



At the Little Company of Mary, St. John's Hospital, Centenary Mass in St. John's Cathedral, Sister Mary Hassett (right), and Sister Catherine O'Connell, both of the centenary committee.



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## Blue Nuns mark the 100th Anniversary

HUNDREDS of people joined in the celebrations at the weekend as the Little Company of Mary celebrated 100 years in Limerick.

It was a century ago that Count Moore made money available for the Company, better known as the Blue Nuns to come to the city.

And his grandson, Arthur Moore, Moonesfort, County Tipperary, was one of the guests of honour at the celebrations at St. John's Hospital.

The founder of the order, Mother Mary Potter, came to Limerick and

turned St. John's from a fever hospital into a general hospital.

Now along with the hospital the Company also, of course, run Milford Hospice in Limerick.

Sisters who served in Africa, Italy, America, Australia and England attended the concelebrated Mass along with the whole parish of St. John's, all of whom were invited.

Representing the Superior General was Sr. Geraldine Fitzgerald, a native of Limerick and now based in England.

Most Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Newman and over 20 priests attended the ceremony.

The Sisters point out that St. John's still, as it always has, serves both poor and rich. Sixty per cent of patients are medical card holders.

After the Mass the attendance marched down behind a photograph of the founder to St. John's Pavilion where they talked of times gone by and the changes in the Order over the past century.

## Suffering constitutes challenge to life . . .

Address by Most Reverend Jeremiah Newman, Bishop of Limerick, on the occasion of the centenary of the coming of the Little Company of Mary to Limerick given in St. John's Cathedral on Sunday last.

THIS afternoon we are gathered for the purpose of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in both honour towards and supplication for the Congregation of the Little Company of Mary, whose Sisters first came to Limerick in 1888.

A word of history should be in order. As is well known, the Congregation was founded towards the end of the last century by Mother Mary Potter, an Englishwoman, for the precise purpose of succouring the sick and especially praying for the dying. It quickly spread in England, to Rome and Australia.

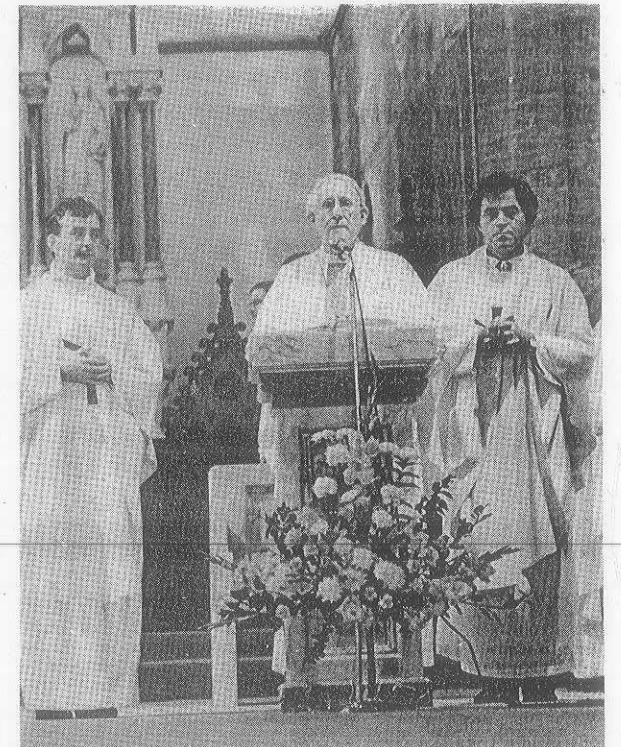
In 1887, following a request by Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, then only one year Bishop of Limerick, the Congregation set up a foundation here. The first Sisters arrived in 1888 and started their services in St. John's Hospital, for the purpose of nursing in which Bishop O'Dwyer had specifically invited them.

Although under stress at the start, the Hospital gradually progressed with the aid of the citizens who saw in it a truly good and needed object. Still, for quite some time the Sisters had no convent and attended Mass in the Cathedral or in the Hospital where Fr. Crotty of Donoghmore said a daily morning Mass. The Sisters have been very faithful to the Cathedral and its staff ever since.

### Development

In the early days, their remuneration was miserable, £25 a year or ten shillings a week. Happily, towards the end of the century, things began to improve. A Chaplain was appointed, funds raised, and in 1904 the foundation stone of a convent laid.

The people had been truly generous. We should, though, not forget the words of Bishop O'Dwyer on the occasion of the opening of the convent: "We believe that these works (of charity) never will be done permanently — never can be done permanently — on what the world calls business principles . . . They . . . cannot wear out the love of God which charity shows to the alleviation of His poor".



