

*This commemorative Booklet is in
thanksgiving to the Sacred Heart
for the past 100 years*

1916 - 12th December - 2016

and is dedicated to:

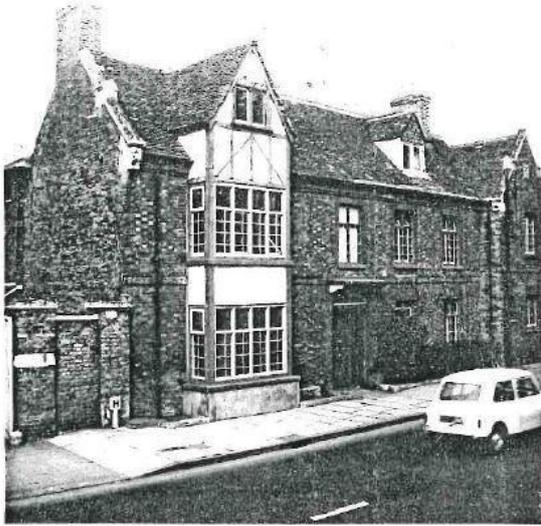
our Foundress

Mother Marie Adele Garnier,

Our Founding Mothers and Sisters

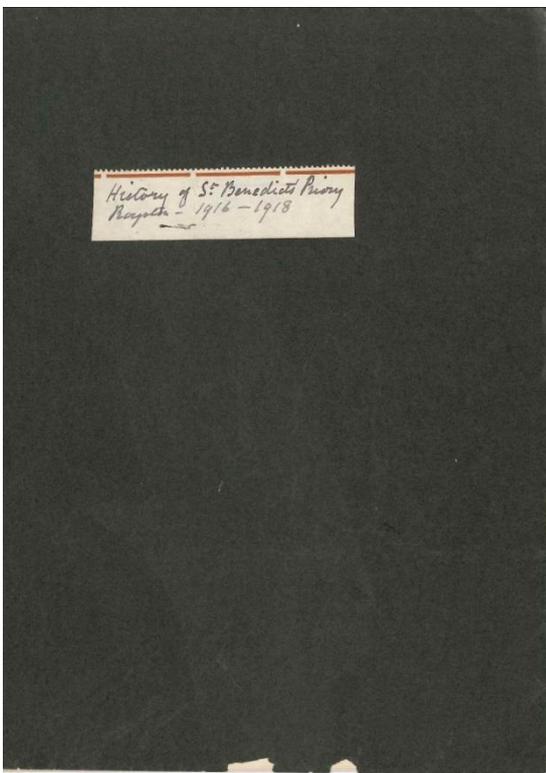
*and all whose lives have been a
part of St. Benedict's Priory*

The foundation of St. Benedict's Priory in Royston.



Historical account of St. Benedict's Priory Royston

1916 to 1918



“In obedience to our custom of sending a yearly report of each convent to our beloved Mother House, the following account of our dear little convent of St. Benedict's Priory Royston is given below. But as obedience requests the account should date from the foundation, the report will cover the two & a half years we have spent here, but will not include the history of the foundation previous to that date.

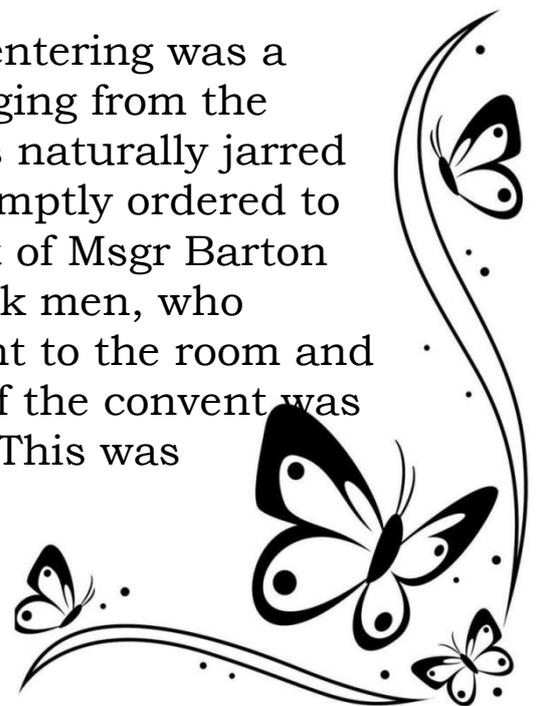
On December 4th three of our Sisters came down from Tyburn to begin the foundation,

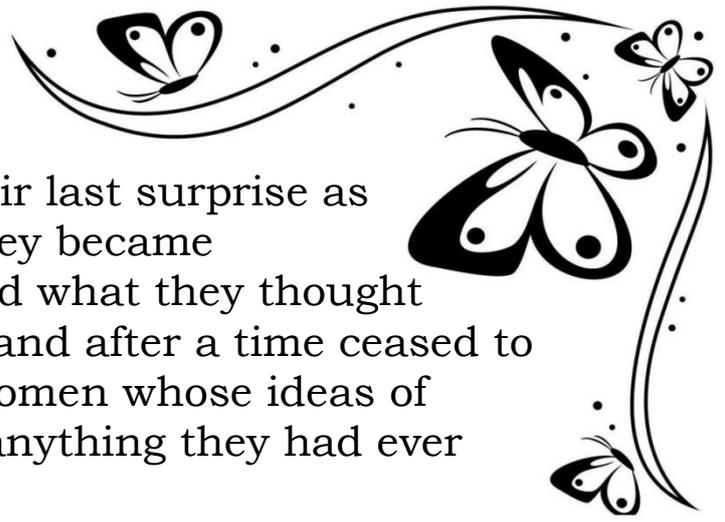
Mother St. Benedict, Sister Rose, and Sister Terese. The furniture consisting principally of a harmonium, chairs, books, cooking and other utensils and the sisters' clothes, followed by a van in the afternoon, and their arrival was greeted with doubtful gratitude by the sisters as the lower rooms of the convent were already filled with cases, cabinets, chairs, tables, beds etc. So space was at a premium, and it was difficult to make room for the incoming goods. However ways and means were found, thanks to the help of Msgr Barton Brown and some workmen who were in the house, and in about two hours time all was safely inside the convent and the sisters alone in their glory.

They had been hard at work since their arrival in the morning getting things a little into order amid many difficulties and they soon unearthed some blankets from the heterogeneous packages, and having safely secured doors and windows sought their much needed and deserved rest on their wooden planks and a straw mattresses.

The following two days were spent in unpacking, arranging cells, making curtains etc to be a little in order for the arrival of our dear V.Rev. Mother Assistant and the Sisters accompanying her.

The first object that caught her eye on entering was a most unmonastic brass chandelier hanging from the ceiling of the would-be refectory, as this naturally jarred upon her love of holy poverty it was promptly ordered to be taken down much to the amusement of Msgr Barton Brown and the astonishment of the work men, who probably regarded it as a great ornament to the room and wondered doubtless in their simplicity if the convent was going to be inhabited by semi-lunatics. This was





their first but by no means their last surprise as time went on, but gradually they became accustomed to the unusual and what they thought eccentric orders they received and after a time ceased to gaze at these strange erratic women whose ideas of comfort were certainly unlike anything they had ever seen before.

