

# Easter 2008

## 1. Death and Resurrection Experience, Easter 2008

The joy and peace of the Risen Lord be with you all this Eastertide!

I experienced in a very real and painful way the Death-Resurrection story this Easter. It happened as follows. I visited Rome for eight days in early March to carry out some research in the Christian Brothers Generalate Archives and to seek some advice from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints about how best to proceed in the case of an alleged cure through the intercession of Blessed Edmund Rice. Br Tony Twomey, the Immersion Director of the Christian Brothers' European Province, who lives in Community with me at Edmund Rice House, North Richmond Street, Dublin 1, travelled out to Rome with me. Tony has the onerous task of introducing groups of teachers and senior pupils from the Brothers' schools in Ireland and England to projects for the poor and down-and-outs in Africa, India and South America, but this was his first visit to Rome. In whatever free time I had, I helped to introduce him to the wonders of the Eternal City. What made it all the more interesting for him was that he knew that one of his nieces, Mary Collins (29) from Athy, Co. Kildare, was travelling out to Rome for the St Patrick's Weekend, just after our return to Dublin, and he keenly looked forward to discussing the Roman visit with her.

Mary and three female companions, best friends since their student days studying science at University College Dublin (UCD), travelled to Rome on Saturday, 15 March, and attended the Palm Sunday Mass in St Peter's Basilica the following morning. Mary sent a text message that the girls were having a memorable visit. They planned to go out to a good restaurant for a special meal together on Monday, the night of St Patrick's Day, and were due to fly home the next morning. Imagine Br Tony's horror on the morning of 18 March when word filtered through that Mary and a pal of hers, Liz Gubbins from Limerick (28), were mindlessly killed by a drunken driver at a pedestrian crossing in Rome the previous night. The other two girls in the party had left to walk to their nearby hotel just five minutes previously. The families were shattered. The bodies of Mary and Liz were returned to Ireland on Good Friday. Mary's remains were removed to Athy Parish Church on Easter Sunday Evening, and the funeral was after 11.00 am Mass next morning. A huge crowd attended. Liz's funeral followed in Limerick a day later. We supported Tony as best we could, however inadequately, and attended the various ceremonies. Our prayer now, through the intercession of Blessed Edmund, is that both girls celebrate the Resurrection with Christ in heaven and that the Good Lord bring comfort and healing to the grieving families and survivors. Death and Resurrection, Easter 2008.

## 2. The "New" Mount Sion

The new Blessed Edmund Rice Chapel and Edmund Rice International Heritage Centre have been officially opened at Mount Sion in Waterford.

The Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Dr. William Lee, was chief celebrant together with

Bishop Laurence Forristal and Bishop Michael Russell at a Mass of Dedication of the new Chapel on Sunday February 3rd. Parish Priest, Fr William Ryan, acted as Master of Ceremonies.

The ceremony was attended by large numbers of Christian Brothers and Presentation Brothers and many students from secondary schools in Waterford. Music was provided by The Edmund Rice Choral Society.

Featured in the Chapel are the four sculptures in wood by well known Irish Liturgical Artist, Fergus Costello - the altar, the ambo, the tabernacle and the scriptorium. Fergus also designed the tomb in stone and glass which contains the remains of Blessed Edmund.

Four of the windows contain images of the four evangelists, created by Brother Joe Connolly, and the Celtic designs were produced by Michael Daniels.

On Friday February 8th, An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, TD, opened the new Centre and prayed at the tomb of Blessed Edmund Rice. The Opening of the Heritage Centre was also attended by Mayor of Waterford, Ms. Mary O'Halloran

### 3. New Leadership Team of the Christian Brothers

Brother Philip Pinto was re-elected Congregation Leader at the Christian Brothers' six-yearly General Chapter at Kunnar, Kerala, South India, in March 2008. For the first time ever in the Brothers' more than two-hundred-year history, there is no Irishman on the Congregation's Leadership Team, and the first African-born Councillor has been elected onto the Team. This is the Holy Spirit speaking to us to reflect on the more international membership of what Blessed Edmund Rice initiated in Waterford in 1802. As heretofore, the new CLT will be based in Rome, but will need to travel all five continents to visit where the Christian Brothers and their ministries are located. We pray the blessing of Blessed Edmund on them as they take up their leadership role.

The membership of the new Team is as follows:

Br Philip Pinto, India: Congregation Leader

Br Jack Mostyn, USA: Deputy Leader

Br Francis Hall, UK: Councillor

Br Victor Kamara, Africa: Councillor

Br Peter Dowling, Australia: Councillor.

## 4. International ER Novena 2008

It is that time of year again when our thoughts focus on preparation for Blessed Edmund's Feastday, Monday, 5 May. Everyone will have their own special intentions, but an underlying one is that Blessed Edmund will soon become 'Saint Edmund Rice'. We are also conscious in this 'Year of Vocations' of praying for new vowed members of Blessed Edmund's two Congregations, the Presentation Brothers (FPM) and the Christian Brothers (CFC), and for an increase in the membership of the Edmund Rice Network (ERN) - those who draw their inspiration from Blessed Edmund and who are linked with the two Congregations as Associate Members and/or Co-Workers.

