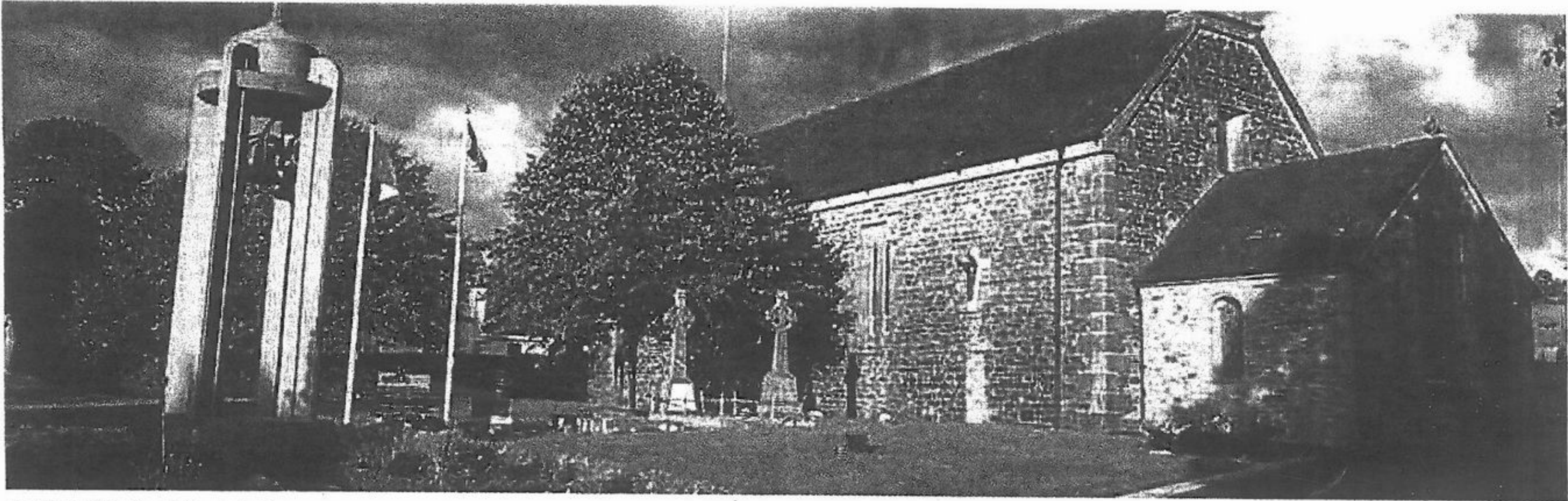


Then & Now

Tom Aherne



Most Holy Trinity Church, Templeglantine

Two bishops 'tower' over local history

THE BISHOP'S ROCK in Templeglantine has a claim to two Bishops of Limerick Cornelius O'Keeffe, and Robert Lacy. The lives of these two bishops cover the whole penal period and a different Ireland as we know it at present.

In those days there was no road between Abbeyfeale and Newcastle West and the only means of communication was by a bridle path that twisted its way along by the watershed at the foot of the hills. With forests covering the entire range of hills it must have been well nigh inaccessible.

There is a nameless glen sunk right into the heart of Sugar Hill, and it is a secluded spot and is not observable until one walks right into it. About the middle of the glen and rose a little over the bank of the stream there is a large rectangular brown stone. It is quite possible that at one time, it stood much higher but gradually sank into the boggy bank of the stream. This is Carraig an Easpuig - the Bishop's Rock where was offered by a Bishop in Penal

Days. Towering over the glen and rock is Sugar Hill and here the sentinels or lookouts were posted when Mass was being offered. The glen and Mass Rock lie on the southern side and there is a wonderful view from the top of Sugar Hill. To the west are the Dingle Mountains, the Mc Gillacuddy Reeks, and all that makes Kerry the beauty spot it is. To the east out through the gap of Barna lies the plain of Limerick guarded by the river Shannon, and the hills of Clare.

Dr John O'Moloney, Lord Bishop of Limerick sought refuge on the Continent towards the end of the 17th century and died there on September 3, 1702. From the date of his death until 1720 there was no Bishop appointed for Limerick. This was the time during which many Penal Enactments were passed and actively enforced. The general Penal Code is well known but there were some special enactments dealing with Bishops and priests which are not so well known.

In 1697 the Dublin Parliament passed an Act for the banishment of all

Catholic Bishops and dignitaries, leaving untouched the parish clergy who it was hoped would die out in time for want of due consecration. The Act was vigorously enforced and in a few years the resident Bishops were reduced to half a dozen, living the most obscure and dangerous existence.

Cornelius O'Keeffe was born about the year 1664 in Doonakenna, the fort of the tribes, a townland adjoining the Rock and near Templeglantine. He was a son of Denis O'Keeffe, a descendant of the Chieftains of Fermoy and formerly of Glenville, Cork. They were dispossessed by the Cromwellian confiscations and settled in Templeglantine where the future Bishop was born. His mother was Hanora O'Daly of a well known Cork family.

He was consecrated on the continent and after a short time he returned to Ireland and his diocese. Here he lived the secret life of a proscribed man and yet managed to run his diocese and minister to the needs of his flock for twelve or fourteen years. Then the rigors of the Penal

Laws descended on him and instructions were issued for his arrest. After being pursued for 18 months, not knowing any longer where to hide himself he had to flee the country to France. He was 70 years old and in rather bad health after his labours of 22 years of mission in the office of Bishop and Vicar General.

Is it too much to hazard that the greater part of that time was spent in the glen of the Bishop's Rock adjoining his paternal home in Doonakenna. The only help we get from tradition is that a Bishop used to say Mass in Carrig an Easpuig while hiding from his enemies and used to spend the day by a running brook nearby. After a few years in exile Bishop O'Keeffe returned again to his diocese. He wasn't long spared however and he died on May 4, 1737. He was buried in an unknown grave in Saint John's Churchyard. It is perhaps fitting that in death as in life his whereabouts should be unknown.

Today all that remains in their native West Limerick to remind us of those two singular and saintly men, Doctors of the Church and Bishops of our Diocese, is a single rock by a stream in a lonely glen. The following lines are taken from the Mass Rock in the Glen song:

God bless the glens of Ireland every rock and mountain pass,

'Twas these same glens that unto God had served for us the Mass,

And if the time should ever come when Ireland calls for men,

She will not find them wanting by the Mass Rock in the glen.

COMMON SENSE: is not that

Towering over the glen and rock is Sugar Hill and here the sentinels or lookouts were posted when Mass was being offered

common anymore and more the pity that is. Common sense is fast disappearing as political correctness takes centre stage with crazy rules and regulations being introduced. A number of years ago an email about common sense was in circulation. It was taken from an Obituary notice printed in the London Times in 2009. The following passages are taken from it.

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, common sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as: Knowing when to come in from the rain; why the early bird gets the worm: life isn't always fair: and maybe it was my fault. Common sense lived by simple sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children are in charge)

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6 year old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate: teens suspended from school for using mouth

wash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

Common sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children. It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an Aspirin to a student: but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common sense lost the will to live as the churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims. Common sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your home and the burglar could sue you for assault. Common sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realise that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little into her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common sense was preceded in death, by his parents, truth and trusts His wife, discretion, his daughter, responsibility, and his son reason. He is survived by his 4 stepbrothers; I know my rights I want it now. Someone else is to blame and I'm a victim. Not many attended his funeral because so few realised he was gone. If you still remember him, pass this on. If not, join the majority and do nothing.

I thought it was very interesting and sadly it is true. I look forward to his resurrection and a better society for us all.