

17 martyrs remembered

Kilmallock file

KILMALLOCK was ablaze with colour and pageantry this Sunday, as the town turned out to honour the 17 Irish martyrs beatified in Rome, and in particular three of the martyrs who were from the Diocese of Limerick.

At a special commemorative Mass, Bishop of Limerick, Dr Newman, said that there were still chances for people to uphold their faith in the face of adversity.

Dr Newman was the main concelebrant of the Mass, which was said on a hill site in the grounds of the local vocational school. The site, known as Crochta, was adorned with a large white cross to commemorate the men who had been hung there for their faith, and to commemorate all the Irish martyrs.

Fr Maurice MacKenraghty, Bishop O'Healy and Fr Conn O'Rourke were hanged on the spot during the 15th and 16th centuries. Bishop Terence Albert O'Brien and Archbishop Dermot Hurley were both from nearby, and both were also martyred in the same era. They were commemorated too on Sunday.

Archbishop O'Hurley of Cashel was a layman who was ordained Archbishop of Cashel by Pope Gregory XIII. His family moved to the Diocese of Limerick. He was later martyred for his faith.

Bishop O'Brien of Emly took refuge in Limerick during the Cromwellian sieges of the city, and was hanged by Ireton in 1651.

Fr MacKenraghty was born in Kilmallock, the son of a goldsmith. He put himself in the place of a man condemned to death, and died in his place in 1585.

Dr Newman said in his homily that the martyrs were drawn from a number of walks of life, and that we could all identify with one or other of them.

"They contain among them a martyr with whom each one of us can identify



Mrs Barry, Cliona Cussen, Denis Danaher and Helena Power, who attended the special Mass in honour of the 17 martyrs beatified recently in Rome.



Canon English, Canon Tim Green and Brother Flannan O'Brien who were at the special Mass.

in his or her own way. They represent the people of God in every kind of person.

"Truly, it was a varied group. But all became martyrs for refusing to accept the Oath of Supremacy, namely that the Crown of England, not the Pope, was the head of the Church.

"Their faith was summed up by one of them, the Wexford layman Matthew Lambert, who is described as a simple, unlettered man, but one who, even though tormented and condemned to death, was not prepared to betray the Church of Jesus Christ in which he believed."

Speaking of the beatification of the martyrs in Rome, Dr Newman said he was delighted that members of the Church of Ireland attended.

"It was nice that two deans of the Protestant tradition were in Rome for the

ceremony of Beatification. It would be a pity if the welcome extended to them then were to be estranged by anything that might give the impression that they were there, yet somehow not there.

"May I remind you that it takes two to make a martyr. What I mean is that to be so one has to die for the Faith against an attack on the faith. That is what the martyrs whom we celebrate today did, and for which reason are known in the tradition of the Irish language as red martyrs - a martyrdom sealed with their blood.

The same tradition also recognises two other forms of martyrdom - green martyrdom, that of the monks of old, and white martyrdom, by which is meant the everyday martyrdom which Christ's faithful have to endure in the face of oppo-

sition and even calumny.

"That conditions for such are rife in the Ireland of today should be clear to any right thinking person.

"Given that, let us not fail to pray to those who have gone before us as red martyrs. And hopefully let Kilmallock do something too by way of a monument to them here - not a triumphalist thing, which they themselves would not want, but a humble yet dignified reminder of them."

Bishop Newman was assisted in the commemorative mass by Canon G Hall, PP; Canon E Houlihan, PP; Canon T Greane, PP; Canon English, PP; Canon S Condon, PP; Fr P O'Grady; Fr Maurice Fearol; Fr Paul Murray; Fr J Kennedy; Fr R Costelloe; Fr Mark Crowley; Fr L O'Sullivan; Fr A McNamara; Fr L Madden; Fr F O'Malley; Fr M Hanley, Fr

M Kearns; Fr P O'Sullivan, CC. Brother Peter and Brother Flannan of the Franciscan Order were also present.

Kilmallock church choir, under the direction of Sean Naughton, with organist Maira Maughton, provided the music for the Mass, while Margaret McCarthy played the tin whistle during communion. The epistles were read by Mainchin Seoighe and Sr Teresa Murphy, school principal. Prayers of the faithful were read by Marjorie O'Riordan, Brid Quinn and Jim Gammell.

The offertory procession was unusual, in that the gifts brought to the altar were as historic as the occasion itself. They included a chalice dating from 1934 and an old Roman Missal, a leaf of palm, a crown, bread and wine. They were carried in procession by Marie Wingfield, Mora Lyons, Joan Kelly, Bridie O'Doherty, Pat Gubbins and John Donegan.

A Colour Party of the 14th Battalion of the FCA formed a guard of honour during the consecration, and trumpeters from the Charleville Brass and Reed Band sounded the salute.

After the Mass the large congregation witnessed one of the most moving ceremonies ever staged in Kilmallock. Seventeen schoolgirls marched behind the band, each wearing a sash with the name of one of the martyrs written on it. Each sash also contained a single red rose.

They made their way to Crochta, the site of the hangings, led by the Kilmallock banner which was present in St Peter's Square on the day of the Beatification.

At Crochta, Fr M Hanley, CC, recited prayers, and as the name of each martyr was intoned one of the girls would lay her rose on the wreath at the foot of the white cross. Finally the wreath of 17 red roses was placed on the centre of the cross, making the symbol of the ancient celtic cross, while the band played Faith of our Fathers.



Kilmallock schoolgirls who laid roses for each of the 17 martyr's who were recently beatified.