Two days later the Mother Prioress arrived with two or three more Sisters and they had the advantage of finding things fairly shipshape except the chapel, so the aid of all available Sisters was called into requisition and the work went on until late on Saturday night.

On Monday the last batch of Sisters arrived from Tyburn including besides those assigned to the new convent, R.Mother Hildegarde and Mother Suzanne who had come down to help. In the afternoon Msgr Barton Brown who had been named as chaplain by his Eminence Cardinal Bourne, blessed the bell of the chapel "in honorem Sanctorem Joannis et Ceciliae" and then proceeded to the blessing of the convent. He was accompanied by the R.Fr.Lievertz Master of Ceremonies at Westminster Cathedral and two Sisters.

After the priests had taken their departure the Sisters turned their attention to the chapel which was by no means ready. Here many unpleasant surprises awaited them. The first discovery was that the lights in the choir touched the Sisters heads when they stood up, the raising of the back stalls not having been allowed for and a facetious demobilised Tommie who was seeing to them remarked: "they'll keep yer 'ead warm" which had the effect of completely upsetting our gravity.

Then the sanctuary curtains were too short, the Tabernacle curtains too narrow, the altar frontal too short

and matters seemed rather hopeless, however the Sisters soon rose to the occasion and before night all was in fair order for the opening ceremony of the next day.

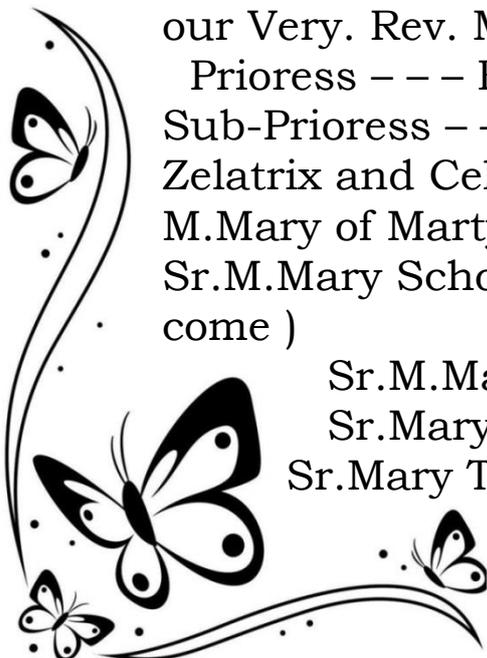
The first thing the next morning Mgsr. Barton Brown blessed the chapel in "in honorem Sancti Benedicti". At 8 am the mass of St Benedict was said by the Very Rev Canon Burton D.D., president of St Edmunds college ,Ware, who has been named Ecclesiastical Superior of this convent by his Eminence Cardinal Bourne, he being also the Ecclesiastical Superior of our convent of Tyburn.

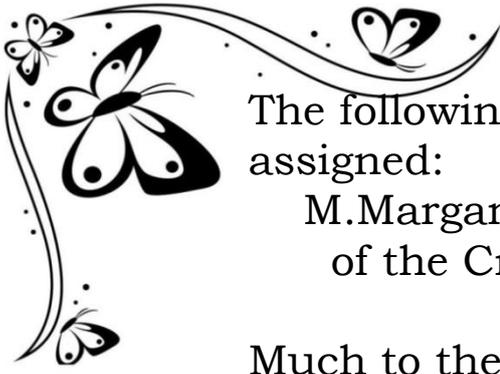
The High Mass at 11.00 was of the 5th day in the octave of the Immaculate Conception, at which his Lordship the Very Rev Msgr Butt Bishop of Campbysopolis pontificated, representing his Eminence who had expressed his intention of opening the convent himself. He was however unable to do so, having been called to the consistory at Rome. Canon Burton was Deacon and the Rev Fr. Bernard Hyde of Hitchin was Sub- Deacon. The chant of the Mass was Plainsong and sung by the Sisters.

Before leaving, Canon Burton named Msgr Barton Brown, Extraordinary Confessor, and Fr. Bernard Hyde of St Edmunds, Hitchin, Ordinary Confessor of the community. The first sisters assigned to the convent by our Very. Rev. Mother General were as follows:

Prioress – – – Rev Mother Mary Dominica of the S.H.
Sub-Prioress – – – R.M.Myriam Joseph of the S.H.
Zelatrix and Cellarian – – – R.M.St. Benedict of the S.H.
M.Mary of Martyrs of Jesus
Sr.M.Mary Scholastica of the Blessed Trinity (not yet come)

Sr.M.Mary Mechtildis of the S.H., Lay Sister
Sr.Mary Rose of the S.H., lay sister
Sr.Mary Terese, of the Infant Jesus, Lay Sister.





The following sisters were sent without being assigned:

M.Margaret Marie, M.Berchmans, and Sr. Mary of the Cross.

Much to the regret of all the sisters and friends, our V.Rev. Mother Foundress was too ill to be at the opening of the convent, and sent R.M.Mary Agnes, Assistant General, to represent her.

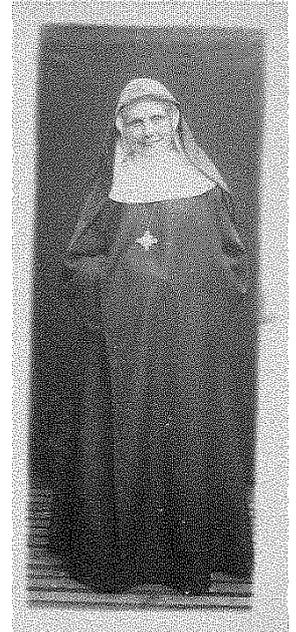
The little convent was thus fairly launched on its way, and the sisters soon settled down to their regular life. However, owing to the small number of sisters, it was not possible to begin the Perpetual Adoration, but three or four nights a week were soon started and as the numbers increased it was found possible to add another night and sometimes two. Only those who are accustomed to living in a convent where there is the



Blessed Sacrament always exposed, can understand the cold, blank feeling that comes over one when the sacred host is placed in the Tabernacle and all the lights are extinguished, and it is the greatest desire of the sisters soon to be

sufficiently numerous to have that great privilege and unspeakable joy of Jesus always in their midst on his Eucharistic Throne.

As in all, or at least in most foundations, there are generally some difficulties and trials to be met with, St. Benedict's Priory was no exception to the rule. The convent being newly built was very damp and cold but no one suffered any ill effects from it and the inconveniences



R.M.M.Dominica,

necessarily entailed by these two drawbacks, were often a source of amusement to the sisters and had the further advantage of exercising them in patience and mortification.

The annual retreat was preached by the V.Rev. Mgsr. Barton Brown in March and the ceremonies of Holy Week were also performed by him.

His Eminence Cardinal Bourne visited the convent for the first time since its opening on April 12th accompanied by Msgr. Barton Brown and the Reverend. F. Cootes. He expressed his satisfaction with all he saw, and said he was very glad to have a community of nuns in the parish and hoped by our prayers and life of mortification we should draw many souls into the church.

The annual renewal of the Vows was made by the community in the presence of Msgr. Barton Brown on the feast of the holy Trinity, as is the custom in our Congregation.





