

## From the Postulator's Desk

### Easter 2009 Edition

*The blessing of the Risen Christ be with you all! At the time of Easter our thoughts are raised to what is of true value in life, what is passing, what is lasting. Jesus entered into his Kingdom at the moment of his Resurrection. He achieved all that the Father had required of him. "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."*

(Mark 1:11, 9:7, Matt 3:17, 17:5, Luke 3:22, 9:35)

What will *we* be remembered for? The Good Master promised his followers: "*I have come that they may have life and have it to the full*" (John 10:10). This then is our aspiration during our life and we depend on the grace of God to achieve it. Jesus, our Elder Brother, "*went everywhere doing good*" (Acts 10:38) and, naturally, we look to his followers to see how this may be accomplished throughout history. In our case, we look at his servant, Blessed Edmund Rice, to see how he became 'another Christ'.

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### **Edmund, Patron of Honest Businesspeople with a Social Conscience:**

At the present moment in world history we are very conscious of the vast economic downturn that is affecting every country. We are appalled at the reckless greed and dishonesty of some in the business and banking world who have brought this about. We desperately look for exemplars of integrity in the business world, and we look to our holy religion to provide models. I suggest that we need look no further than Blessed Edmund Rice. He was known as a model of fair dealing in his many years as a businessman. He gave many a loan to people who could never approach a bank. His hand was ever open to the poor and he became executor of many charities so that the widow and the orphan might receive what was rightly theirs in many wills and bequests that were often contested by a bigoted and heartless bureaucracy. In his life as a businessman, Edmund had acquired a good working knowledge of the law. Time was of the essence to poor people.

Often Edmund paid out in advance to these poor people from the meagre funds of the Brothers, hoping to claim the money back later from the unreformed and unsympathetic Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests (CCDB). Even as a very old and sick Christian Brother, he undertook many arduous stagecoach journeys from Waterford to Dublin to champion the rights of poor people deprived of their legal and monetary rights. At one stages the Commissioners threatened to seize all the properties of the Brothers as collateral.

In February 1839 Edmund wrote: *“I am obliged to set off for Dublin this evening. It’s well if this work does not kill me.”* All matters had not been resolved by Edmund’s death in 1844, but at a meeting in Dublin Castle on 13 June 1845, William P. Matthews, Secretary of the Commissioners, conceded:

*“That from the documents laid before the Board and statements made, it appears to the Commissioners that the late Edmund Rice, Esq., was a gentleman of the strictest integrity, and whose life was one of active benevolence, therefore the entries made in his books should be received as prima facie evidence of payments made for the sundry branches of Mary Power’s charities which during life he had benevolently superintended, and that his representative ought to be reimbursed such sums as may appear to have been advanced in this case by him out of his private funds to aid in maintaining Testatrix’s Charities.”*

Already, groups representing the Brothers in the United States and Australia have organised ‘working breakfasts’ among businessmen and professionals who are past-pupils of the Brothers. During the course of the meeting an input is made on caring ethics in business on the model of ‘Edmund Rice, Businessman’. A discussion ensues, and a collection is taken up for various projects for the poor, sponsored by the Brothers and their Associates, in inner cities in the so-called First World and in deprived areas in Africa, South America and India. There is a growing enthusiasm for this movement. It only goes to show how relevant Edmund Rice and his values are for today’s world.

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## **Scientifically crafted bust of youthful Edmund Rice goes on display**

*The following is brought to you, courtesy of [catholicireland.net](http://catholicireland.net), a Catholic website:*

Last year a likeness of Edmund Rice was generated by scientists from his skull, in time for the opening of the new Edmund Rice Heritage Centre at Mount Sion, Waterford. This year the scientists have advanced a stage further. A new bust of Blessed Edmund Rice which claims to depict him accurately as he looked when he was young has gone on display.

The likeness was created using state-of-the-art laser technology and is made of resin, paint and clay. A forensic scientist from the University of Dundee, Dr Caroline Wilkinson, undertook the task of reconstructing Blessed Edmund's facial features as he would have appeared as a young man.