This year, Br Donatus Brazil FPM (the Vice-Postulator) and myself, Br Donal Blake CFC (Postulator), at our March meeting, have selected two families, the McGowans from Belfast, Northern Ireland, and the Walshes from Montreal, Canada, as a special focus for our International Novena. There is much suffering and illness in both families and we request our International Associates to storm Heaven during the Novena through the intercession of Blessed Edmund for a restoration of good health and happiness to all concerned. This year's International Novena runs from Saturday, 26 April, to Sunday, 4 May. Please make an effort to attend Holy Mass on Monday, 5 May, the Feast Day of Blessed Edmund.

Prayer Resources are available at

<http://www.edmundclt.org/prayerresources/prayerresources.html>

## 5. Tribute to Br Aidan Quinlan

Br Aidan Quinlan has been and still is a great devotee of Blessed Edmund Rice. Even before Edmund Rice was beatified by Rome on 6 October 1996, Br Aidan, from his base in St Mary's, Baldoyle, Co. Dublin, promoted a "League of Prayer" in honour of his hero. Month after month he sent out a monthly 'Newsletter' that included historical snippets from the lives of Edmund and the early Brothers, and articles outlining the progress of Edmund's Cause towards Canonisation and recording both requests for, and answers to, prayers through the intercession of Blessed Edmund.

This was in addition to his sterling work in the Brothers' former African Office, which among other things involved the sending of a weekly newsletter to Irish Brothers working in Africa. This office is now transferred to Zambia, and St Mary's, Baldoyle, out of which Aidan worked is being transformed into a building site, preparatory to being absorbed as a much-needed extension to St Patrick's Nursing Home next door for elderly and sick Brothers. Aidan himself has been quite ill of late, and the pressure of meeting monthly deadlines was becoming burdensome. It has been decided to call a halt to his 'Newsletter', at least in its present format. In the meantime, gratitude is being expressed on all sides, not least by many elderly readers, for Br Aidan's gallant attempts over the years to spread devotion to Blessed Edmund through the ministry of the pen. We salute you, Aidan, and I'm sure that Blessed Edmund is proud of you.

## 6. The late Brother Fabian O'Donohue FPM

They came in large numbers from near and far and from many walks of life to pay their respects to Br. Fabian O Donohue a real ‘Gentleman of the Presentation’ whose funeral Mass was celebrated in Christ the King Church, Turner’s Cross, Cork on Saturday February 23rd. Br Fabian, you will recall, was one of the two people we prayed for during last year’s Novena. The other person, Linda Loughran, is still seriously ill. So let us keep up our prayers.

The chief celebrant at the Mass was Fr. Kerry Murphy O Connor PP who spoke of Fabian as ‘mirror of God’s love’ to young and old and especially to the poor and vulnerable. The Greenmount school choir enhanced the requiem liturgy. Former colleagues from the various schools in which Fabian taught were at hand to offer words of appreciation and condolence to his family who travelled in large numbers from his home place in Ballinagun, Kilrush, Co.Clare.

‘He had an elegant athletic walk, his long fingers seemed to offer him balance as he moved lightly and with purpose. I’m told that he moved similarly on the football field. His visits home to Ballinagun were like Christmas even if the only gift he brought was himself. He was a second father to me’. With these words his nephew John spoke of Fabian in an eloquent eulogy after Mass.

A tribute from another Clareman, Br. Pat Madigan cfc came from New Mexico stating: “all Claremen have reason to be proud of Fabian”. It is very appropriate that he is laid to rest in the Blessed Rice Cemetery in Mt.St.Joseph next to another great Clareman Br. Basil Daly.

His coffin was laden with bouquets of flowers from family and friends who wanted to say a sincere ‘thank you’ to their friend. Among them were two bouquets from ‘Right of Place’, the group representing those who suffered institutional abuse – an eloquent statement of gratitude to one who always listened respectfully and did not judge.

Br. Fabian’s playing colleagues from Nemo Rangers formed a guard of honour and took turns in carrying his coffin. A sports profile and appreciation by Plunkett Carter from Greenmount appeared on the Cork Evening Echo and a minute’s silence was observed before the All Ireland Club semi-final game at Ennis which Nemo Rangers proceeded to win in style.

In the words of an old friend, Brother Mark McDonnell, CFC, writing from India, "It gives one confidence in the dynamic of religious life when it offers men like Fabian as exemplars of what the fruits of a good religious life can be”.

May he rest in peace.