The Bishop of Limerick, Dr. Jeremiah Newman, speaking at the Little Company of Mary, St. John's Hospital, Centenary Mass in St. John's Cathedral.

between ordinary pain and suffering. Such suffering of itself is negative; it is evil; it serves no purpose. In short, it cannot be explained or accommodated within the normal, natural, framework of human life.

It is for this reason that no purely human consolation can really provide an adequate support to one who is suffering. The natural world of man is logically incapable of coming to terms with its own negation and suffering as a contradiction to life is repugnant to the natural order.

Reflecting on this, we cannot but realise that it is only by transcending man's own narrow natural world that we can really cope with suffering and give it meaning. Only experience of another world, a world of mystery, can reconcile man to it. This, my friends, is the function of the Cross of Christ

St. Matthew's Gospel, which clearly indicates that the measure of Christian commitment is the extent to which we help our fellow men in their afflictions: "I was sick and you visited me".

What I am trying to say is that the man is a Christian, not primarily by prayer or theological knowledge, but to the extent that he bears suffering for Christ's sake and ministers in the name of Christ to his suffering brothers and sisters, who otherwise would have no one.

### Tribute

It is in this context that the work of the Little Company of Mary takes on its most profound significance. In a booklet on the Sisters, Sr. Geraldine Fitzgerald, one of Limerick's own, now in London with the Generalate of the Congregation, recites the following



Sister Angela O'Keeffe (left), from Grange, who joined the Little Company of Mary Order in 1925, and Sister McNamara from Ballyneety who joined in 1922, pictured at the Centenary Mass in St. John's Cathedral for the Little Company of Mary, St. John's Hospital.



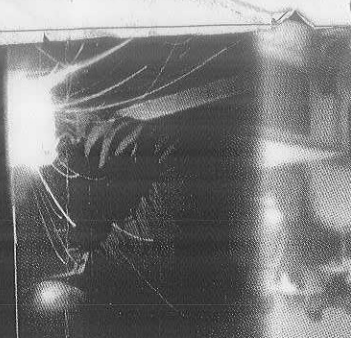




Sister Claver O'Shea, Provincial Superior, Little Company of Mary, pictured at the centenary Mass in St. John's Cathedral.



The scene at the Centenary Mass for the Little Company of Mary, St. John's Hospital, in St. John's Cathedral.



wear out the love of God which charity shows to the alleviation of His poor". The Sisters took these words to heart and have laboured for all alike, whether rich or poor, a fact that seems to have been forgotten in some quarters as time has gone by. This is not the place in which to outline the expansion of the Congregation from Limerick to other parts in Ireland and elsewhere. As far as Limerick is concerned, the first foundation in Ireland being there, it was chosen later to be the seat of the Congregation's Provincialate, at Milford House, which also became a centre for the care of the elderly and recently of a Hospice for the very seriously ill — receiving them, by the way, irrespective of their means. We should not fail to remember these things. All of us are sometimes sick or injured. All of us eventually become old and finally all of us die.

### Questions

My dear friends, there are certain very basic and mysterious aspects to life. Some are of a happy kind, joyful and positive, such as sexual love or the birth of a child. Others are sad happenings, the cause of grief. Of such a kind are pain and suffering.

These matters involve life's ultimate questions. They have always posed a problem for philosophers, especially suffering. Why does the all-powerful God allow it? I remember how, when I was a young student of philosophy at Maynooth now many years ago, one of the defying questions which used to face us in what was called Natural Theology was the very one: 'Why Does God Permit Evil?', as one author expressed it, or 'The Problem of Pain' as the well-known writer G. S. Lewis did.

In actual fact, pain in human life does not in itself constitute a problem as to why God permits it. Pain is necessary for man; it has a meaning for life. This is so because without the ability to feel pain man simply could not exist. The truth of this is evident when one considers that, strangely enough, man is the least adapted of all animals to life. He does not so much adapt himself to the world as adapt the world to himself. For that purpose, he must know its points of threat to him, and that is the function of pain. In other words, it tells him where to be cautious; once bitten twice shy. Without the possibility of pain he would get into situations that would destroy him. In short, pain is meaningful, in the natural order of things.

### Suffering

Suffering is an entirely different phenomenon. Suffering takes the place of pain when pain ceases to have any human function, when, so to speak, it crushes man's nature rather than alerts it. As such, suffering in itself has no meaning and constitutes a challenge to life.