The bust will sit beside an existing one which depicts the Christian Brothers' founder as he would have looked when he was 82.

The centre, which opened a year ago, celebrates the life Blessed Rice. He was born in Co. Kilkenny and had a career as a successful merchant in Waterford until he dropped all to work for the education of the city's poor.

His tomb is in a chapel adjoining the centre, which has already become one of the country's leading religious and heritage tourism sites and attracted both Irish and foreign visitors over the past year.

It has an interactive multimedia tour telling not only the story of Rice himself but of the Ireland in which he lived and worked.

Picture shows the new bust of Edmund Rice as a young man.

Note: The image may or may not be to your liking. Traditionally, the 'Carrick Portrait' was reckoned to be the most accurate likeness of Blessed Edmund, although not a very good painting. I'll supply a copy of this in the next Newsletter and make some comments on it. In the meantime, please send on your comments on the new image of Edmund as a young man which appears at the top of this section.

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#### **Note on 'Nano Nagle 225'**

20 April 2009 marks the 225th anniversary of the death of the Servant of God, Nano Nagle (1728-1784), the founder of the Presentation Sisters (PBVM). Already, a wonderfully evocative Eucharist has been broadcast on Palm Sunday (5 April 2009) on Irish TV (RTE) from Killavullen Parish Church, Co. Cork, Nano's native parish (She was born at Ballygriffin in this parish, and her cousin, Edmund Burke (1729-1797), the great orator and politician, was reared nearby). On 20 April, there will be an international celebration held in Cork honouring Nano. The celebration will include visits to the Presentation Convent, Douglas Street, where Nano died and to Ballygriffin where she was born. Considering Edmund Rice's close contacts with the Presentation Sisters in founding his own Brothers, there will be a strong representation present from the three congregations that together constitute the Presentation Family: The Presentation Sisters, the Presentation Sisters and the Christian Brothers. We all owe Nano a debt of gratitude. She was the inspiration that fired all the subsequent founders of religious congregations in Ireland in the 19th century. Let us pray for the success of the campaign for the Canonisation of Nano Nagle, Servant of God, trailblazer of lay initiatives in the Catholic Church in Ireland just then emerging from the long winter of the Penal Laws.

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## **Edmund, Patron of Pressurised Students**

At this time of year many students in the Northern Hemisphere face into the annual pressure of achieving good results in their final examinations. In many cases the direction of their future careers depends on the outcome. For many years, educationalists have agonised about ways and means of relieving the sometimes unreal expectations of parents concerning the educational performances of their children. The students themselves feel under severe pressure and not all can cope adequately in the situation. Edmund, both as a parent of a handicapped daughter and as a founder of teaching congregations, understands very well the dilemma of young people under pressure. While Edmund, from his own career in business, was always conscious of the importance of young people achieving their full potential with dignity, he was also very conscious of the variety of gifts that young people possessed and that achieving the greatest results in higher mathematics wasn't the only criterion of academic success.

Many people, both parents and students, have reported greater peace of mind and a realistic understanding of the various gifts of mind and heart that they possess, after praying through the intercession of Blessed Edmund around the time of examinations. Let us imitate these people and, as the timetable of examinations approaches, let us invoke Blessed Edmund for the parents and young people we know who are caught up in the various stresses brought on by the examination system. At a time of economic downturn, let us pray that Blessed Edmund will guide young people in their careers and life decisions, not forgetting giving serious consideration to the possibility of a religious vocation.

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### **15 August 1809: Edmund and his Companions become a Roman-approved Diocesan Congregation, the Society of the Presentation**

This year we celebrate the **Bicentenary** of Edmund Rice and his early companions making Perpetual Vows in Waterford on 15 August 1809. The previous year, in answer to their desire for the vowed life, Bishop Power had allowed them to take private annual vows. He then requested Rome to recognise Edmund and his companions as a new Diocesan Congregation, with the understanding that they would continue to renew their annual vows each year until such approval was granted. Realistically, the Bishop expected a number of years to elapse before such a permission would be secured. Among other things, he would have to provide Rome with rules and constitutions of the proposed new congregation written in Latin.

