

The Religious 764 Years on, St Saviour's still serves

THE DOMINICANS are the only religious order in the city with their own parish — St. Saviour's.

And they have in their possession the most revered religious ikon in the city — the ancient Flemish carving of Our Lady of Limerick.

The members of the order devote themselves to the people, although they also bring their holiness to the peoples of the developing world.

The order established itself in Limerick as far back as 1227 AD. They have, at various times over the last seven hundred years made a major contribution to the religious life of the area.

From a small chapel and 'convent' in Fish Lane on re-establishment, they transferred to their present home in Glentworth Street, in 1814.

The invitation by the then Bishop of Limerick Dr Henry Murphy, in 1973 to establish St Saviour's parish merely put a seal on the relationship that existed between the Dominican Order and the Church in Limerick over the centuries.

The parish is bounded by Carey's Road, Mallow Street, and Catherine Street, and includes approximately 650 homes.

Today there are six priests and one Dominican brother in the priory.

The present prior, Very Rev Hugh Costello, OP, PP, who replaced Fr Brian Reynolds PP, two years ago, emphasises that their work evolves around "our church, our parish and availability to our parishioners at all times".

The other priests, Fr Pius



Our Lady of Limerick, the statue saved by the Dominicans in time of persecution, is a favourite shrine today.

Davy, Fr Xavier Patrick Hennessy, Fr Peter Gaffney, Fr Declan Gowen and Fr Walter Hegarty and are involved in church and parish work. And Brother Christopher O'Flaherty is the sacristan.

Speaking to the *Limerick Leader*, this week, Fr Costello, a native of Kerry, emphasised their availability.

"We have a priest on duty here 24 hours a day, for Confessions and spiritual advice, or to talk to persons wishing to discuss personal problems.

"If you have a problem there will always be somebody at the Dominicans to talk to you", he stressed.

Referring to their future role, Fr Costello said he saw the order continuing to be very much community orientated.

"Our activities revolve around our congregation and will continue to do so", he added.

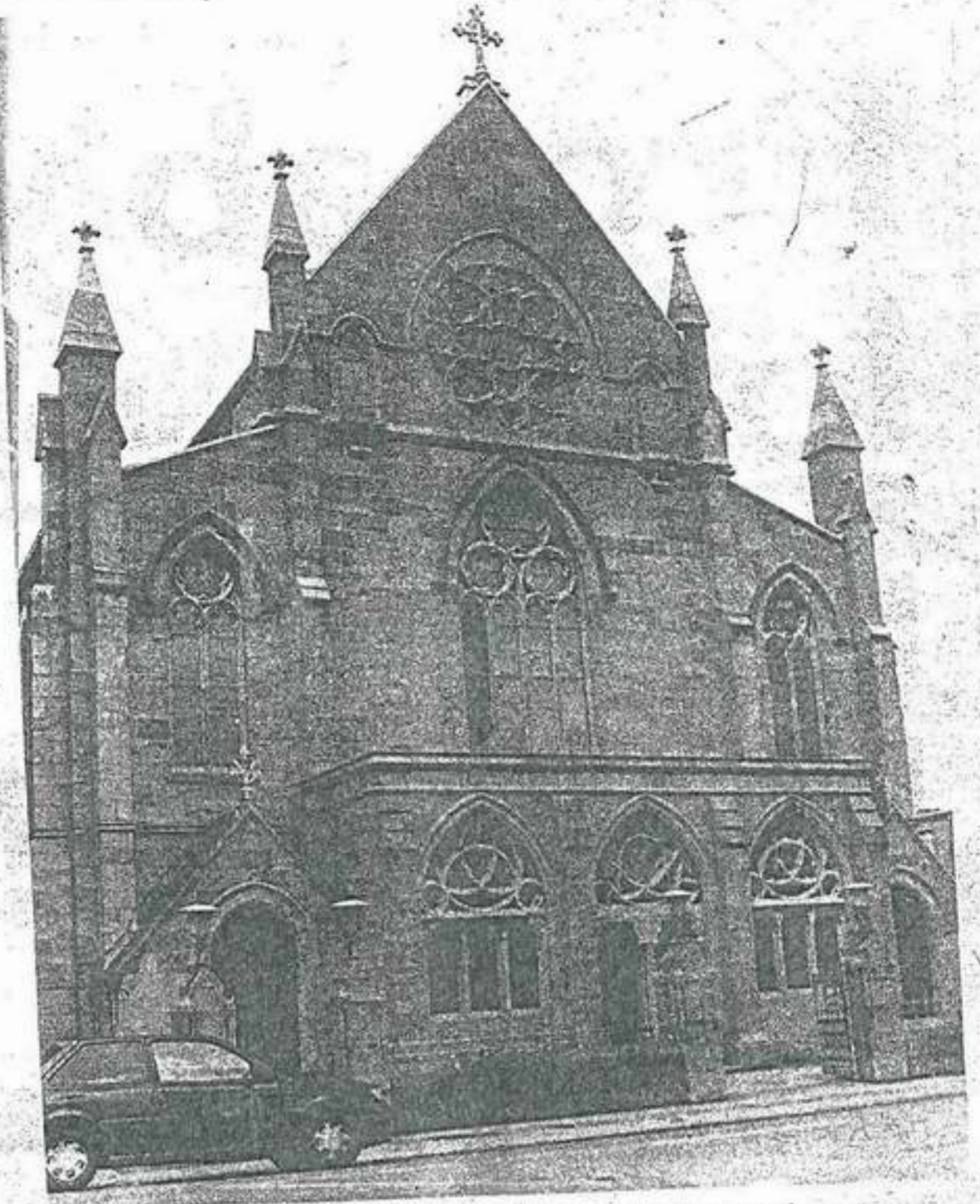
Referring to changing times, and the problems most concerning his parishioners, Fr Costello stressed that the majority were financial.