Mother Foundress
Servant of God
Marie Adele Garnier



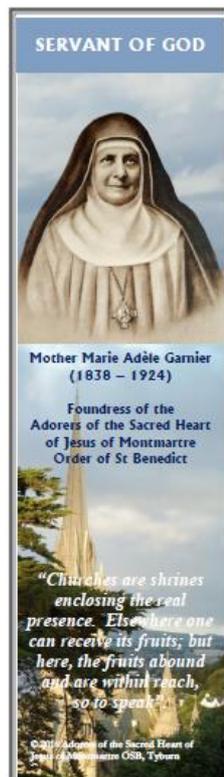
1918



The next event of importance was a very joyful one: it was the coming of our beloved Mother General, her first visit since the convent had been opened. She arrived on June 17th. and the bells were rung with great zest and joy on her arrival. On the 21st dear Mother Assistant from Tyburn came down, so our cup of happiness was full. They stayed with us until July 2nd. During her

stay with us our Very Rev. Mother General five made her annual visitation. It opened on June 24th, the Feast of St John the Baptist and closed on the feast of the visitation July 2nd.

Our Very Rev. Mother General was greatly pleased with all she saw and amongst her special recommendations urged upon us faithful observance of the spirit of poverty with regard to all things placed at our use: order and cleanliness in the cells and employments and to avoid asking for things not absolutely necessary for ourselves or our work: above all to cultivate a spirit of penance and mortification, gladly accepting any sacrifice God may demand from



us: always showing a greater reverence towards our superiors and having a great charity in our relations with one another.

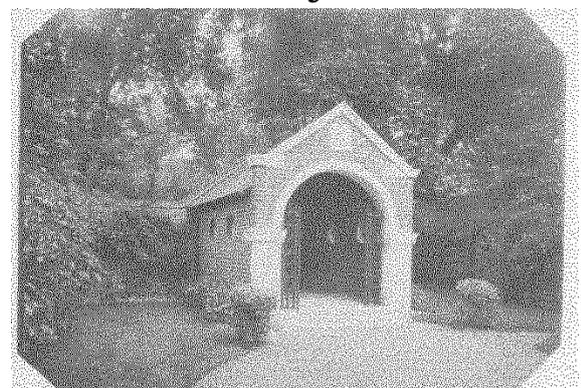
Account of the burial of Mother Foundress at Royston. Annals 1924

On June 9th, Silver Jubilee of the Profession of our dear Mother Foundress and Rev. M. Assistant we heard with sorrow that the former was not expected to live through the day, but she lingered on in great suffering 'till 11:15 pm Tuesday, June 17th and we received this sad news here by wire about 9:30 am the following day.

The Requiem taking place at Tyburn on the 21st the funeral here was fixed for Monday the 23rd. Although Rev Mother Mistress went up for the Requiem, Rev Mother Prioress remained to make the necessary arrangements, and a busy time was spent in preparing the little cemetery to receive its precious treasure.

On the morning of the 23rd, therefore, after singing Matins and Lauds of the dead at 9 am we had a little time to wait before the arrival from London of the motor-hearse containing our beloved Mother's Coffin. It was accompanied by Very Rev. Mother General, (then Vicarress General), R.M.M. Hildegarde, and R.M.M. Louise. M.L' Abbe Marguere also came, as well as Msgr Barton Brown, to be present in the sanctuary.

During the Mass of Requiem which was celebrated by Dom Bede Camm O.S.B. (Father McGrath, parish priest, being Deacon, and Fr. Gay of Kelvedon, sub Deacon), the coffin rested in the secular chapel. After the Mass and the absolutions, also given by Don



Bede Camm, we went out in procession through the cloister door, bearing lighted candles, there to meet our beloved Mother's mortal remains as they were reverently born through the big gate. From thence we accompanied her through the brilliant June sunshine, and amidst the flowers which were looking their best to greet her, with the chants of the "in Paradiso" and the songs of numberless little birds sounding in our ears. We just seemed to be going with our Mother for a little "tour du Jardin" as we should have done, and had hoped to do, if she had been able to visit us once again during her lifetime, she seemed so close to us that we could not feel sad, although Dom Bede's emotion as he stood at the foot of the grave for the last prayers was noticeable.

The vault had been lined with flowers, the path was also bordered with branches of fir and clusters of white pinks, while the central cross of black wood was hidden in green. When we had all sprinkled the Coffin with holy water we left the cemetery, but returned after the midday meal to spend some beautiful moments near our Mother, touching the coffin with rosaries, pictures, etc.

In the evening, we had a quiet little talk gathered round dear Mother Vicaress, whose fortitude and sweetness all through the day had so touched us. She remained with us till 25th as she was exceedingly tired after all the months of watching and anxiety. None who were present here on the day of 23rd will ever forget the impression of joy and peace bequeathed to us as our Mother Foundress' precious legacy, and so deeply felt particularly on that day. We feel that we cannot be grateful enough for the privilege of having been present on that happy day.



Excerpts from early Annals

Divine Providence

1919

We had already had the joy of welcoming Rev. Mother Agnes in April when the first arrangements were made for the building of the novitiate. The sum of money then in hand for the erection was not sufficient to allow of its being begun at once owing to certain regulations of Canon Law. One day, while discussing the matter with V.R.Mother General, Rev.Mother Assistant expressed her regret that we would have to wait for funds, being no longer allowed to venture on Providence in quite the same way as before and as the Saints had done undertaking great things with no other security than the hope of even a miracle if need be. V.Rev Mother at once rejoined: “But do you not think the Sacred Heart can work a miracle in accordance with Canon Law?”



Consequently it was hardly a surprise when shortly after in an interview with the Rev. Dom Bede Camm O.S.B., a sufficient sum to cover the requirements of Canon Law was promised.... The new building is almost entirely due to the generosity of the monk to whom under God, Tyburn itself partly owns its existence.



The Emerald Isle

During our mother's absence, letters had been pouring in from Ireland in most generous response to an appeal we had made by letter and advertisement, for help in our great financial necessities, especially to enlarge our novitiate and build a new chapel, both of which extensions of our buildings are becoming urgently necessary on account of the increasing number of postulants, due, we feel sure, to dear V.Rev. Mother 's prayers and sufferings. We had promised a Novena of Masses to be celebrated from December 16th to 24th and that the intentions sent in would be placed near the tabernacle during this novena and till after the Midnight Mass of Christmas. So many availed themselves of this privilege, several sending more than one alms, that we raised nearly £200 by this means, thanks to the proverbial faith and generosity of the Irish. Several sisters were kept busy at acknowledging the touching letters containing alms which one and all breathed a profound spirit of faith in prayer, and greatly edified as well as consoling us by the material help with which they were accompanied.



Aid from the Mother House

1919

Our Rev. Mother Prioress having been appointed to help V.R.Mother General with the regular visitation of Tyburn Convent, returned bringing two large cases of "Detachments" collected in the course of her passing through the cells and employments, where useful articles

were placed very much in evidence labelled: "I want to go to Royston."