But, providentially, the course of European history intervened. There were troubled times in Europe because of the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. The Emperor of France (and of much of continental Europe) removed Pope Pius VII from Rome to French-held territory as a prisoner for five years, mostly in Savona, until 1814. In the absence of the Pope, Cardinal di Pietro, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, early in 1809, before he too went into indefinite exile, granted provisional permission through his secretary, Monsignor Quarantotti, to Bishop Power to proceed with his plan for a new diocesan congregation of teaching brothers, with the understanding that he would provide Latin rules and constitutions for the tiny new group. The Bishop considered this sufficient grounds to allow Blessed Edmund and seven companions, much to their great joy, to proceed to simple perpetual vows, which they did, on 15 August 1809, in the Society of the Presentation of Mary, closely modelled on Nano

Nagle's Presentation Sisters who had only got definitive Roman approval as recently as 1805, although originally set up in 1777 in Cork. Unlike the Presentation Sisters who had opted for solemn vows, Edmund Rice's Brothers, with their simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, were not bound by enclosure. They were spread over three small communities in the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore: Mount Sion in Waterford City, Carrick-on-Suir in Co. Tipperary and Dungarvan in Co. Waterford. Edmund was named 'Brother Ignatius' in honour of the great founder of the Jesuits, St Ignatius of Loyola. The new Brothers were clothed with a simple black habit which initially they only wore indoors and in their schools so as not to cause offence to their Protestant neighbours. The Penal Laws were still, in many regards, still alive and well!

Whatever period of membership and of ad hoc training that Edmund and his companions had experienced under Edmund's example and guidance prior to 1809 was accepted in the place of a canonical novitiate. From 1809 onwards, however, all new members would have to enter as Postulants for at least six months and then proceed to Novitiate training for a period of two years before being admitted to vows. Today, both the Presentation Brothers and the Christian Brothers look back to 15 August 1809 as the date on which they were recognised by Rome as proper religious and not just as enthusiastic amateurs. We give thanks to Blessed Edmund and Bishop Power for this great advance in their organisation.

Today, the inclusive Edmund Rice Network, including the Presentation and Christian Brothers and their many Associates, rejoice at the many graces bestowed through Blessed Edmund and his followers down all the years on the many young people with whom they shared the benefits of education. They thank the Lord for the good done and also say 'sorry' for occasional personal failures. Blessed Edmund Rice, pray for us and guide us.

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### **International Edmund Rice Novena**

Monday, 27 April – Tuesday, 5 May 2009

#### Introduction:

*This year, as mentioned above, we celebrate the Bicentenary of Edmund Rice and his early followers making perpetual vows in Waterford on 15 August 1809, with the approval of Rome.*

*This marked the formal beginning of the Presentation Brothers (FPM), the Christian Brothers (CFC) and the Edmund Rice Network (ERN).*

*We honour the event during our Edmund Rice Novena by concentrating on the following intentions:*

1. A recommitment among those following Blessed Edmund in **the vowed life** as Christian Brothers or Presentation Brothers;
2. A campaign of prayer for **new members** in the two Congregations;
3. A wider involvement and enthusiasm among **Associates** that work in the **Edmund Rice Network** that has sprung up in various parts of the world;
4. Our own **local and personal intentions** may be added to these.

These intentions are very much in keeping with the aspirations expressed at the most **recent General Chapters** of Edmund's two Congregations. Coincidentally, Edmund's native country, Ireland, has just been celebrating the **Church's Year of Vocation** (concludes on Sunday, 3 May).

*Novena Prayers:*

\_O God, we thank you for the life of Blessed Edmund Rice.