"Financial matters are the worries of the majority who come here looking for help".

To cater for those people, the Dominicans have set up their own unit of the St. Vincent de Paul which meets once a week to review deserving cases.

Under Our Lady of Limerick's altar in the richly decorated church, the Arms of Limerick are incorporated into the Dominican Crest. Permission for this was given by the Corporation on account of the historic importance of the statue in the history of the city.

The statue itself predates the Penal Laws, and has seen good and bad times. It is the unfortunate recipient of a variety of coats of paint, often of starkly inappropriate style.



The exterior of the church, facing south.

The original hollow shape, carved from a solid piece of wood, seems to have a Spanish style about it, possibly a kickback to the period when the Netherlands and Belgium were elements of the Spanish empire.

In the 1950s, the altar areas were redesigned, and this work culminated in the rededication of the statue, and the then Bishop, Dr O'Neill, crowned the statue with the present head-adornment amid appropriate pomp and circumstance. The crown itself was raised by subscription from the people of the time.

The statue was hidden during times of persecution, but nothing is certain as to what became of it for over a century. One theory is that it was placed face down and its hollow back was used as a trough until safe to return it to a Dominican church again. The hollow at the back was a standard device of sculptors to

lighten the wood and to prevent cracking.

This statue has been replicated in a richly coloured mosaic over the main door of the Dominican Church of St. Louis Bertrand in Limerick, Louisville, Kentucky — a reminder to the American congregation of the trials their ancestors suffered for their faith, and their devotion to Our Lady.

Another very fine feature of the Church is its magnificent organ, which has become so much part of the whole Gothic

effect that it would be impossible to think of the Church without it.

And in passing, one can say that at present the organ has a choir worthy of such an instrument.

One of the abiding memories of the Dominican congregation must be that of Fr Aengus Buckley, the renowned painter. His hand, although entirely in the classical style, moulded artistic opinion in Limerick for two generations, and his work is highly prized to this day.

Mortgage relief: no cash

APPLICANTS for the new £3,300 mortgage subsidy will get no cash into their hands.

Mr Sean Moran, housing officer, explained to the City Council that when a person purchases a house they would receive a subsidy on their mortgage which would be paid by the Department into their financial institution.

The amount will be paid on a sliding scale from £1,000 in year one to £400 in year five.

Clr Joe Harrington asked what effect the new scheme would have on housing estates in the city.

Mr Moran said he did not think there would be the adverse effect on the less attractive housing estates that the £5,000 grant had.

Holes left in house

A Thomondgate resident was left with five holes in the wall of his house. So Clr Frank Prendergast this week called for more co-ordination between the Corporation's environment and housing departments.

"When the Corporation are moving in to knock down property for logical reasons, I would suggest some system of communication be devised so that the housing and environment sections, and the Ward Councilors would be aware of what was happening", he suggested.