The end of the 1st World War

1918

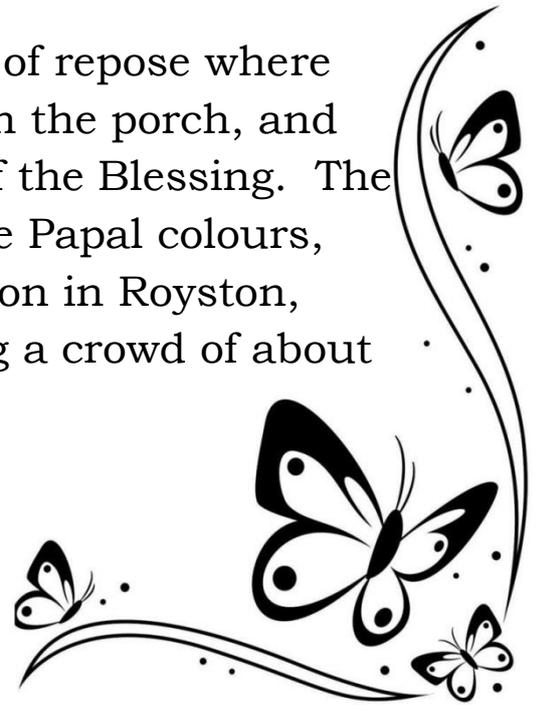
The great event of this year was the signing of the Armistice between the Allies and Germany which took place on November 11th. The good news did not reach us until about 4.o'clock in the afternoon when immediately we rang all the bells in the house and the Te Deum was sung at Benediction in the afternoon. The following morning we decorated all our windows with evergreens and coloured Roses, flags of all the allies and chinese lanterns. Our decorations, we were told, were the best in the town, and were much admored by the passers by.

1919

In the course of the year, besides the usual ceremonies and processions, we had in harmony with the whole country, a holiday on July 19th,. The day officially appointed for the peace celebrations. Previously, the signal announcing the formal cessation of hostilities was fired by guns at the very moment when, singing the Litany of Our Lady at Benediction, we reached the invocation: Regina Pacis, ora pro nobis.

On Sunday August 3rd., the Royston Catholics Peace demonstration – a procession of the King of Kings – took place with an impressive escort of some 250 military cadets who were camping that week in a field leant to

them by Mgr. Barton Brown. An Altar of repose where Benediction was given, was prepared in the porch, and the royal salute marked the moment of the Blessing. The Priory was decorated with flags and the Papal colours, and the first important public procession in Royston, made a splendid impression, attracting a crowd of about 2000 people.



The Round Robin!

1920

In spite of our lack of means however the Sacred Heart provided as usual for daily needs. It was even during the anxious period of the coal strike, when the whole country was adopting stringent measures of economy, that the most essential articles of furniture for the Novitiate were successfully begged by means of the round robin inserted here:

*Dear Friends, I'm sure you'll list with joy
Unto my plaintive song,
From morn to night I'm carolling to speed the day along.
So now perhaps you'll like to hear what mean those sounds
so sweet*

*Well, first of all I Praise my God, as that is only meet.
Then down to earth I take my flight and hopping all
around,
I find my nuns have spread a feast of breadcrumbs on the
ground.*

*But if by chance I am forgot all gently and serene
I hop withion the kitchen where I know there's margarine.
A bite I take then off I fly, my mate and chicks to feed,
So surely you'll not me accuse of avarice or greed.*

*And now to make that doubly clear, I'll tell you why I've
come:*

*It is to ask your charity for these dear nuns' new home.
They've built a house for novices whatever they may be
And nothing's in that house I know because I've been to see!
They - dustpans, brooms and basins, jugs and chairs and
tables need,*

*And saucepans, pans and other things, tis sad, 'tis sad
indeed!*

*No money have they for these things, so what are they to
do?*

*O prithee list unto my song that pleads for just a soU.
A soU's not much I hear you say, then change the "U" to
"V",*

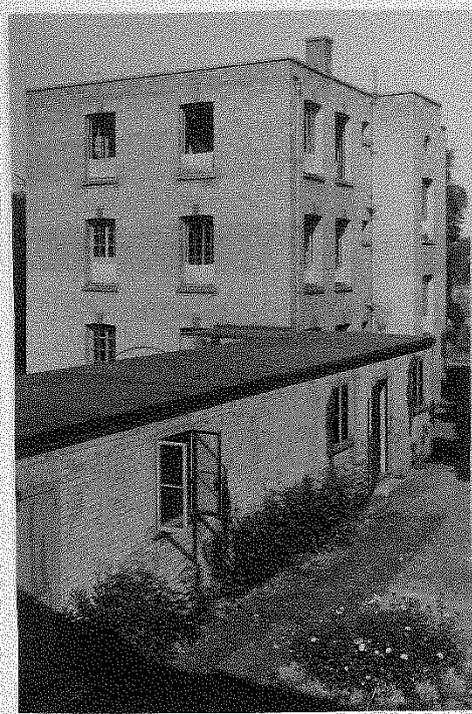
*Or better still just write a cheque and hand it out to me.
And now lest I should weary you I sweetly sing "Goodbye"
And carol "Deo Gratias", as homeward I do fly.*



WITH ROBIN'S BEST THANKS.

*Right joyfully my song shall rise, until at heaven's door
Its notes shall plead and intercede
For those who help us in our need
That blessings on them pour.
So you, kind friend, I'll not forget when in my matin's song
Warbling sweetly and discreetly, all your needs and kindly
deeds
I lay before God's throne.*

Dom Bede Camm celebrates Mass for the opening of the novitiate and reveals its benefactor.



Novitiate Building
with Cloister in the
foreground

Sermon by Rev Dom Bede Camm. on 5th January 1921 for the blessing of the novitiate at Royston:

Obtulerunt et Munera "they offered Him the gifts." -About two years ago I was at Bethlehem, and I shall never forget it-and especially the Mass I said in the cave where our Lord was born. There I said Holy Mass at the altar of the Magi opposite the spot where a star marks the place where God became man for us. The dark cave was filled with the Catholic people of Bethlehem,

with the men in their white turbans and striped coats, and women dressed just as they must have been in the time of our Lord. And close to the altar were three shepherds, in long white cloaks, and white veils on their heads, bound round with crowns, made of green and gold twisted cord. And at the Sacring, they cast these crowns on the ground. As I raised this sacred host-I shall never forget this!-how through the darkness there rang out the wailing of a Babe! And I thought: "this is Bethlehem indeed!"

And we have come here to Bethlehem! For this is the House of Bread. Tomorrow's feast is that of the Magi who followed the star that they might find Jesus and His



Mother, and when they had found Him, they fell down and adored. They found Him after travelling over hard and rugged parts, over desert, baked by the sun, over waterless wastes. And they sought Him, and found Him not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem, the House of

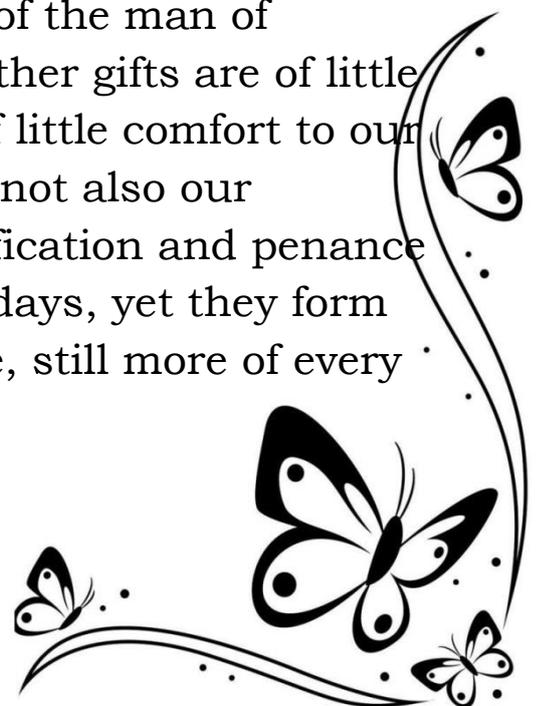
Bread! What was it that told them that that Little Babe was the King of Kings, the Lord God of heaven? It was faith-that wonderful gift! Oh! How blessed are they who find Jesus! Inveni quem diligit anima mea! I have found Him whom I love! He is indeed blessed who seeks Jesus, but no words can tell what Jesus is to those who find Him! As we know, my dear sisters, if we are to find Jesus, we must seek Him through Mary-she must be the star, Stella Maris, our guide in our wanderings, and at our death, we hope that she will be near to show Him to us when we open our eyes to see the King in his beauty.

