

‘From the Postulator’s Desk’, Advent 2007

Greetings to all Friends of Edmund Rice! Sorry for the long silence, but personal adjustments arising from ill-health and the transfer of my office from Rome to Dublin have kept me pre-occupied with adjusting to living in Ireland after four years in Rome. I will still need to visit Rome a few times a year to keep in touch with the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and to do some history research in our International Archives at Via Marcantonio Colonna 9. If and when we receive news of what appears to be a definite miracle worked through the intercession of Blessed Edmund, then I may have to spend more time in Rome to find out how to go about setting up a Miracle Tribunal. This morning’s post has brought in an invitation for all 377 Postulators to a special Papal Audience at 12 noon on Monday, 17 December.

Regarding my health, the doctor has discovered as a result of tests that I am suffering from a complaint called pernicious anaemia. Seeing that I suffer from high blood pressure, this was the last condition I suspected. The anaemia is being treated by a course of Vitamin B12 injections and tablets and, already, I can feel the energy returning. I had attributed the tiredness to the recent transfer of my office and its contents from Rome to Dublin. Please pray to Blessed Edmund that I will have sufficient energy to adequately promote his Cause.

New Dublin Office

My new address is:

Postulator’s Office,
Edmund Rice House,
North Richmond Street,
Dublin 1.

The general telephone number is: (a) from outside Ireland: +353-1- 855 6258; (b) from inside Ireland: 01-855 6258. I may, shortly, be assigned a personal number. My e-mail address remains: postulatorefc@gmail.com

The move was set in motion by the sale in Rome of our old Generalate, Via della Maglianella 375, and of our extra residence, Via dei Casali Santovetti 50 (where I lived). The Christian Brothers’ only presence in Rome now is at the new Generalate located at Via Marcantonio Colonna 9, next door to their former secondary school, Istituto Marcantonio Colonna (now a Catholic University). Since we had to give vacant possession of Santovetti to its new owners, we spent a few weeks since the end of the summer disposing of all furnishings, etc. Then I had to start again at Marcantonio Colonna and remove all the files, documents, books, etc., of the Postulator’s Office (ten large boxes) and transfer them to Dublin via Missionary Transport Service. I am busily equipping a new office at North Richmond Street at present. It will take me some time to assign all the files and documents to new shelving and filing cabinets. Wish me well! By the way, Blessed Edmund Rice lived here in North Richmond Street from 1831 to 1838, the last eight years of his time as First Superior General of the Christian Brothers. His bedroom is preserved as a shrine. Next door is the famous O’Connell School (OCS), named after Blessed Edmund’s great friend, “The Liberator”, Daniel O’Connell MP.

Happenings at Mount Sion, Waterford

As mentioned in my last communication, work proceeds at Mount Sion on the building of a new Blessed Edmund Rice Chapel to house his permanent tomb and a new Museum and Heritage Centre to display in a worthy state-of-the art interactive setting the history of Edmund and the early Brothers. Centrepiece of the Exhibition will be a laser-generated image of Blessed Edmund as an elderly man, created over the summer months from an examination of Blessed Edmund's skull by forensic scientists from England. By all accounts, Edmund's image looks very like that depicted in the oil-painting from life, the so-called "Carrick Portrait" that is stored in the Christian Brothers' Residence at Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary, founded 1806.

A very high powered committee is in charge of operations in Waterford and they assure me that the builders are up to schedule. The programme for the Official Opening will be as follows:

Sunday, 3 February 2008:

Mass of the Dedication of the New Blessed Edmund Rice Chapel. The remains of Blessed Edmund will be deposited in a special shrine in the new chapel. The Mass will be celebrated by Bishop William Lee of Waterford and Lismore, assisted by the newly-ordained Bishop Seamus Freeman of Ossory. Bishop Freeman is a member of the Pallottine Fathers and is, appropriately, a past-pupil of Callan CBS, Co Kilkenny. He was stationed in recent years at San Silvestro in Rome, a church well-known to Irish couples who got married there.

Friday, 8 February 2008:

Official Opening of Museum and Heritage Centre. Prime Minister, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD, will perform the ceremony. During the week 3 – 9 February, a series of events will celebrate the life of Blessed Edmund and his two Congregations, the Christian Brothers and Presentation Brothers.

1807: Founding of Dungarvan CBS, Co. Waterford.

Two hundred years ago, the two Mulcahy blood brothers, John and James Mulcahy, founded the Brothers' third establishment at Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, towards the end of 1807. A Mr. Barron of Faha, Co. Waterford, bequeathed by will a sum of £1000, the interest on its investment to establish and maintain a monastery and school. This mission appealed to the charity of Blessed Edmund, particularly as there was no Catholic free-school in the town. The two Mulcahy brothers had their pioneering difficulties as the interest on the Barron bequest was insufficient for the school and they were obliged to take up farming as a part-time occupation. Today the Christian Brothers are no longer present in the town but they are Trustees to the secondary school and primary school that they left behind them. In early December 2007, the local people celebrated the bicentenary of the establishment of the schools in a dignified and fitting manner.

2008: Bicentenary of Edmund and his Companions taking their First Vows:

The year 2008 marks the bicentenary of Blessed Edmund and seven companions taking of annual vows "according to the rule and constitutions of the Presentation Order", at the Presentation Convent, Hennessy's Road, Waterford on the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, 15 August 1808, in the presence of Bishop John Power of Waterford. The little group consisted of the personnel of

Mount Sion, Carrick-on-Suir and Dungarvan, the first three foundations of the Brothers. It was an historic occasion. Heretofore, they were, at best, pious laymen but now they were consecrated religious. The fact that they, a group of men, took their vows according to a formula established by a religious congregation of women, Nano Nagle's Presentation Sisters, set a precedent in the Irish Church. I have no doubt but the Presentation Brothers and the Christian Brothers – and the Presentation Sisters - will celebrate the event appropriately in the coming year.

