thomas Power	1713	Fr Thomas Burke
1627	Fr John Fox	1732	Fr Francis Conmy
1631	Fr Peter Strange	1736-1737	Fr John Newman
1648	Fr Peter Strange	1749	Fr Patrick Bray
1650	Fr Michael O'Cleary	1754-1756	Fr James Sexton
1667	Fr John Reynolds	1767	Fr Denis O'Connor
1675	Fr Raymund Power	1777	Fr Patrick Bray, elected provincial.
1683-1685	Fr Patrick Marshall, later provincial.	1793	Fr Antoninus Duane
1686	Fr John Cotter (July-August)	1797-1799	Fr Cornelius Ryan
1686-1687	Fr Dominic Langton	1812	Fr Francis O'Finan, later bishop of Killala.
1687-1689	Fr William O'Dwyer	1817	Fr Bernard MacDermott
1689	Fr Peter Ryan	1819-1820	Fr John O'Connor
1693-1695	Fr Peter Ryan	1832	Fr John O'Regan

(Interval of thirty-five years before formal re-establishment in the city).

1867-1871	Fr Thomas Deely	1899-1902	Fr Thomas A. Tighe
1871-1877	Fr Patrick Mullins	1902-1905	Fr Andrew Skelly
1877-1880	Fr Dominic Fitzgibbon	1905-1911	Fr John Kiely
1880-1883	Fr Joseph A. Wheeler	1911-1918	Fr Henry James Flood
1883-1889	Fr Edward Albert Ryan	1918-1921	Fr Raymund Kieran
1890-1893	Fr Joseph D. Slattery	1921-1924	Fr Benedict Duggan
1893-1899	Fr Dominic Barry	1924-1927	Fr Thomas Crotty

1927-1930 Fr Benedict Duggan
 1930-1933 Fr Bernard Hegarty
 1933-1938 Fr Ambrose Crofts
 1938-1942 Fr Terence O'Donoghue
 1942-1946 Fr Joachim O'Sullivan
 1946-1953 Fr Norbert Barry
 1953-1956 Fr Isidore McArdle
 1956-1959 Fr Raphael Hannigan
 1959-1963 Fr Terence O'Donoghue

1963-1966 Fr Joseph Moran
 1966-1968 Fr Gabriel Harty
 1969-1972 Fr Colm O'Hagan
 1972-1973 Fr Finian Lynch
 1973-1975 Fr. Ambrose McCarthy*
 1975-1978 Fr Paul Hynes
 1979-1982 Fr Patrick Lucey
 1982-1985 Fr Benedict Moran
 1985- 1991 Fr Eddie Conway

* From the appointment in 1975 of Fr Ambrose McCarthy as the first parish priest of St Saviour's, Ballybeg, each successive prior was also parish priest of Ballybeg. - until Feb 1990

1991-1992 FR. BRIAN REYNOLDS

1992- FR. JAMES HARRIS





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