

# June 2007

## From the Postulator's Desk

The first day of June marks the Birthday of Blessed Edmund Rice each year. Before Rome presented us in 1996 with 5th May as Blessed Edmund's official Feastday, the first of June was traditionally celebrated, in communities and schools in the Northern Hemisphere at least, as a special day of prayer for success in the end-of- academic-year examinations. It can be a worrying time for students and their families. What are their priorities in life? Seeing that, for over 200 years, Edmund and his followers have brought education and its benefits within the reach of hundreds of thousands, we should invoke Blessed Edmund that the students will put their education to the best possible use in their life choices and careers. It is heartening to see so many in the Edmund Rice Network each year making some return for their quality education by reaching out to the less privileged in the Edmund Rice Camps, Edmund Rice Awards, the Edmund Rice Immersion Programme, in the SHARE scheme in Cork City, even "in going from one street to another to serve a neighbour for the love of God."

## This year's Novena

By all accounts, great effort was put into this year's Novena. Some prayed the Novena individually, others prayed it as a group, while some marked the occasion with special Masses and Talks. One man sent me an e-mail from Rarotonga in the remote Cook Islands in the Pacific that he had actually enjoyed the Novena! Isn't that a lovely thought? What of the two special recipients of this year's prayers? Br Fabian O'Donohue FPM who lives in Cork is still weak from his surgery and chemo-treatment but is much heartened by the thought of so many people praying through the intercession of Blessed Edmund for and with him. He had a relic of Blessed Edmund with him during the Novena. He sends his greetings and prayerful thanks to you all.

Linda Loughran from Limerick is still seriously ill. Br Kieran Loughran CFC, her husband's uncle, did a magnificent job in circulating the Novena prayers to the extended Loughran family in Ireland, England and the USA. They feel so proud of the Edmund Rice connection and that so many, in so many countries, are praying with and for them. Linda is still quite ill and we should continue our prayers through Blessed Edmund's intercession. Br Loughran informed me as follows: "The most recent bit of news is that the specialist treating her has informed my nephew that there is a 60/40 chance that the children may have the illness as well! They need to carry out tests on

them. Please God, all will be well and Blessed Edmund will not be found wanting.” There is plenty of motivation there to continue our prayers for the entire Loughran family.

## **Bonnie Schott’s Celebration of the 2007 Novena**

I hear you asking, ‘Who is Bonnie Schott?’ Bonnie from Indianapolis USA is mother-in-law of Dr Daire Keogh, Lecturer in History at St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra, Dublin. In her spare (?) time, Bonnie is a voluntary catechist at her local Catholic school. Daire, as you probably know, has written a biography of Blessed Edmund and is at present researching a two-volume critique of the Christian Brothers in Ireland. During visits to her daughter Katie who is married to Daire, Bonnie became enthused for Blessed Edmund and two years ago she recommended her niece Bridget Mayberry as a worthy focus for the 2005 Edmund Rice Novena. Bridget, you will recall, went to God in July 2005, but her little boy Cody who was ill at the time is now doing very well, T.G. I met Bonnie twice during visits she made to Rome. I first met her with Daire and Katie and their family, and then last year she was in Rome for the canonization of St Theodora Guerin, the first Indianapolis saint. We had Bonnie and her friends as guests for a meal at our Generalate. She enthused her parish priest in Indianapolis about Edmund Rice, and a first-class relic of Blessed Edmund now holds pride of place in the parish church of St Roch, Indianapolis. By the way, Fr Wilmoth also visited us here in Rome.

Now read on [e-mail of 17 May 2007]: “We had the most beautiful Mass today at St Roch’s, and I wanted to tell you about it. I saw Fr Wilmoth at about 8.40 a.m. today as I was turning in some raffle tickets before the 9.00 a.m. Mass. Father asked me if I knew what saint we were doing today. He grinned and told me I had better not be late, because they do the intro at the beginning of Mass that tells what feast day we are celebrating. Well, lo and behold, today was Blessed Edmund Rice Day at St Roch’s. His actual feast is May 5, but they did it today because Mr G’s class had prepared the Mass – and he always puts in a lot of effort. They gave a short intro to his life before Mass, and then Father gave the most beautiful sermon about Edmund Rice. Donal and Daire, you would have been very proud of Father’s history lesson on Edmund!

The readings they selected for the Mass were absolutely perfect for the life of Edmund. They did 1 Peter 4: 7b – 11 and then Mark 9: 33-37 for the Gospel. Father had our Edmund Rice relic on the altar the whole time, and Mr G had the kids sing “Set Your hearts on the Higher Gifts” for the responsorial Psalm. He did the Servant Song for the Offertory, and the kids took up several items that reflected the life of Blessed Edmund in the Prayers of the Faithful. They sang “The Summons” song at the start of Mass.

