

# Two Limerick-born martyrs

**T**WO of the martyrs to be beatified in Rome this Sunday were born in Co. Limerick. These were Bishop Terence Albert O'Brien and Fr. Maurice Mac Kenraghty, the name Mac Kenraghty, an attempt to render phonetically the purely Irish name Mac Ionnraichtaigh, has, since the martyred priest's time, been anglicised Enright. To his contemporaries the priest would have been known as Muiris Mac Ionnraichtaigh.

Maurice's father, a goldsmith, had come from North Kerry to Kilmallock, where Maurice was born. Maurice chose the ecclesiastical state, and having pursued a course of study and obtained a degree in Sacred Theology, most likely on the Continent, was ordained priest. He was an eloquent preacher, and laboured for some time in Kilmallock and the surrounding countryside. Later, he became chaplain to the Earl of Desmond, and shared the rigours and the danger of the Desmond Wars with the Earl and his men. As Monsignor Patrick Corish remarks in his booklet, *The Irish Martyrs* "... it comes as no surprise to find him as chaplain to the Earl of Desmond, for Kilmallock was one of the great Desmond strongholds."

On September 17, 1583, Fr. Mac Kenraghty, who had become separated from the Earl's party, was captured by English Government forces in

Duhallow — the Earl himself was to be slain on November 11 of that year. Fr. Mac Kenraghty was taken to Clonmel, where he was cast into prison and where he was to remain for the next 18 months.

On Easter Eve, 1585, Victor White, one of the leading Catholic citizens of Clonmel, bribed the head jailer to release Fr. Mac Kenraghty for Easter, so that he, White and his wife, and their neighbours, could have the sacraments, confession and Mass. The priest was accordingly released. Unfortunately, it happened that just at this time the English Lord President of Munster, Sir John Norris, arrived in Clonmel; and, as Monsignor Corish says: "The jailer, to save what was left of his skin, betrayed the priest and his host."

Just as Mass was about to begin, Norris's soldiers burst into White's house. Some of those in the house, including Fr. Mac Kenraghty, managed to escape, but White was placed under arrest. The priest hid himself in a heap of straw in the courtyard, and as soon as it was safe to do so, left the town and went into the country.

White was threatened with death and the confiscation of his property unless he delivered the priest up to the authorities. Fr. Mac Kenraghty, hearing of this, sent word to White that, to save him, he would give himself up. White objected strongly and said he was

prepared to lose his life rather than that the priest should be put to death. But Fr. Mac Kenraghty was determined to save his host and surrendered to the authorities.

He was tried before the military tribunal of the Lord President. At the trial he was asked to renounce his Faith and take the Oath of Supremacy, being offered pardon and promotion if he did so. He refused, and was condemned to death as a traitor. He was hanged in Clonmel on April 30, 1585.

The second Co. Limerick-born martyr was Bishop Terence Albert O'Brien, who was born in Tuogh, near Cappamore, in 1601. These Cappamore O'Briens were a branch of the powerful Dalcassian family of O'Brien, and Terence's father was the owner of an estate of some 2,000 acres. Growing up in a completely Irish-speaking environment, Terence Albert O'Brien would have been known as Traolach O'Briain — the Albert was his name in religion, perhaps an anglicisation of Ailbhe, name of the patron of the diocese of Emly.

Terence O'Brien joined the Dominican Order in Limerick in 1621, and completed his studies in Toledo in Spain, where he was ordained in 1627. After ordination he returned to Ireland, and served two terms as prior in Limerick, and one in Lorrha, Co. Tipperary. In 1643 he was elected Provincial, which made him Superior over the entire Irish branch of his Order. He went to Rome the following year to represent Ireland at the General Chapter of the Dominicans, and made such an impression on the Roman authorities that he was appointed Bishop of Emly. He was ordained bishop by Cardinal Rinuccini in Waterford on April 2, 1648.

Cardinal Rinuccini was in Ireland as Papal Nuncio to the Confederation of Kilkenny, the national parliament that had been set up in the period of Irish Catholic resurgence that followed the Rising of 1641. The following year Cromwell came to Ireland to begin his campaign of terror against all those opposed to the English Parliamentary forces.

