

'The Troubles'



Graffiti cover the walls in Derry; on the one at left a caricature of Margaret Thatcher biting the head off Ireland.

Diocesan Takes Intimate Look at Woeful, War-torn Derry

(Kathleen Mahoney, coordinator of religious education at St. Anne's Parish in Rochester, recently returned from a two-month "working holiday" in Derry as guest of the Discalced Carmelites.)

By Kathleen Mahoney

It wasn't only the dense Irish accent which was a stumbling block for me in understanding the people of Northern Ireland. The phrase, "the troubles," was a frequent part of the conversation. But what troubles were the people referring to? The Easter Rebellion of 1916? The Bloody Sunday massacre and riots of the late 60s and early 70s? Or were they referring to the ongoing guerrilla warfare that is a part of the daily routine of their lives — the car hijackings, security checks, friskings, bombings, murders.

The ambiguity of the phrase speaks well of the situation in Northern Ireland. The troubles have been going on a long time, and as my hosts correctly noted, the closer one gets to the situation, the less one understands about the whole thing.

To know the history of Ireland is to know a history of atrocities. The root of the problem is the 1,000-year-old question of the relationship between Ireland and England.

Only through a treaty with England during this century did Ireland achieve status as an independent nation, though the cost was high: the six northern counties, which had a high Protestant population, were to remain under the rule of England, while the 26 Catholic counties of the south became independent and known as the Republic of Ireland.

The prejudice against and the oppression of the Catholics in the north is



The Bishops' Gate dates from the Middle Ages. It is now the site for gun emplacements and surveillance cameras. As the photographer was taking this picture, a voice boomed from a loudspeaker on the gate, "Cease and desist and leave this place at once."

Liturgical Federation Probes RCIA Methods

Sacramento — National liturgical leaders meeting here this month have called for a nation-wide survey of methods being used in the new Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

The annual meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions called for the collection and review of "models" of the process from a wide variety of pastoral settings and in a broad range of media.

The move comes 12 years after the U.S. bishops introduced the new process for adults seeking membership in the Catholic Church. The federation meeting examined progress in implementing the rite since 1972.

not unlike the bias which blacks in this country have known. Catholics didn't get jobs or decent housing. Predominantly Catholic towns and cities can't depend upon the government for funds like Protestant areas can, and so the roads, water works, shopping centers and the like are far inferior.

The situation exploded during the late 60s, when a Catholic civil rights march between Belfast and Derry was ambushed at Burtollet Bridge, just outside of Derry. The police did nothing to intervene. This incident sparked the rioting and fighting which made headlines around the world. Note, though, that the cause became more than just a civil rights issue. It quickly became politicized. The Catholic population began to want more than equal rights. They wanted England out of Ireland, and they wanted reunion with the 26 counties of the south.

The English sent in the Ulster Defense Regiment (UDR) to keep the peace, but, ironically enough, this peace-keeping force became a symbol of England's oppression and has become the ongoing source of tension.

The young people I worked with, in their late teens and early 20s, have known nothing but life in a police state. The heavily armed army and police constantly patrol the streets, in full battle gear. Checkpoints are a frequent part of each day. At a checkpoint one is frisked, while one's purse or parcels are searched. It's facing the four or five loaded M-16s that makes it unnerving. Helicopters are continually overhead, taking photographs and watching for the movement of IRA guns and artillery.

Many of the young people claim that the violence hasn't affected them.

But it has.

Gregory told me of a tear gas canister flying through the window of his kindergarten classroom. He smirks when he describes how he hid underneath Sister's skirt. Michelle's brother was taken to prison for five years without a trial. Just a few months ago a car bomb went off killing a group of soldiers driving by in a land rover. One of the soldiers died in pieces at Michelle's feet.

Not one of the young people I met hadn't some story of how the violence had touched their lives: the ongoing unemployment of their parents, the innumerable bomb scares at school, the deaths of friends and relatives. They've seen it all.

While it can't be condoned, it is perfectly understandable why the young people join the IRA or its equally illegal Protestant counterpart, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

Brendan was with the IRA for ten years in intelligence gathering. For ten years he plotted how to kill soldiers and police. He drank heavily and beat his wife. But five years ago he gave his life to the Lord, and gave up the IRA. Since then he's been studying the Bible inside out, and preaching a message of peace to the young people. The risk is great: the IRA deals severely

with those who leave and those who tell the young to avoid it.

Edward Daly is Bishop of Derry. He's the local hero. During the Bloody Sunday Massacre he left the relative safety of his rectory, and holding a handkerchief above his head, went into the battle to give the last rites to his dying people. He is as courageous today in preaching peace as he was 14 years ago on Bloody Sunday.

But, frankly, the future is rather bleak.

The IRA intends to carry on its guerrilla warfare. The English government is as adamant as ever about retaining Northern Ireland as an English territory. The people frequently speak of how inevitable civil war seems.

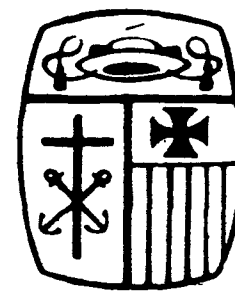
But their lives go on, amid guns, barbed wire and the constant helicopters.



Miss Mahoney would take groups of young people from Derry to this more peaceful spot at Linsfoot, Donegal. She stands at far left. Among this group are Michelle and Gregory.

CARDINAL MOONEY HIGH SCHOOL

A CO-EDUCATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL OFFERING COLLEGE PREPARATORY, BUSINESS, AND GENERAL COURSES.



Conducted By
HOLY CROSS BROTHERS
and
SISTERS OF MERCY

800 Maiden Lane, Rochester, NY
865-1000

Open House: Thursday, October 25 — 7:30-9:00 p.m.
Entrance Exam: Saturday, January 5