**He opened his heart to Christ present**

**in those oppressed by poverty and injustice.**

**May we follow his example of faith and generosity.**

**Grant us the courage and compassion of Blessed Edmund**

**as we seek to live lives of love and service.**

**Grant that soon he may be declared a saint of your Church.**

**We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.**

*(2) O God, you inspired Blessed Edmund Rice to follow your Son*

*in a life of consecrated service of the poor*

*and of all in need of a truly Christian education.*

*Grant through his intercession the petitions I now make:*

*(a) a recommitment to the ideals of Blessed Edmund*

*among his vowed followers, the Presentation and Christian Brothers;*

*(b) an increase in the number offering themselves as new Brothers worldwide, including in our part of the Lord's Vineyard;*

*(c) a deepening of involvement and enthusiasm among the Associates that work*

*in the wider Edmund Rice Network throughout the world.*

*Listen also, Gracious God, to the special local intentions we bring before you*

*through the intercession of Blessed Edmund .....*

*We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

**(3) Our Lady of the Presentation, pray for us.**

**Our Lady of Good Counsel, pray for us.**

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help, pray for us.**

**Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us.**

**St Joseph, pray for us.**

**St Patrick, pray for us....**

**Holy men and women of our land, pray for us.**

**Blessed Edmund Rice, our hope and inspiration, pray for us.**

**Nano Nagle, Servant of God, pray for us.**

**Live Jesus in our hearts forever.**

**(4) Optional: One decade of the Rosary daily for the Novena intentions**

*and/or*

**Attendance at daily Mass each day of the Novena.**

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### **Edmund Rice Cause Today**

*I am occasionally asked at what stage is the Edmund Rice Cause today. A simplistic answer is that we now require one more miracle of healing before approaching the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. We have been looking at a number of exceptional healings, but the answer is a little more involved. What follows below is the text of a short talk I recently gave on this topic. I hope you find it helpful and that you keep on praying and hoping.*

Since Edmund Rice was beatified – declared ‘Blessed’ – on 6 October 1996 by the late Pope John Paul II, work has continued to ensure that Blessed Edmund will soon be canonised – become known worldwide as ‘SAINT Edmund Rice’. Everybody can play his/her part in this campaign by making Blessed Edmund better known and by bombarding heaven by prayer.

In 2003 Br Donal Blake CFC, Christian Brother, was appointed Roman Postulator to liaise with the Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of Saints (CCS). Assisting him as Vice-Postulator is Br Bede Minehane FPM, Presentation Brother. Thus Blessed Edmund’s two Congregations are involved together at official level. Assisting them in the various regions around the world where the Christian Brothers, the Presentation Brothers and the Edmund Rice Network have a presence is a whole host of Local Promoters.

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints informs us that three issues remain to expedite Blessed Edmund’s Canonisation in the coming years:

- Relevance of Blessed Edmund today;
- Existence of a lively devotion to him;



- One miraculous cure from a life-threatening illness.

**Relevance:** What is it in the life of Blessed Edmund and what he stood for in his time that is still relevant in today's Church and in today's world? For many years, we concentrated on Edmund as Religious Founder and Educator. In more recent times, many have also drawn strength and meaning from Edmund as parent of a handicapped daughter and as a widower. Others again saw him as an honest and caring businessman in a corrupt world. The list goes on...

**Devotion:** Is there a genuine devotion to Blessed Edmund? How is it being nurtured? How does it manifest itself? Do people pray to God for help in their problems in life through Edmund's intercession? Hence there are Edmund Rice memorabilia. There is an Edmund Rice Mass and an Annual International Novena in preparation for his Feastday on 5 May. There is a growing volume of Edmund Rice literature. Do we use the school, the parish and local media to spread devotion to him?

**Miracle:** One further miracle, performed since 6 October 1996 (the date of his Beatification) needs to be described and verified before Blessed Edmund can be formally called 'Saint Edmund' in the Rite of Canonisation. The evidence, both spiritual and medical, has to pass rather stringent tests ordered by the CCS. Many people, for instance, claim that Blessed Edmund has intervened to cause healing to many relationships. But the cures sought in Rome are those of medical physical healing that can be monitored by hospital records and hospital tests. Instances have been recorded in Melbourne, Toronto, Florida, Chicago, St Lucia (West Indies), Liverpool and Cork. Let us pray that at least one of these may prove fruitful. There is, of course, our time and God's time!

Have a Blessed Easter. May the Risen Christ inspire you and yours now and forever.

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