But the Magi were not content with finding Him! They fell down and worshipped and gave Him gifts. What must it have been to gaze upon the Babe in the House of Bread! but love is active, unwearied, not content with enjoying-must sacrifice itself. They offered Him their mystic gifts. They poured out their Gold profusely at his feet. What is it that he asks of us? The love of our hearts. "My son,

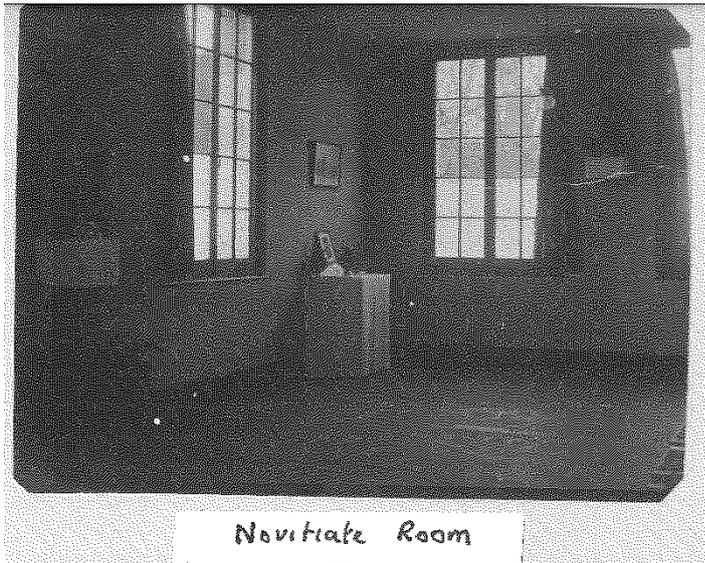
give me thy heart." And he is a jealous God, not satisfied with a share he must occupy the throne of our hearts alone. But the proof of our love for Him is our love of our brethren, of each other, and at the same time we must love for Him and in Him. Our gold must be untarnished, and all his. "If you love not your brother whom you see, how can you love God Whom you have not seen?"

Incense! The King offers it kneeling before the mother and the Babe and Mary places the incense on the coals, and the Babe blesses it, and that perfume twines around the child and His Mother and ascends until it laps the very throne of God. Your incense is prayer that rises from hearts filled with divine love - hearts that Jesus has blessed, and that incense, I rejoice to think will go on rising ceaselessly here day and night. While men forget, you will be kneeling before our divine saviour enthroned in the monstrance. Blessed are you in the great vocation to which God has called you!

If the incense proclaims him Very God of Very God, so the myrrh tells us of the other side - of the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. The other gifts are of little use without the myrrh. It would be of little comfort to our poor fallen humanity if our King was not also our saviour. The myrrh symbolises mortification and penance - words so little understood in these days, yet they form an integral part of every Christian life, still more of every religious life.



You have come to train yourself here, you novices, – in this Bethlehem. You have come to give him the gold – perhaps you have not any! – But you give him your all – that is the gold you sacrifice. Peter had only His nets, but he spoke with confidence: "behold, we have left all things, what reward therefore, shall we have?"



Then mortification, penance. You cannot go where you will – there is the enclosure. And here, you will sometimes have to bear a great deal of cold – that is your myrrh.

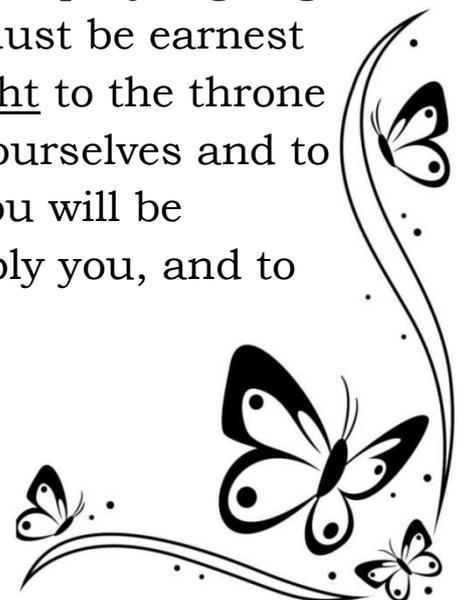
Above all you offer him the Vow of Chastity by which you have withdrawn yourselves from all other love but His. Your prayer is directed by the Vow of Obedience. It is the burning coal which makes the incense arise. The immolation of your whole selves and your Wills which you make to the Babe of Bethlehem by the Vow of Obedience.

Today, begin with great courage and greater love, and a determined will. You will only leave this Bethlehem to go to the heavenly Jerusalem, where you will see him face to face.

Today I ask your prayers for the benefactor who has given you this novitiate – my Father. St Francis of Sales says it is as difficult to speak of oneself as to walk on a

tight-rope! But you may ask how a monk, having made a Vow of Poverty, can give anything, as he has nothing. My Father did not wish all his money to go to his family. He was a very fervent convert and wanted to leave part of it to further the work of the Church in England, so he left this sum to the only one of his sons who he knew did not need the money for himself. At my Profession, I of course, had to make my will, so this money, ordinarily speaking, would not have come to you until my death, had not my Abbot allowed it to be used now. Therefore, I beg your prayers for my Father who gave it, and for my second Father, the Abbot of Downside through whom it has come to you. I have known this congregation from its beginning in this country, when I think there were only five or six sisters. Now you have three houses, one at Tyburn, this one, and one in Belgium. In these few years God has blessed you, multiplied you, and been with you.

May he be with you always, bless you and help you to be faithful to that wonderful vocation given you, of prayer for the world, for England. It is the comfort and consolation of priests labouring in the vineyard, often with little result that they can see, and amid great discouragements, to remember that there is prayer going up unceasingly for their work. Now you must be earnest in prayer, your incense must go up straight to the throne of God, otherwise you will be useless to yourselves and to the world. But you will not be, because you will be faithful. I pray God to bless you, to multiply you, and to help you. Amen.



