

Columnists

## A Marian pilgrimage to Ireland

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Q: Weren't you in Ireland recently?

A: Yes, from August 13 to 24. In 1986, I had written that our October tour would be the last I would be conducting. But a friend phoned last June about a proposed Marian pilgrimage to Ireland, and offered to take care of all expenses, saying, "This will be a relief from the responsibilities of your tour guidance." I replied, "Tour guidance was always a pleasure, but I should be very glad for your offer."

Q: What was it like?

A: It was under the auspices of Guest House, a clerical clinic at Lake Orion near Detroit. It was established by the famous Mr. Ripley, and encouraged by Archbishop Edward Mooney, then the bishop of Detroit. There were 27 persons in our group, including four old-time Ireland visitors from the Rochester diocese: Emmet Hennessy of Our Mother of Sorrows, on his fifth visit to Ireland; Mary Louise Garvin of St. John's, Ridge Road, her 20th; Helen Pratt, the lady lawyer of Dansville, her fourth; and myself, of Webster, my 16th.

Redemptorist Father Jack Fulford of Detroit, an alumnus of Guest House of 19 years, and an evangelist for Alcoholics Anonymous, was the trip's spiritual director, assisted by a lovable young matron, Kathy Godell, who is on the staff of Guest House.

Q: Was it a pilgrimage or a tour?

A: Both. It was advertised as a Marian pilgrimage, and Father Fulford and I concelebrated Mass each day: first, on the Sunday we landed, at Shannon Shamrock Motel, next to Bunratty Castle and Durty Nellie's Pub; then in Killarney at the Cathedral and the Franciscan church which has a fine shrine to St. Martin DePorres; in Dublin at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, which has the body of Matt Talbot; then on to Kylemore Benedictine Abbey in Connemara, and a climax at the shrine of Our Lady of Knock in Mayo where it always rains. Each day we said the rosary while traveling in the coach. "Bus" is a verboten term. The more elegant "coach" is in.

Intertwined with piety, we experienced the beauty of the small country of 40 shades of green, with some special entertainments at Knappogue Castle and the hilarious Hal Roach

## On the Right Side

Show at Jurys in Dublin. The women sated their passion for shopping in the many shops.

Q: What of Ireland?

A: In casual conversations with laity and clergy, there was general agreement about the desperate economic situation: 20 percent unemployed in the Republic, and 35 percent unemployed in the Ulster Catholic community. Consequently, great numbers of young Irish are going to England, Australia and the States for work. Several said: "We're having a brain drain, with many of our most able and educated young people leaving the country." To stop in the churches, the devotion of the young people is edifying, but to stop in the pubs is to worry about the many young who guzzle vast quantities of stout and beer, with the girls equaling the men in capacity.

The traditional good-heartedness of the Irish was manifested in many ways. When asked for help in directions, they often responded by escorting one to the proper location. At Waterford, Jack Goodman was shopping in town and missed the coach to Waterford glass works. He asked a woman: "Did you see our coach? It was going to the glass works, and I missed it!" She hadn't, but a man in a car heard him and called out: "Hop in. I'll take you there!" And he did.

While looking for the Franciscan church in Waterford, I stopped in at a huge Church of Ireland (Episcopalian) church. The rector was there, and with Episcopalian graciousness showed me around. When I was leaving, he remembered I was from Rochester and said: "Rochester is Waterford's Twin City. I wonder if we could twin with the Episcopal Church there?" I replied: "I'll send you the name and address of the Episcopal bishop." I am confident that he understood that my own good will was not diluting my enthusiastic Catholicism.

## Your sins are forgiven

By Cindy Bassett

"Josiah, wake up! I have wonderful news!" I heard my brother, Simon, calling from the next room.

From past experience, I knew any ideas of his would not be quickly dismissed even by someone like me, whose dreams for the future had long since been forgotten.

"Well, Simon," I called back, "come here and tell me your news." Then I added to myself, "A paralyzed man certainly can't go to you."

"Josiah, do you remember that fellow, Jesus, everyone is talking about?" he began eagerly.

"Vaguely. They are saying Jesus is some sort of prophet," I replied.

"There are stories circulating all over the area about miraculous healings by Jesus," Simon continued. "The blind see, the deaf hear. Jesus has even cured lepers!"

"Oh, no!" I groaned, certain of what my brother would say next. I had given up the idea long ago of ever being healed. My brother, on the other hand, had been tireless in his efforts to find a cure for me. There was none to be found. The futility of it all had left me with something much worse than a physical condition. I was furious with a god that would have afflicted me in the first place. I could never tell Simon.

"Simon, I appreciate everything that you have tried to do for me," I said gently. "But it's time for you to realize that there is no cure for my paralysis!"

I watched his downcast look. "I promise that this will be the last time. It's just that I have a feeling about Jesus. Are you willing to pass up one last chance?"

In the end, it was only with the aid of several friends that I was carried on a mat to the house where Jesus was teaching. When we finally arrived, the crowd was so large that the doorway was blocked and no one offered to let us pass through.

"Well, that's it, Simon, let's go home," I said.

## The Bible Corner

"You've had your last chance with me. There's no way we'll even come close to Jesus!"

"I've thought of a plan," Eli, one of our friends announced.

In a few minutes, they had climbed up on the roof of this house with me. As I looked on, Eli carefully removed some of the roof tiles until the opening was large enough for me to pass through. The people inside gasped as they watched me being lowered directly in front of where Jesus was teaching. I was afraid to look at him. Would he be angry that someone had interrupted him?

Instead, Jesus merely looked from me to the roof top and smiled, saying, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

I felt my face redden with embarrassment. Could Jesus know how I felt about God? Then I heard the Pharisees and scribes muttering angrily to themselves, "Only God can forgive sins. Jesus speaks blasphemy!"

Jesus turned to his critics and asked, "Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Get up and walk'? In order that you may know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins ..." Then looking at me, Jesus commanded, "Get up, take your mat and go home now."

As my brother and friends watched with the rest of the crowd, I began to walk. I was overjoyed that Jesus had healed my paralysis, but he gave me an even greater gift that day. He had restored my faith in God's care for me. Scripture reference: Luke, Chapter 5: 17-27. Meditation: What hidden ills in my life need to be given to Jesus for healing?



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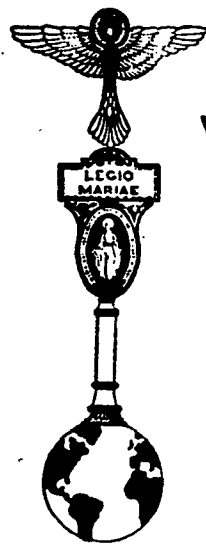
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