## 7. A New Edmund Rice Prayer Book?

Over the past twenty or more years, people in different parts of the world, sometimes working independently, have produced prayers and reflections of various kinds centred on Blessed Edmund – prayers for favours, prayers for his Canonisation, litanies, novenas, Morning and Evening Prayers, meditations, liturgies, suggested Mass Readings, etc. It has been suggested to me recently that it might be a good idea to collect these prayers into one single prayer book for devotees of Blessed Edmund. I agree with these sentiments, and I now propose, with your help, to produce such a collection that would then become widely available. How can you help, I hear you asking. Search your prayer books, shelves, etc., and forward to me in whatever format you consider most convenient examples of what you find. I appeal in a special way to secretaries and archivists working in provincialates, regional houses, novitiates and houses of formation. I also include individuals who may have collected items of devotion. Please pop examples of what you have into an envelope or as an attachment by e-mail and forward same, before 1 June 2008, Birthday of Blessed Edmund, to:

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*If you are reluctant to permanently part with what you send, please remind me of this, and I will ensure that the items are returned to you!*

## 8. Alleged Cure in Cork City

I mentioned in a recent communication about an alleged cure in Cork City granted through the intercession of Blessed Edmund Rice to Betty, a married woman. It involves recovery from an operation for the removal of a tumour on the brain, where little hope of survival had been held out by the surgeon. A first-class relic of Blessed Edmund was applied to the affected area by Betty's husband, a long-time devotee of Blessed Edmund. Today, Betty is alive and well. I recently met the family at an impressive Edmund Rice Prayer Meeting at the Presentation Brothers' Mount St Joseph in Cork, attended by about sixty people. The family gave public testimony to the intervention of Blessed Edmund in their lives.

The case has now moved a step forward. I got the family and the Brothers involved to write a preliminary account of what had occurred. I then submitted this, during my March visit to the

Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome, to Monsignor Robert Sarno, an expert in such matters. Such officials are by nature cautious, but he accepted that the case was “promising”. He then advised me on how best to proceed. This will involve collecting copies of the medical records, interviewing the family doctor, the surgeon, nursing assistants, family members of the patient in greater detail, etc., writing up all of this material under prescribed headings ... and then getting a more expert preliminary opinion from a panel of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. Then, if the verdict is still positive, I need to approach the Bishop of Cork to set up a Miracle Tribunal to examine under oath all the personnel involved in the alleged cure. Informally, the Diocese has told me that they have never had any experience of organising such a tribunal, and they will be very reliant on what I, the Postulator, and Br Donatus, the Vice-Postulator, can tell them concerning procedures. There is no guarantee that everybody involved will co-operate with such an intricate procedure. It will also involve a new medical examination of Betty. All going well, it will take about two years minimum. Then, I, or somebody working on my instructions, will need to write up a detailed Miracle Positio for the Congregation of Saints. So, if you see me with a faraway look in my eyes over the next few years, you will know why! Please pray that the Cork case will be successful. Only then, of course, Edmund can be canonised.

The following report by Br Clement McCarthy FPM gives a touching account of how the relic was made available:

“It was approaching bedtime when I received a telephone call from Brother Nessian O’Mahony, a Christian Brother who resides with his community about a mile from our residence, Mount St Joseph. Knowing that our Presentation Community possessed a first-class relic of Blessed Edmund Rice, he asked if he could borrow it for a friend Michael whose wife Betty was gravely ill in the Cork University Hospital after a serious brain tumour operation. I agreed they could have the relic and asked them to come and collect it.

While on my way to the Community Chapel where we keep the relic, it occurred to me that when they arrived in a matter of minutes I would invite Nessian and Michael to join me in prayer in the Chapel at the Blessed Edmund Shrine. Both gladly agreed and we went to the Shrine where I already had candles lighting. I was meeting Michael for the first time. He was very distraught and overwhelmed by grief as he told me of the serious illness of his wife Betty at the local hospital. Michael said his wife was greatly disturbed and agitated after the serious operation. I got the impression that Betty’s condition was life-threatening – hence Michael’s recourse to the intercession of Blessed Edmund Rice whom he trusted with great conviction.

After Michael lit a special candle for Betty, all three of us prayed with great devotion and fervour and much faith, believing that through the intercession of Blessed Edmund Betty would be healed. After some time I placed the relic on Michael’s head at a place corresponding to the place on Betty’s head where the operation had taken place. Together we recited the prayer to Blessed Edmund and the special prayer for healing.

As I reflect back now, I recall this as a great faith experience for me, as I feel it was also for Michael and Br Nessian. As Michael and Br Nessian set out on their journey to Betty at the Cork University Hospital I could not help observing how calm, confident, peaceful and hopeful Michael had become.

A few days later Michael and Br Nessian returned with the good news that Betty was recovering. They joined with our regular Thursday night Divine Mercy Prayer Group to say thanks. Michael gave a touching testimony to all present attributing the improved health of his wife Betty to the powerful intercession of Blessed Edmund Rice.”

I leave you to reflect on this remarkable account by Brother Clement, and I remind you once again about my request for various Edmund Rice prayers, etc., which I hope to receive by Edmund’s Birthday on 1 June. Please join in the Annual International Novena, 26 April – 4 May, in preparation for the Feast of Blessed Edmund on 5 May. Please remember, in addition to your own intentions, the McGowan Family, Belfast, and the Walsh Family, Montreal, during the Novena. God bless you and yours and may Blessed Edmund guide you in your life choices.

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4 April 2008