L. to R.
 M. Gerard, M. Salvadora, M. Augustin,
 Sr. Madhida, Sr. Culbert, M. Maydalen,
 M. Emmanuel, M. Benedict, M. Lioba,
 M. Schastria, M. Mary Alto Martyrs,
 M. St. John,
 Seated: Sr. Ruth, Sr. Walburga,
 Sr. Mary Alto Holy Child, Sr. Mary of Calvary
 Sr. Geronia
 Centre: R. M. Gertrude, R. M. Domitica
 R. M. Baptista



L. to R.
 Sr. Geronia, M. Edmund Campion
 St. Teresa, M. Walburga, M. Anastasia
 Sr. Winifred, M. Mary Alto D. Hecker
 M. St. Mark, M. St. Benedict, M. Dorotina
 M. Beata
 Seated: M. Cecilia, M. M. of Jesus Dei
 M. Benedicta, M. J. Felix, M. Gabriel



L. to R.
 M. Benedicta, M. Bernadetta
 M. St. Mark, M. Martina
 M. Athanasius, M. Thomas More
 Sr. Alban, M. St. Lambert
 Seated
 M. Teresa, M. Thomas,
 M. Bernard, M. John Fisher
 (1959)

The robin appears again in 1921!

From trees one goes on naturally two birds – so we will here record the "quest" of our little brother Robin redbreast, who did us such good service last year. Having hot cheerily all about the country, he has brought us in the wherewithal to pay our gas bill, and we doubt not he will fare forth again next year in spite of the threat under which one kind benefactor veiled his generosity: "if that bird turns up again, I'll shoot him!" This was the burden of his song:

*“Dear friends, you will not surely wish, that I should
you forget
and fail to let you know once more, my poor nuns
are in debt.*

*But first, I prithee, listen to a legend I will tell,
for surely that will touch your heart, and help my
cause right well.*

*A thousand years and more ago, when Christ hung
on the rood
I drew a thorn from out his brow, and stained my
breast with blood.*

*So now I wear a breastplate read, in honour of my
King
to show how richly he rewards the smallest little
thing.*

*But to my nuns I now return, that you may know
their need.*

*And then with me you will agree 'tis great, yes,
great indeed.*

*A doctor's bill of heavy weight lies waiting to be
paid,
for sickness sore has touched their door and ruthless
havoc made.*

*Two nuns are seriously ill - in need of many things,
but every time the postman comes a tradesman's bill
he brings.*

*So surely by a robin you will not be put to shame
but draw a cheque to help them pay whate'er the
tradesmen claim.*

*No coal is in their cellar, and
winter's drawing nigh
it would be sad indeed to
hear a nun from cold did die!*

*And now I'm sure I've said
enough, my object to attain
so I will say once more
goodbye, till I come back
again."*





The Move to Wadhurst

Annals 1964

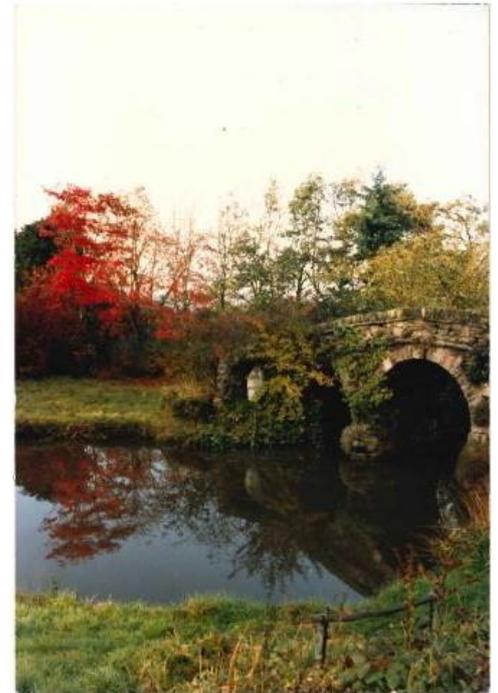


“Beechlands – Wadhurst

The great event of the year, not only for St Benedict's, but also for the whole congregation, was the move from Royston to Wadhurst in Sussex. For a long time we had tried to solve the problem of St Benedict's, Royston, by various plans for restoring and rebuilding, but all these proved impracticable and finally it was decided to look for a suitable house and property elsewhere. On May 10th a Conventual Chapter was held to vote on the advisability of selling St. Benedict's Priory, Royston. The result was in favour of the sale. We were in a good position for selling our site as the town council were desirous to purchase it.

After some search and investigations a very suitable modern building used as a hotel of a residential kind was located in Sussex as being for sale. Our surveyors surveyed it and were very pleased with it, recommending it is as structurally sound. Very Rev. Mother General and Rev. Mother Odilia went to look at it and to meet the owners who were very much in favour of selling to us. Very Rev Mother asked our Rev. Mother Prioress to visit it with Mother Edmund Campion and they came back to Royston full of enthusiasm. Wadhurst seemed to fit in almost perfectly with our requirements – a modern, well-

equipped house in fine grounds and beautiful country surroundings – and within our financial possibilities. In due course and obtaining the necessary diocesan permission to settle our community and novitiate in the Southwark diocese and, the deeds of purchaser being signed, Beechland, Wadhurst, was ours.



The move to Wadhurst.

In preparation for the move there was much to be done; many journeys to Beechland, Wadhurst, by Rev Mother Prioress, Rev. M. Sub-Prioress and our acting cellarer. All the preliminaries had to be arranged and a tremendous amount of clearing out and disposing of obsolete or saleable furniture from our Royston house. A ruthless investigation took place and many treasured old articles were condemned for wormwood and consigned to the bonfire. In mid-September we moved out of the choir into the secular chapel for what we thought was a temporary measure while the choir stalls were being treated for woodworm. In effect we never returned to the choir. We celebrated the Divine office and assisted at Holy Mass in the secular chapel, leaving one side free for the Sisters of Providence who came to us while they had no Mass in their convent. The move originally fixed for 24th of September had to be



postponed and this was fortunate as it gave the workmen at Wadhurst more time to get the essential parts of the new convent ready for occupation by the community on arrival. Ultimately, the date decided on for the transfer of the

community was 22 November.

On October 12 the first contingent – Rev. Mother Sub Prioress and Sr. Bernard – left Royston. They went to Wadhurst via Tyburn where they collected Rev. Rother Odilia and Sister Veronica. Instead of the dormobile ordered to convey them to destination, a large coach for 40 persons was provided and the extra space found to be most useful for the countless boxes, packages and luggage they were taking. Everything had to be thought of for these pioneers, food, bedding, crockery, etc... They were going into an empty house and would have to “camp out” until the arrival of the furniture vans. A day later we heard from them that the journey had been safely accomplished and that they were finding plenty to do cleaning up the grounds. At this juncture Sr. Gabriel joined them from the Mother House to give a helping hand. Meanwhile at Royston on Monday, October 19th the furniture removers started work. Three vans arrived, the smallest intended to take the chapel furniture only. The men worked steadily loading all day, but as there was more to take than had been anticipated it was decided that two extra vans should come on the Wednesday. Before the arrival of the furniture vans everything possible had been done to facilitate the work. All our goods and chattels were packed, tied up, labelled and numbered and a fine system put into operation by which first things went first, less urgent things second, etc... On the whole it worked very well indeed. Rev. Mother Mistress and her novices were in the forefront of the removal operations and did wonders.

On Wednesday 21st, the furniture removers spent half a day loading their vans and still there was a great deal for the morrow.

October 22, 1964.