**You are probably wondering why I am telling you all this. Well, as I sat there listening to the sermon, I felt I was experiencing a little bit of heaven today. I think there were many celestial beings “in the house” today. And I realised that this was a very special Mass, with the relic and all the perfect readings and songs. So I asked Blessed Edmund if he would heal Matt’s back at the Consecration and help Tom find a new job and direction....**

**And Father Wilmoth, Mary De Armand, Mr G and myself were all at this Mass, and we have all been to the International Headquarters of the Irish Christian Brothers in Rome! ...I am really hoping that Edmund Rice will be canonized before our Indianapolis Edmund Rice Fan Club gets too old to travel to his canonization! We are all ready to buy our tickets now and be there for the occasion, now that we are seasoned veterans of Rome canonizations. I cannot think of a better way that Edmund Rice could pay Daire and Katie back for all the work that have done to write his history than to cure one of their relatives – and I nominate Matt! I believe that Bridget was with us in spirit today, along with my Mom and Dad.”**

**What can I say? Doesn’t it do your heart good to hear of such devotion to Edmund, in a city where there are neither Christian Brothers nor Presentation Brothers! But with promoters like Bonnie (and her parish priest), who is to say that our next miracle won’t come from Indianapolis USA? God bless you, Bonnie, and may Blessed Edmund bless you.**

## **Death of Philosopher John Moriarty (1938 – 2007)**

**After a brave struggle with tumours, that great searcher, philosopher John Moriarty, for whom we prayed in last year’s Novena, returned to God on Friday, 1 June 2007, Edmund Rice’s Birthday incidentally. For a short time he lost his cradle Catholicism and sought the truth in a great search through Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and the beliefs of Eskimos and Australian Aborigines. He finally travelled full circle back to Jesus of Nazareth and his childhood Christianity. Along the way he discovered closeness to God in a garden. A mystic, he lived his final years in the shadow of Mangerton Mountain in Kerry and acquired a wonderful appreciation for the spirituality and contribution to society of Blessed Edmund Rice. The author of several books, ‘Dreamtime’ written in 1996, gives a wonderful account of his search ‘for the Holy Grail’ of God and Goodness. He was laid to rest on Monday, 4 June, in Aghadoe Cemetery, after Holy Mass in the Cathedral, Killarney. Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh (another Moriarty), the well-known broadcaster and sports commentator, devotes the**

final chapter of his most recent book to John, 'From Borroloola to Mangerton Mountain' (2006). On p.265, he claims about John:

**"I subscribe to the school of thought that advances the notion that this unique philosopher will one day be recognized as one of Ireland's greatest original thinkers." Light of Heaven to him from all of us.**

## **Memorial in Doneraile, Co. Cork, to Nagle Rice Family**

**I mentioned a few issues back about the possible construction of a memorial to all three congregations of the Nagle Rice Family in my native Doneraile, Co. Cork. It is most unusual that all three groups should have a connection with one particular location. Some of the earliest Presentation Sisters (including Nano Nagle), Christian and Presentation Brothers (including some of the pioneers of the North Monastery and South Monastery, Cork) are from the immediate area. Br Michael Augustine Riordan, first Superior of the separate South Monastery (1826), was architect of the Parish Church of the Nativity of Our Blessed Lady (1827). My contention is that it was Nano Nagle's local reputation and example that facilitated so many local men joining Blessed Edmund Rice's early Brotherhood. The story continues into the future through the influence of the local Nagle Rice Secondary School.**

**At a meeting during Easter Week 2007 that included the parish priest, some parishioners and representatives of all three religious congregations, it was decided to go ahead and erect a memorial. The three congregations and the parish will share the cost of the monument. A sub-committee is actively planning a design at present, and a follow-up meeting is planned for the end of September, on a date when I can attend from Rome. Nano Nagle's Cause took a turn for the better recently with the appointment of Fr Brendan Cooney, Procurator of the Kiltegan St Patrick's Missionaries, as Vice-Postulator. His special task will be to have the title 'Venerable' bestowed on the Servant of God, Nano Nagle, as soon as possible. Many years of historical research have been completed by Sister Pius O'Farrell PBVM. Let us share our prayers for Nano's eventual canonization with the promotion of our own Edmund. He would be the first to acknowledge that he owes a debt of gratitude to Nano. His early Brothers followed her Rule and they were initially known as Religious of the Presentation.**