Denis McLaughlin's new book on Edmund Rice:

Dr Denis McLaughlin, a professor at the Australian Catholic University - a former Christian Brother, - has produced a new study on Edmund Rice and on Ricean Education, just to hand. The book is a labour of love for Denis and runs to 450 pages. It is titled '*The Price of Freedom: Edmund Rice, Educational Leader*'. The foreword is written by Cardinal Edward Clancy. The publishers are David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, Australia. The book retails at 25 Australian dollars. Chances are that it may become available at your nearest Edmund Rice Centre, depending on where on the planet you live. The blurb says: "This book is a critical contribution in the rediscovery of that lost man Edmund Rice. The specific focus is on Rice's contribution as an educational leader. In so doing, the author Denis McLaughlin has critiqued many long-held traditional interpretations and has found them either historically inaccurate or challengeable. He offers alternative perspectives that richly portray an invitingly human Edmund Rice as son, victualler, husband, father, religious Brother and educational leader." See if you agree with his assessment.

Some Vacancies among Promoters

Because of recent bereavements, realignments of personnel and restructuring of regions within both the Presentation Brothers and the Christian Brothers, we are in need of some new Edmund Rice Promoters in various parts of the world. Both Brother Donatus Brazil FPM (Vice-Postulator) and I myself will, over the next few months, be anxious to fill the gaps in time for the next International Novena. We appeal, in particular, to various Congregation Leaders in the areas affected to appoint people in the places bereft. On the other hand, we would welcome individuals, with an interest in Edmund Rice and his Cause, to get in touch with us. I am available at the e-mail address: postulatorefc@gmail.com and Donatus is available at his new e-mail address: jdb1802@ireland.com. Remember that the miracle-cure that we are seeking may well come from your part of the globe.

'Miracle' in Cork?

Work is on-going on the reported favour in the Cork area. We have been trying to assemble, with the assistance of the family concerned, a preliminary report of the supposed happening in the south of Ireland. It is a slow tedious process and takes on a life of its own. Since Br Donatus resides in Cork I am working closely with him in trying to establish the nature of the reported 'cure' and the evidence that prayer to Edmund and the use of his relic occurred around the time concerned. Pray that both the family and the medical people involved will be able, under oath, to state that they are convinced that an extraordinary occurrence took place. It is not required that medical people state that a miracle occurred – what is sufficient is that they acknowledge that in their experience of treating the particular disease that a cure does not normally occur in such circumstances. Copies of the medical records have to be supplied; the quality of the evidence given under oath has to be sifted locally, and only then does an international Medical Tribunal have a second look at the findings of the Cork Diocesan Tribunal. That could be a long road. Pray to Edmund in particular

that this could be the favour that sees him declared 'SAINT EDMUND'. I think it would be particularly appropriate in the case of Blessed Edmund that Cork should be the venue for the miracle that would see him canonised, as it was in Cork that Edmund's followers divided into Presentation Brothers and Christian Brothers. Let us keep praying.

Doneraile Memorial

Work is on-going at the Parish church of the Nativity of Our Lady, Doneraile, Co. Cork, on the Nagle-Rice memorial. As mentioned previously, the local connection with all three congregations of the Nagle-Rice Family is being commemorated – Presentation Sisters, Presentation Brothers, and Christian Brothers. A four-way division of the cost has been agreed to – the local Parish and the three congregations. It is hoped that the work will be completed before Easter. For those in the south of Ireland, details of the unveiling will be announced in good time.

Novena

It is appropriate at this time of year to look back at last year's Novena and look forward to next year's one. Both Linda and Fabian that we prayed for last year are still seriously ill. However, the families and communities involved state that the prayers said and the messages of encouragement sent have brought peace and resignation around serious situations, and there is always the hope that God, through the intercession of Blessed Edmund, may intervene. In the case of Linda, we should keep her whole family in our prayers as word has come that the doctors are afraid that her illness may have been transmitted to her children also. Pity the poor husband! Brother Fabian is now in Marymount Hospice in Cork. He is quite cheerful and resigned, although the cancer seems to have progressed further. He recently attended the annual Cemetery Day at Mount St Joseph. The victory of his team, Nemo Rangers, in the Munster Club Final recently must have brought a smile to his face! Fabian played for them with distinction many times in the past. God bless him and may Edmund guide him.

Casting our minds ahead to the 2008 Novena, let us continue to pray for Linda and Fabian and their relatives and friends. If you have an intention that you think might be suitable for the International Novena, please get in touch with your local Edmund Rice Promoter, if you know one. Otherwise get in direct touch with either Br Donatus or myself by the e-mails listed above. If there is some aspect of Blessed Edmund's life that you or your friends find inspiring, please share that with us.

In the meantime, may the Blessing of the Christ Child and his Blessed Mother and the guidance of Blessed Edmund be with you and your loved ones this Christmas season and in the New Year of 2008. Keep in touch. Live Jesus in our hearts for ever. Blessed Edmund, pray for us and for our loved ones.

Br Donal Blake CFC,

Edmund Rice Postulator/

Congregation Historian,

Edmund Rice House,

North Richmond Street,

Dublin 1,

Ireland.

8 December 2007,

Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

=====