

Plunkett's Canonization 'A Great Joy' for Ireland

Dublin [RNS] — An Irish Roman Catholic bishop who was hanged, drawn and quartered by British authorities in 1681 on a charge of "high treason" will become Ireland's first canonized saint in 700 years.

At a Vatican consistory on Dec. 12, Pope Paul announced that Blessed Oliver Plunkett, who was Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland during a period of anti-Catholic persecution in the reign of King Charles II, will be canonized on Oct. 12, 1975.

Blessed Oliver will be one of six new saints, including Blessed Elizabeth Ann (Bayley) Seton, the United States' first native-born saint, who will be canonized during the 1975 Holy Year.

The last Irish saint to be canonized was St. Lawrence O'Toole, an Archbishop of Dublin, who died in 1180 and was canonized in 1226.

In the past few years a campaign for the canonization of Blessed Oliver was vigorously conducted by a national committee under the chairmanship of Cardinal William Conway, Primate of All Ireland, who greeted the Pope's announcement as "a great joy for Ireland."

The new Irish saint was born at Loughcrew, near Old Castle, County Meath, on Nov. 1, 1625, the son of John Plunkett, Baron of Loughcrew, who belonged to one of the wealthiest and most influential of Ireland's Anglo-Norman families.

In 1674, Oliver went to Rome and enrolled at the Irish College to study for the priesthood. After his ordination in 1654, he remained in Rome, worked



Every year thousands of Irish Catholics make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Blessed Oliver Plunkett, former Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, in Drogheda where the martyr's head is preserved in this glass enclosure. [RNS]

among the poor and took degrees in canon and civil law at the Roman College.

He was appointed Roman representative of the Catholic bishops in Ireland and served as a professor of theology at the College of the Propagation of the Faith until 1669, all the while engaging in charitable activities in Rome's hospitals and orphanages.

Named Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland by Pope Clement IX, he was consecrated in Ghent, Belgium, on Nov. 30, 1669, and returned to Ireland in the Spring of 1670 after an absence of 25 years.

In 1673, the London Parliament

forced King Charles II to publish an edict that commanded all Roman Catholic bishops and religious order priests to leave Ireland. Religious houses were closed down and dispersed monks and friars went into hiding.

Blessed Oliver himself, refusing to obey the edict, went underground and continued to carry on his pastoral duties as best he could. Open and active anti-Catholic persecution ceased temporarily in the Spring of 1675, but all disabilities affecting Catholics remained in force. Then, in 1678, the "Titus Oates Plot" burst on the scene, and the English government renewed its anti-Catholic campaign.

Titus Oates, the son of an Anabaptist preacher, managed to inflame public opinion in England by spreading stories of alleged Roman Catholic intrigues to assassinate King Charles and place his brother, James, on the throne. (The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church says the "supposed plot" seems "to have been a pure invention of Oates.")

Archbishop Plunkett was arrested Dec. 6, 1679, accused of violating the 1673 royal edict and of conspiring to bring a French Army into Ireland. The charges were later dismissed, but new charges were filed and the archbishop went on trial in Dunkalk in July, 1680, accused of fomenting a revolt that would lead to the murder of Protestants and the establishment of the "Romish religion" in Ireland.

The trial was transferred to London, and in short order the prelate was convicted of rebellious and traitorous actions and of plotting with the French and Spanish against the English. (One of the prosecution's chief witnesses, Henry O'Neill (O'Neal) later confessed that he had perjured himself.)

On Friday, July 11, 1681, Archbishop Plunkett was taken to Tyburn Prison, hanged, disembowled, and decapitated.

Vatican Presents Orthodox Church Relics of Saints

Ankara, Turkey [RNS] — The relics of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Greek brothers venerated as "apostles of the southern Slavs" in the ninth century, were handed over to the Orthodox Church of Greece by a Vatican representative at a ceremony in Istanbul on Nov. 30.

Ankara Radio said the relics which had been preserved for centuries at the Vatican were presented to His Holiness, Demetrios I, Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul) and spiritual leader of the Eastern Orthodox world, by Father Pierre Duprey, undersecretary of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity.

The presentation took place at the Patriarchal church of St. George during a ceremony marking the feast of Saint Andrew, traditional founder of the Church in Constantinople.

The broadcast said the relics of SS Cyril and Methodius will eventually be kept in the church of SS Cyril and Methodius currently under construction in Salonika, Greece, the birthplace of the two brothers.

Cyril, a secular priest who died in 869, and Methodius, a monk who died in 885, preached the

Gospel, in Slavonic, in Moravia. Cyril later became a monk. Methodius became Archbishop of Simium and persuaded the reigning Pope to allow a vernacular liturgy in Slavonic. Methodius had also translated most of the Bible into Slavonic by the time of his death.

The brothers, whose memory is revered by Czechs, Croats, Serbs, and Bulgars, are regarded as patrons of the unity of the Eastern and Western Churches.

WIDOWED PARENTS MEETING

The Catholic Widowed Parent's Club will begin the new year with a meeting on Jan. 3, Friday, at 8:30 p.m. at St. Theodore's Church, 168 Spencerport Road. Judge Carl Scacchetti will be guest speaker. A social hour will follow. All Catholic widows and widowers are invited.



Elizabeth and William Seton

Mother Elizabeth Ann (Bayley) Seton, whose canonization as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church was announced by Pope Paul VI on Dec. 12, was married in 1794 to William Magee Seton at New York's St. Paul's Chapel in a ceremony witnessed by Episcopal Bishop Samuel Provost. William Seton was a wealthy shipper and importer. Mother Seton was 20 when they were married and in their nine years of marriage, the couple had five children. Seton's failing health took the couple to Italy, where he died in 1803. While in Italy, Mother Seton became familiar with the Roman Catholic Church and with the nuns who worked among the urban poor. On her return to New York, she began corresponding with Catholic Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore. In 1805, she and her five children were received into the Catholic Church in New York's St. Peter's Church. She taught school in New York and headed a girls school in Baltimore before taking vows before the then Archbishop Carroll. In 1809, she founded the first American branch of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul at Emmitsburg, Md. She died in 1821 at the age of 47. When she is canonized on Sept. 14, 1975, Mother Seton will become the first native-born American saint. (RNS photo)

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