Having subjugated most of the country, Cromwell returned to England and left his son-in-law, Ireton, to complete the task.

Ireton laid siege to Limerick on June 4, 1651. Bishop Terence Albert O'Brien, who had spent more than three years in untiring efforts on behalf of his diocese and of the whole Irish church, was in the city when the siege began. Attempts to negotiate a surrender broke down when Ireton made it clear that there would be no toleration of Catholicism, and that no terms whatsoever would be offered to the Catholic clergy. Bishop O'Brien and the military commander, Aodh Dubh O'Neill, were those most strongly opposed to surrendering on those terms.

By late autumn, however, the city, hungry, exhausted and ravaged by bubonic plague, had to surrender. On October 27, 1651, Ireton's troops entered the city. Ireton had decreed that no pardon would be extended to Catholic priests, and to a number of prominent personalities, including Aodh Dubh O'Neill, who had advised against surrender. Some of those exempted from pardon escaped in disguise, including the bishop of Limerick. Diplomatic representations made on behalf of Aodh Dubh O'Neill, who had had a distinguished career in the Spanish Army, resulted in his being released and allowed to go to Spain.

Making no attempt to escape as others had done, Terence Albert O'Brien was arrested in the plague-house, tending the sick. He was immediately tried by courtmartial, sentenced to be hanged and executed next day. Many others were hanged also, including Major General Purcell; the mayor, Thomas Stritch; Dominic Fanning, a former mayor; and Luke Wadding's nephew, Geoffrey Barron.

We were told that Terence Albert O'Brien was put to death with special barbarity, his dead body being spun round and beaten until it was a bloody pulp.

From the day of his death he was venerated as a martyr.

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Clonlara athletic club went on an outing to Shannon recently and had some major successes: Michelle Noonan, 1st U7, 60m; Ailish O'Connor, 2nd U8 100m and 3rd U8 200m; Fiona Lynskey, 2nd U10 100m, and 2nd U10 200m; Danny Noonan, 2nd U11 600, 3rd U12 800m; Patricia Haskett, 2nd U15 100m; Rachel Noonan, 3rd U7 60m; Deirdre Lynskey, 3rd U10 100m; Lily Casey, 3rd U10 600m walking race; Irene O'Connor, 3rd U10 200m; Linda Lynch, 3rd U14 200m. The girls relay team U10 were Fiona and Deirdre Lynskey, Lily Casey and Eileen O'Connor and they won 3rd place. Training continues every Wednesday evening at 5.45 p.m.

A collection will be taken up at both Masses on Sunday in Truagh church for the clerk of the chapel.

The brownies have again resumed in Bridgetown after the summer recess. Meetings take place every Monday night from 7.15 p.m. to 8.15 p.m. There are a limited number of places available. Anyone wishing to join should get in contact with any one of the following leaders in charge: Hazel Robinson, Mags Furlong and Mariam Guerin.

In the replay of the U18 camogie Munster semi-final between Clare and Cork the Clonlara/Truagh camogie club were well represented with Tracy Moloney at full back, Olive Crowe at centre back and Cathy Halley a centrefield. Subs: Jackie Nihill and Lisa Moloney. This was a fast and furious match but Clare's determination saw them through and they went on to win by one point. The score was Clare 1-6, Cork 2-2. Clare now play Tipperary in the final.

## CASTLETROY

A very enjoyable function was held in the Monaleen GAA club last weekend to celebrate the 80th birthday of Sonny O'Brien of Kilmurry. Joint hon. president of the Monaleen club, Sonny is also the caretaker of Monaleen NS. Prior to the function Mass was concelebrated in the club premises by Rev. Fr. O'Brien, PP, Rev. Fr. J. Doran, CC, Rev. Fr. M. Egan and Rev. Fr. Des Campion. Over 350 people attended the function during which Jackie Power, ex-Limerick hurler supreme, Willie P'Dea, TD, Junior Minister for Justice, and Rev. Fr. John Doran, club chairman, paid tributes to Sonny. Amongst the huge attendance were some 40 grandchildren. Many presentations were made during the night. In addition to this special function Sonny was also the recipient of a special presentation of a sculpture of hurler from the children of Monaleen NS.

The Minister for Health, Dr. O'Connell, TD, visited

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