This was the Epoque making day. We had had our marching orders carefully worked out and everything (almost) fell according to plan. After our last Mass in the secular chapel and our last meal in the refectory each one packed her bedding and last-minute necessities in a large cardboard container provided for the purpose. The removal men were once more on the scene to take the beds and remainder of the furniture. As much as possible of this had been taken into the cloister to help the men and save their time. All the same it was realised that the loading of the furniture vans could not possibly be finished by the time we were due to go, so Rev. Mother Prioress decided that we should leave the removal men to finish and lock up the house. We were all ready and waiting by the time our coach arrived at 11:30a.m. 16 of us were going to Wadhurst (M.M.Laetitia, having been assigned to Tyburn, had already left by the 9:30 train for London.)



As we were getting into the coach, R.Fr. Steers, the parish priest, arrived followed a few minutes later by R.Fr. Gardiner. They came to give us a good send-off. Father Steers said a few kind cheerful words and blessed our journeying. All along he had been most helpful to us and at his instigation the Catholics of Royston collected the sum of £50 for us as a passing parting present. At 11:45 we were on our way and as we left Royston the morning mist was gradually clearing up.

Rev. Mother Prioress had arranged that we should call a halt at the Sisters of Mercy convent at Romford. There the Rev Mother Superior welcomed us most kindly and had provided an excellent sandwich luncheon for us. She served us herself with some of the other sisters and

introduced the Sister cook who provides meals for 150 every day. The sisters at Romford are also having to move and we promised our prayers that they might successfully negotiate the sale of their property. We visited their chapel and at 2:15p.m. started the last stage of our journey to Wadhurst, not before being loaded with gifts of groceries and fruit and the remains of the day's feast by the kindhearted Superior.



At 4:15 p.m. we arrived at St. Benedict's Priory, Beechlands, Wadhurst, having had an excellent journey. Rev. Mother Odilia, Rev. Mother Sub Prioress and our Sisters already there gave us the warmest

welcome and showed us to our various cells. Tea and buns were awaiting us in our beautiful newly painted refectory. The house is a really fine building. The Blessed Sacrament was already reserved in the chapel and we all thanked Our Lord that everything had gone so well on this memorable day.

First days at Wadhurst



After the eventful days of the arrival of the community and the subsequent arrival of vanloads of furniture when everyone helped as much as she could, we tried to settle down to a regular convent life in spite of the fact that workmen were in most parts of the house, putting up partitions, painting, repairing and renovating.

The temporary chapel, however, the refectory, kitchen and most of the cells were ready for use. The chapel

looked very nice and in good taste, the wallpaper left there by the previous occupants proving most suitable.

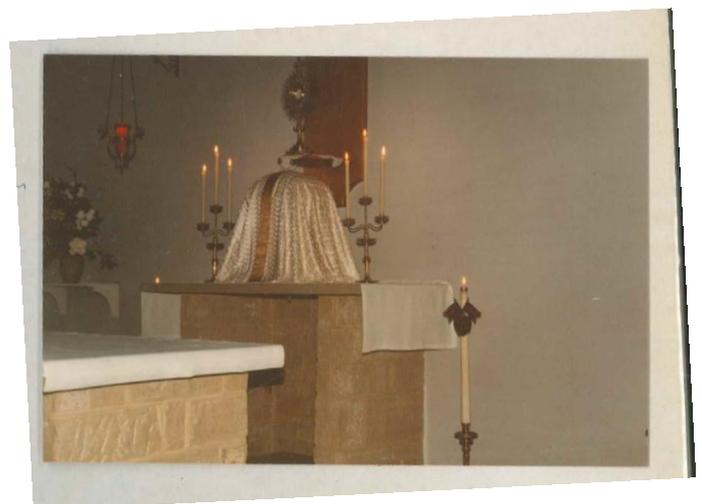
On the Sunday after our arrival, the feast of Christ the King, we had Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for the first time at Wadhurst. It's lasted from after Mass until 5:15 p.m. when we had Benediction. V.Rev. Mother has made arrangements with the rector of St Joseph's seminary, Mark Cross, for our daily Mass and Benediction when needed. Msgr Westlake, the rector, called on us very shortly after our arrival. He was most kind and assured us that we could turn to him for any need.



V.R.M. Mary of Calvary

Our second day of Exposition was on the first Friday of November and on the 10th of that month we had the first night of Exposition. From then on we gradually increased the Exposition and soon had the Blessed Sacrament on the throne every day and four nights a week, having Benediction on Sundays and Wednesdays and a short deposition on Saturdays. On November 12th Very Rev. Mother

General arrived for a short visit to see how we were getting on. It was very heartening to have her among us at this period. During her visit she gave us a conference on the various changes affecting us at the present time; the liturgical changes, the necessary changes in the congregation, our own uprooting from Royston; pointing out that in all these things we must always look Godwards.”





Scenes from Wadhurst



V.R.M. Mary of the Divine Heart





The Move to Cobh

Annals 1993



The Move to Ireland

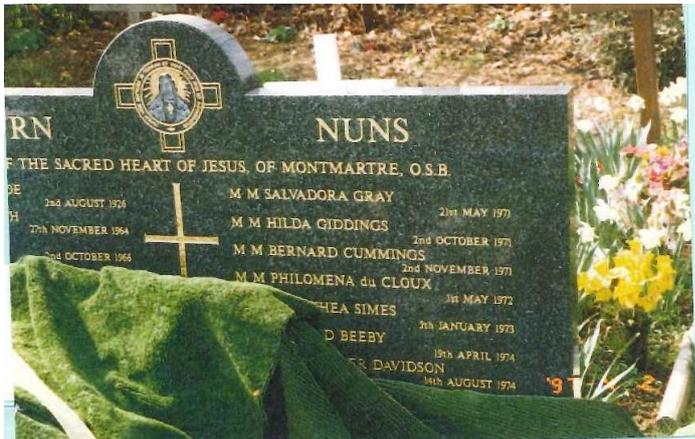


“The move of St. Benedict's Priory to Cobh in Ireland from Wadhurst dominated the year, the first half of the year being a preparation for

the move and the second half a re-orientation to our new situation.

The year opened quietly enough. There was little sign of a definite buyer for the property at Wadhurst and we

were told that the housing market was bad and unlikely to pick up for a year. But an unexpected phone call at the beginning of February came from Very Rev. Mother General and Rev. Mother Prioress was on her way with Very Rev. Mother General to Cobh at the request of Sister Margaret, the Mother General of the sisters of Mercy from whom we were hoping to purchase Mount St Mary's. During that visit it was made clear that the Mercy sisters were not able to hold the property for us much longer and a week was given to pay the initial deposit and set in motion the purchase of Mount St Mary's. As the Wadhurst property was not sold, it seemed we might lose the very suitable Cobh property, but an anonymous group, hearing of the situation, stepped in with an interest free bridging loan to be repaid only on the sale of the Wadhurst property. From that time everything was set in motion for the move to Ireland, which had been so long awaited.



On February 19 the community went in procession to the cemetery for a brief ceremony prior to the removal of our sisters to the cemetery in Kensal Green, London.

On February 22 the work of exhuming the graves began. The weather remained dry and the work was completed on February 26 when the last coffin left St. Benedict's Priory. This work which was done by our London

undertakers, France & Son was carried out with the greatest reverence.

On March 18 Rev. Mother Prioress, Rev Mother Benedicta and Mother Mary, the trustees for St. Benedict's Priory in Cobh went to Tyburn to sign the contract for the purchase of Mount St Mary's.



