

Columnists

Pilgrimage strays from beaten path

By Father Paul J. Cuddy
Some think it strange, but I don't. A dozen years ago, a group I was conducting through Ireland, Co. Kerry, the Grand dame of Irish hotels. Across the street from the hotel is the Franciscan church, devotional in its altars, statues and busy confessionals. During the day, people streamed in and out to visit the Blessed Sacrament, to pray the Stations of the Cross and the rosary. On the street corner between the church and hotel is a street conner. On returning from the church toward the hotel, I stopped at the men's side of the convenience and was horrified at the filth — graffiti and the dirtiness of this public place — these in Holy Ireland!

On returning to the States, I wrote the village council expressing my dismay and requesting that steps be taken to clean up the place. There was no answer. So two months later I wrote again, repeating my dismay and request. A very formal letter came from the council, acknowledging my letters and assuring me that the council had voted to take action.

While conducting an annual tour of Ireland, I have made a personal inspection each year but one. That year, I engaged the late Father William Hickey to make the inspection. He returned, saying: "It was rotten pitchforks when we got to Killarney, but I inspected the place, and it was decent." This past August 17, my inspection found it immaculate. Does it matter to be concerned? Yes. Had it not been for my concern a dozen years ago, the walls and stalls would be filthy with graffiti and the floors soggy from dirty neglect. I will write the council to praise them.

From Killarney, our coach with 27 passengers drove on to Bantry Bay, to Wexford, to Wicklow and to Glendelough, founded by St. Kevin. On Friday, we arrived at our Dublin hotel for a three-day stay.

En route to our hotel we passed along Stephen's Green. John Duffy, our coachman and guide, pointed out an almost concealed church, saying: "This is University Church, founded by Cardinal Newman when he was trying to found a Catholic university of Ireland!"

John Duffy is quite knowledgeable about

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Ireland and its history, but that was all he knew about John Newman, whom many knew equal to Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Most of our group knew equally little. Newman was born in 1801; became a professor and Anglican priest at Oxford in the 1830s; a leader in the Anglican Oxford Movement; and he was the Fulton J. Sheen of England for many years. He became a Catholic in 1845, and had a tempestuous life until he wrote his autobiography, Apologia Pro Vita Sua, after which he became a revered hero both to Protestants and Catholics. He died in 1890.

In 1851, Newman was invited by the bishops of Ireland to establish a Catholic university in Ireland that would be comparable to Oxford. But when he came to Dublin, the bishops left him hanging. Still, while there he established the University Church opposite Stephen's Green, which is a jewel. But it pains me that almost no one knows about Cardinal Newman whom many confuse with John Neumann, the Bohemian bishop of Philadelphia canonized in 1977. Fewer know about this beautiful church.

Every time I visit Dublin, I go to that church and light two candles: one for Father C. MacNamara of Corning, and one for Father John S. Hayes of Elmira, both Newman devotees. So I took the bus from the hotel to the church, assisted at 11 a.m. Mass on Sunday, gazed in reverence at the pulpit from which Cardinal Newman spoke, lit my two candles, and bought several copies of a new pamphlet by Thomas O'Loughlin: "Cardinal Newman: Seeker of Truth" which I found in the pamphlet rack.

What G.K. Chesterton wrote is an epitome of the life of Cardinal John Henry Newman: "Theology is the part of religion that requires brains."

The tough task of following Jesus

By Cindy Bassett

One day, when a large crowd had gathered on a hillside to see Jesus, he told them this story:

"Two men were each building a house. One of them constructed his house on a rock for the foundation. It was a long, hard job, but eventually he finished.

"The other fellow found an easier way to build his house. He built it on the sand, where the digging was much easier. His work was done, it seemed, in no time at all.

"A few days later, torrential rains fell. The entire area was soon flooded, and the waters struck at both men's houses. The house built on rock could not be shaken. On the other hand, the man's house founded on sand soon collapsed.

"Therefore," Jesus said to all who were listening, "not everyone who hears my words is my follower — only those who not only hear my words, but practice them. For these people are like the man who built his house on solid ground."

When Jesus had finished speaking, two of the men in the crowd began to reason together about the story. "Nathan, I consider myself to be a good man," Simeon began. "I've obeyed the laws of Moses all my life. Would I not be considered a follower of Jesus?"

"Ah, but it is not as easy as you might think," Nathan replied. "Jesus expects his followers to go far beyond mere observance of rules and regulations."

"Is Jesus trying to abolish our laws?" Simeon asked.

"No. Jesus has said that he came, not to eliminate the laws of Moses, but to fulfill them."

"Well, I fast on a regular basis, and give a portion of my money to the poor," Simeon reasoned. "Would I not be considered a worthy follower of Jesus?"

"Jesus teaches that if someone makes a public display of his good works, then he has already received his reward. A follower of Jesus, on the other hand, does these things in secret and expects nothing in return," Nathan explained.

"Different ideas indeed! Still, you and I have

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been friends for a long time. If you ever needed anything, there I would be, ready to help you," Simeon replied. "Is not that the mark of a follower of Jesus?"

"What if I were not your friend, but the person who had just cheated you in business?" Nathan asked.

"Then you are my enemy, and I would have nothing to do with you!" Simeon replied.

"Even sinners love each other," Nathan continued. "Loving your friends is not very difficult. A true follower of Jesus must love his enemies, too."

"But those who cheat others are criminals!" Simeon argued. "They deserve to be punished!"

"I told you that it was not easy to be a follower of Jesus," Nathan said. "It seems a good thing to us to strike back at our enemies and receive justice that way. But Jesus has commanded that his followers be merciful, even as God shows us mercy. We are to forgive those who mistreat us. For with the measure that you use to judge others, so will your own life be measured."

"Jesus certainly asks a great deal of his followers," Simeon answered. "I don't know if I am all that?"

"Yes, Simeon, it is difficult," Nathan agreed. "But for those who choose to follow Jesus, the rewards are far greater than you can ever imagine. Jesus has promised to be with his followers always, even to the end of time. With a foundation like that for your life, all of the problems of this world can never defeat you. You'll be like the house built on the rock! And someday, all of Jesus' followers will be given an even greater gift — that of eternal life!"

Scripture reference: Luke, Chapter 6:27-49. Meditation: Am I a true follower of Jesus?

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Can you spot the priest in this picture?



Considering the statistics, there probably is one. In Africa, vocations to the priesthood are booming. In the past two years, some 15 seminaries were opened on the continent to handle the increase. But some young men are turned away for studies for the priesthood because of a lack of funds. Writes a rector from Nairobi, Kenya: "The seminary has space for 156 young men, but we have 190; next year, we expect 208. We don't know what we are going to do." YOU hold the answer to that rector's question. Your contribution to the Society of St. Peter Apostle can help the dream of a young boy to be a priest become a reality. Contribute to the education of a mission seminarian today.

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