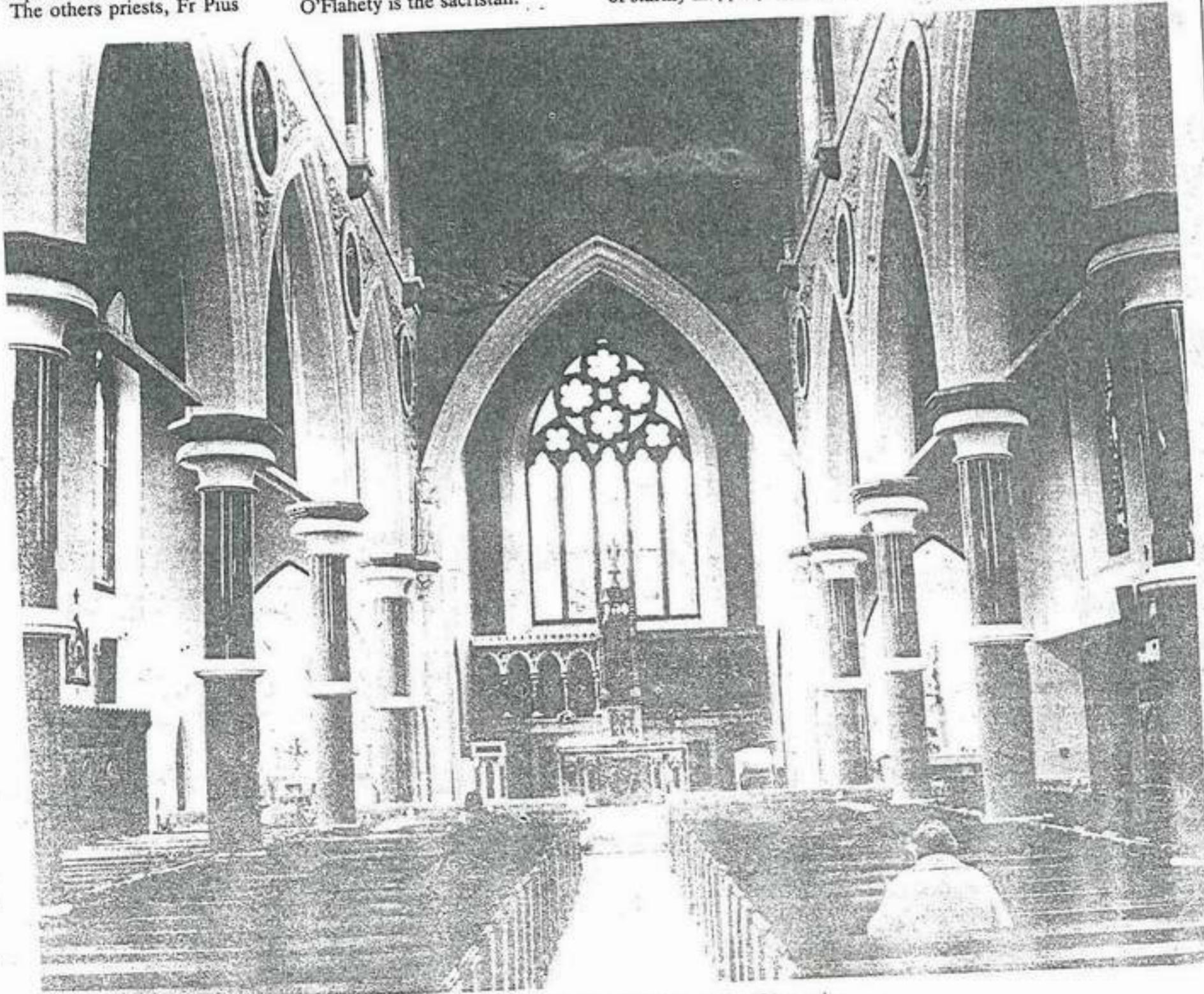
"In that case we would be in a position to explain to people what is happening", he added.

Common sense house list

There are at present 280 persons on the Corporation's housing list. Clr Larry Cross asked at the City Council, this week, how many tenants actually refused housing, last year.

Mr Sean Moran, housing officer, explained that when tenants indicated they wanted a house on the southside, they would not be informed when a house became vacant on the northside.

"It would not be realistic to contact the entire 280 tenants," he explained. "We use a much more common sense approach taking the desires of tenants into account."



The interior of the Dominican Church.