Work now went ahead on the final packing and sorting in the Priory and surplus furniture was sold. As the days went by the monastery became more empty and we were reduced to the bare minimum in everything. The great day for the arrival of the community on 31 May came all too quickly. There were times when it did not seem possible to have everything ready, but somehow all was in reasonable order. Very Rev Mother and Rev. Mother Prioress left Cobh about three o'clock to meet the first plane due to arrive about 4 pm . Bishop John Magee, his secretary Rev Father Bermingham and the administrator of the Cathedral Rev Father Reidy were all at the airport

to greet our sisters.

Mother Jacinta and Mother Mary arrived on the first plane together with Mother Simeon who stayed with us until Sister Mary Joseph obtained her visa. There was great excitement as we all met in



the VIP lounge, the Bishop as Very Rev. Mother General put it “looking as if his favourite dream had come true “. Some 40 min later the second plane arrived with M.M.Odilia, M.M.Matthias and R.M.Benedicta. After more greetings and photographs we were driven in four cars to Cobh, the Bishop heading the cavalcade. As his car swung into the forecourt of the Cathedral, the bells rang out in welcome playing Eucharistic hymns, ending with the Salve Regina as we left. After a silent prayer and venerating the relic of St Oliver Plunkett we continued up to the new St. Benedict's Priory where a reception had been prepared for the community and some 30 guests. On arrival we went straight to the chapel to sing the Magnificat. It was a truly momentous day and a new phase was begun in the history of St. Benedict's Priory. The next day, June 1 daily Exposition and the full Liturgy of the Hours began, and everyone began to find their way around their new surroundings. During June and July until our official enclosure began, the bishop suggested that we visit some places of religious and historical interest in order to become acquainted with the people and the life of the diocese. The sisters of Mercy were extremely generous with their time driving us



around, taking us to their convents and the centres of Perpetual Adoration in the diocese. Some of the places we visited were St Finbarr's cave at Goughan Burra,

R.M.Angela , V.R.M.Xavier and M.M.Matthias
with the Sisters of Mercy

Cloyne Cathedral which now belongs to the Church of Ireland, and our own Cathedral, the heritage centre in Cobh, Fota Island, Spike Island, the Mercy convents at Charleville, Buttevant, Mallow, Cobh and Rushbrooke, the Bons Secours convent and hospital. We also visited Mt Melleray, Glencairn and Glenstal. On June 20 the QEII sailed into Cork harbour at 5:00 am. As we have the prime view of the harbour we invited the sisters of Mercy at Cobh and Rushbrooke and the Bons Secours sisters to come and have tea on our balcony and watch the ship leave in the evening. About 30 came and it was a way of saying thank you for all their kindness to us since our arrival.

The great day of the solemn inauguration by Bishop John Magee dawned and while it was not very sunny it was at least dry. In fact we had only a few drops of rain at the beginning of the homily although it rained heavily roundabout. The altar for the Mass was set up at the top of the steps leading from the balcony to the garden and some 300 chairs were arranged on the lawn for the congregation. The priests were assigned the part of the balcony outside the community room which had been utilised as a sacristy and the community and a few invited guests were at the other end of the balcony outside the refectory. Some 23 priests concelebrated with the Bishop and these included the Abbots of Glenstal, Mt Melleray, Roscrea, Bolton and our own Chaplain Abbot Holman. It was so encouraging to see so many priests from the diocese and to have representatives from most of the Benedictine and

Cistercian monasteries in Ireland. About 300 people, nuns and brothers filled the chairs on the lawn.



There were representatives from all the religious houses in the diocese. The Mass was a wonderful occasion and Bishop Magee preached a homily giving us the warmest of welcomes to his diocese, taking as his theme the text from Deuteronomy "do not forget the Lord your God". "Throughout the diocese" he said "and indeed well beyond there is a welcome which is genuine, and I, in the name of the diocese, express to Mother General, Mother Xavier, and her council the gratitude of the entire people of God in Cloyne for this decision to come among us and to be on the Mount a continual reminder of those words of Moses "do not forget the Lord your God" As the

inauguration of St. Benedict's Priory takes place today I believe that a new star has come to shine in our midst. This star will shine throughout the night looking down on the Cathedral of St Colman and on the dear people of Cobh. May its' light ever be a reminder to us all never to forget the Lord our God and may it join with the many lights which have been and kindled in the Eucharistic chapels of our diocese and thus help in creating an ecclesial constellation which will illumine the pilgrimage way of our people.”

Work was also done in the garden. The two large fields at the bottom of the property covering over two acres were cleared of brambles and ploughed. The smaller field was planted with fruit trees and fruit bushes. The larger field is to become a Bible garden. Whilst Very Rev. Mother General was still with us she drew up a plan for this garden. It is in the form of a Jerusalem Cross with a large pool at the centre and the flower beds spaced down the arms of the cross. There are large expanses of lawn and trees which will be planted including a nut orchard, fruit orchards and vineyards. A leaflet describing the garden and suggesting sponsorship for trees was circulated in November with the Christmas newsletter and by the end of the year there were enough donations to cover the cost of all plants and trees. It is intended that this garden with its scriptural theme and texts will become a real apostolate encouraging interest and reflection on the Bible. “









12th December 2016

Centenary Mass celebrated by Bishop William Crean

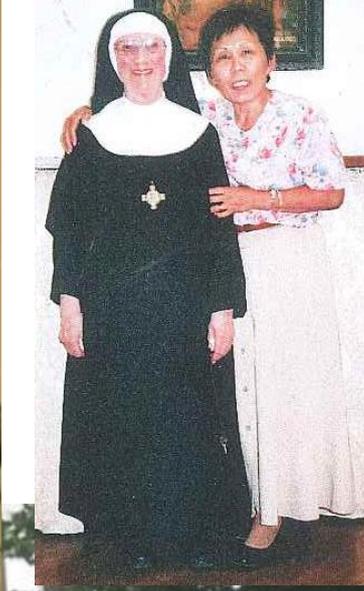
Our Heartfelt Gratitude goes out to all our friends and benefactors, past and present, a small number of whom are represented here:



Fr. Slaughter



Fr. Cronin





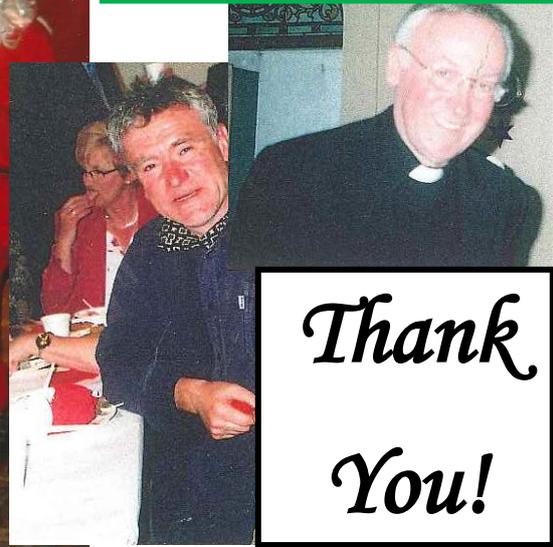
GO RAIBH



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AGAI



Thank You!



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