You all know what I am talking about — the suffering that can descend on an individual or a family, whether due to physical, mental or economic breakdown that is total, the irremediable loss of reputation, the death of a loved one, and so on and so forth. The causes of suffering are legion. When we find somebody cut down in infancy or in the prime of life, or having to carry the burden of a crippling illness with no hope of recovery, then we know how to differentiate

to it. This, my friends, is the function of the Cross of Christ in our lives. It is something that is central to Christianity, focussed as Christianity is on the mystery of a suffering God become man, the mystery of why God permitted the suffering of his Son in order to gain salvation for sinful man. Because of that, suffering in the life of the Christian takes on a supernatural dimension.

We can take it that only such a transcendence of his suffering makes it possible for man to come to grips with his lot. Sure, we hear about those atheistic humanists who are said to bear their sufferings nobly. We are told about cultivated pagans of antiquity, who stoically bore their sufferings without demur. That such are to be admired is beyond question. But let us have no doubt about it; they did not have hope; they were hopeless. Basically even their most courageous acceptance of suffering could not be anything other than putting a brave face on things, keeping the best side out as we say. Even with such nobility, they could not exactly be examples of true humanism because of the irreconcilability of suffering with natural human life, which is all they knew about. Only by linking his own suffering to the suffering of Christ can man bring a meaningful perspective to bear on the human condition.

### Neighbour

It should be noted too that it is only in this way that the healthy person can also be a true Christian. What I mean is that it is of the very essence of the Christian life to help one's fellow man in his suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ. We should never forget the passage from St. John's Gospel which reads: "Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrew called Bethzatha, which has five porticos. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed. One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be healed?' The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool'."

When one thinks about it, it becomes evident that the most terrible human experience is to find oneself saying: "I have no one". No man should have to say this as long as he has Christian neighbours. We should recall the passage from

own, now in London with the Generalate of the Congregation, recites the following lines:

"Our Lady stood beneath the Cross  
A little space apart,  
And when she heard Our Lord cry out,  
A sword went through her heart".

Sister Geraldine remarks that these words more than any others paint the background and meaning of the Little Company of Mary, who have a special devotion to the Mystery of Calvary, standing at the foot of the Cross with Mary. In them we have a body of consecrated women, consecrated to the religious life in the carrying on of the great work for which their Congregation was founded.

Over the course of the years since they came to Limerick, despite differences at the beginning with Bishop O'Dwyer who had invited them here, self-denying contributions from their own hard-earned resources, and recent even more dispiriting difficulties, they have unflinchingly continued to nurse the sick, care for the aged and pray for the dying.

My friends, that is something that deserves more appreciation and support than is sometimes shown by some citizens of our city and region, many of whom, were they disposed to remember it, owe instead a debt of gratitude to the Sisters on the part of themselves or their relatives and friends.

At the same time, there is, we know, a deep respect and affection for the Sisters, even on the part of people who do not always show it publically. And there are staunch bodies, such as the Friends of St. John's Hospital and the benefactors of the Hospice, who do not stint themselves in contributing towards the material means that are necessary to ensure the most efficient running of these important institutions.

I know it is your wish and prayer, as it is mine, that the Blue Nuns will receive both the vocations, financial support and unequivocal general encouragement such as will enable and enthuse them to remain with us for many a day to come.

In the persons of these fine dedicated women, I salute in your name and my own the coming of the Congregation to Limerick and a fruitful future amongst us in the years that lie ahead.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

### AN CHUIRT DUICHE (The District Court)

District Court Area of Adare, District No. 13  
NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF A  
CONFIRMATION OF A TRANSFER OF AN ON-LICENCE  
APPLICANT: ROBERT KEARNEY

TAKE NOTICE that Robert Kearney of Main Street, Croom, County Limerick, in the County of Limerick, intends to apply to the Annual Licensing District Court to be held at the Courthouse, Adare, on the 13th day of September, 1988, at 11 a.m. for confirmation of a Transfer of the Intoxicating Liquor Licence attaching to the premises situate at Main Street, Croom, in the County of Limerick in the Court Area and District aforesaid.

Dated this 12th day of August, 1988.

Signed: HAYES BREEN MCCARTHY,  
Solicitors,  
56 O'Connell Street,  
Limerick.

To: District Court Clerk, District Court Office, Courthouse, Limerick.  
And: Chief Fire Officer, Limerick County Council, 80/83 O'Connell Street, Limerick.  
And: The Superintendent, Garda Siochana, Askeaton, Co. Limerick. (t20/8244)