## **Laser Image of Blessed Edmund**

As readers of this column may know, great work is afoot at Mount Sion, Waterford, to erect a monument truly worthy of Blessed Edmund. A new Chapel to house Edmund's permanent tomb is being erected and a new International Heritage Centre to do justice to Blessed Edmund's reputation is almost completed. It is envisaged that the centrepiece of this new amenity will be a laser-generated image of Blessed Edmund's head. All the necessary permissions have been obtained at Roman and local level. On Monday, 18 June, the coffin will be opened by Mr Thompson, the local undertaker. The skull will be reverently placed on the altar for laser-photography and then re-buried. Under my direction as Postulator, a group of scientists from Liverpool Museum will attend and carry out the necessary scientific work. Then a Dr Caroline Wilkinson, a noted forensic scientist, will reconstruct Edmund's face (1) as an old man, (2) as a younger man, by methods perfected by police forces in the past fifty years. It is generally acknowledged that the early portraits of Edmund Rice taken from life leave something to be desired. The results of the advances of modern science will, hopefully, give a clearer picture of what Edmund really looked like. The results, with an explanation of the scientific methods deployed, will form the focus of the new International Heritage Centre, all going well. By the way, the present Blessed Sacrament Chapel at Mount Sion, the temporary resting place of the remains of Blessed Edmund, will be demolished at the end of June to make way for the newer and larger chapel being constructed to house Edmund's new permanent tomb. Please pray to Blessed Edmund that what is envisaged under the leadership of the special committee working under the direction of Mr Barry O'Brien CEO, former Director of Waterford Glass, will result in a worthy final resting place for Edmund, our future Saint Edmund, and a source of inspiration for all his many followers.

## **Recent Snippets about the Presentation and Christian Brothers**

On 5 May 2007, Feast of Blessed Edmund, the three 'home' Provinces of the Christian Brothers representing England and Ireland came to an end. In their place is the new European Province, embracing Ireland, Britain and mainland Europe, with new headquarters at Marino, Dublin. Former foreign missions in Africa and South America now form part of new Provinces in these vast continents. The challenge for the new European Province may well be to look at unanswered needs in Europe itself. Its very first Provincial Chapter takes place at Sedgley Park, Manchester UK, at the end of July and the beginning of August.

The Presentation Brothers recently opened their very first Community on mainland Europe. It is located in Slovakia and will concentrate on service to the Roma/Romany people, often considered to be the most discriminated against group in modern Europe. The new community consists of Seán Bonner (Co. Donegal), Vincent Costen (Co. Waterford), and Michael McKeown (Co. Tyrone). We pray that Blessed Edmund may be with his Brothers in this new endeavour.

**At an impressive Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral, New York, on 6 May 2007, the Christian Brothers' continued presence in the USA since 1906 was celebrated by a large congregation, including Christian Brothers, Presentation Brothers, students and staffs from the New York schools, and members of the Edmund Rice Network. The chief celebrant was Bishop Gerald Walsh, Auxiliary Bishop of New York. The Christian Brothers were officially represented by Br Michael Godfrey CFC, Deputy Congregation Leader, Rome, and Br Hugh O'Neill CFC, Province Leader, North American Province, Texas. The Presentation Brothers were represented by Br Gerard Despathy FPM, Province Leader, and Br Francis Sebo FPM, Florida. Ad multos annos!**

**In October 2007, the Christian Brothers' five provinces and region, covering Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, East Timor, and Pacific Islands, will unite as the new Oceania Province. The headquarters will be at Brisbane in Queensland, symbolically facing out to the Pacific Ocean where the Brothers have recently opened two Communities in the Philippines.**

**In answer to a query, Claudia, the little American girl with leukaemia that we were praying for in last year's Novena, is recovering well. Her uncle is Br Francis Schafer FPM, Kissimmee, Florida. In a recent e-mail, he stated that Claudia (7) is back in school and is living the normal life of a seven-year-old. She has been through a rough time of chemotherapy. "Her hair is now growing back and her body's physique is returning to normal. She will conclude the maintenance phase of therapy in November. Claudia has been a little hero through this journey. She has faced several setbacks with amazing courage." So keep praying, keep hoping that Blessed Edmund's intercession will see her through.**

**Keep in touch. Keep cheerful. Keep praying. Keep Edmund under pressure.**

**Br Donal S. Blake CFC,  
Edmund Rice Roman Postulator  
Congregation Historian  
+39 06 3211 0363**

**postulatorcfc@gmail.com  
1 June 2007,  
Birthday of Blessed Edmund**