

Consecration of St. Mary's Church, Carrigwohill Cork Examiner, 16th May 1872



Carrigwohill & District Historical Society



This beautiful little church was consecrated yesterday, the ceremonies being of an unusually solemn and impressive character. The ground on which the church is built is held in perpetuity, free from rent; and the rarely performed ceremony of a full consecration made the occasion one of the more than ordinary interest. Little more than two years ago the first stone of this church was laid, and since then the worthy parish priest has been working well and earnestly to bring it to completion. The wishes of the good pastor are now realized, and the town of Carrigwohill possesses, in its little church, a temple worthy of the service of the Holy of Holies, in point of beauty a gem of architecture, and a building which testifies to the piety and charity of those who aided in its erection.

The church is built in the Gothic style, from a design furnished by Mr. G. Ashlin, of Dublin, and the erection of the work reflects the greatest credit on the builder, Mr Newstead, Fermoy. The materials employed are red and green sandstone for the walls, Bath stones for the doorways, windows, and string-courses, and limestone for the coigns. The plan includes nave, two aisles, (north and south), chancel, and sacristy, with porches near the north-west and south-west angles. The western elevation is exceedingly pretty. It shows a handsome Gothic doorway in the centre, approached by three steps, the arch being neatly moulded. On either side of the doorway is a pretty recessed trough for holy water, the back of the recess decorated with an inlaid cross of red marble, contrasting well with the Bath stone in which it is laid. Above are two handsome lancet windows with moulded heads, and between these in a niche of equal length, standard beautiful statue of the Blessed Virgin. A neat circular window with carved quatrefoils occupies the centre of the gable, and the whole elevation is crowned by a Bath stone belfry of picturesque design. In the side elevation there are five couplet windows, and one single window in each aisle wall, and above the aisle roofs, the clerestory shows a range of seven pretty trefoil windows on each side. At the eastern end of the side elevation a graceful lancet window reaching to the main roof lights the chancel from each side. One of the most striking features in the edifice is a singularly beautiful wheel window which lights up the chancel. A Gothic arch surrounds the window, and above it in the gable is a pretty niche in which is placed a statue of St. Joseph. The general appearance of the interior is highly effective. A row of limestone columns, supporting seven pointed arches, divides the nave from the aisles. Neatly moulded hoods impart additional beauty to the clerestory windows on the inside, and from the nave the handsome circular window of the chancel appears to great advantage. The window itself is filled in part with stained glass, in geometrical figures, and the general effect is very pretty. The aisles are flagged and the nave boarded with a tilted passage up the centre. The aisle roofs are of pitch pine stained as in the nave. All the doors of the church and sacristy are handsomely panelled and nothing is wanting to complete a very pretty and artistic edifice. The alter is a beautiful piece of work, chaste and elegant in design, and perfect in execution of

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detail. The church is capable of accommodating 1,200 worshipers and has been erected for the very moderate sum of £3,000.

At eight o'clock, the hour appointed for the ceremony, the church was crowded, and the following were the clergy present:-

Consecrating Prelate-Right Rev. Dr. W Keane; deacon, Rev. D. Keller; sub-deacon, Rev. M. Ahern, archdeacon Very Rev. P. D. O'Regan, V.G. assistant, Very Rev. J. Conon Fitzpatrick, P.P. V.F., Midleton; chanters, Rev. H. Denneby, C.C., Queenstown; Rev. Wm. Foley, C.C., Midleton; master of ceremonies, Rev. Thomas Walsh, P.P. Castlemartyr; Very Rev. Dean O'Mahony, P.P, Mitchelstown, Very Rev. John Precentor Falvey, P.P, V.F., St. Patrick's, Cork; Rev. Richard Seymour, P.P., Carrigwohill, Very Rev. Dilworth, P.P. V.F., Doneraile; Very Rev. John Fitzpatrick, P.P. V. F., Midleton; Very Rev. Canon Murphy, P.P., Youghal; Very Rev. Canon Buckley, P.P., Buttevant; Rev. R Smiddy, P.P, Aghada; Rev. Charles Fielding, P.P., Lady's Bridge; Rev. P. Pope, P.P, Aghina; Rev. John Cronin, P.P, Lisgoold; Rev. T. Walsh, P.P., Castlemartyr; Rev. M Power, P.P., Killeagh; Very Rev. P.A. Lyons, O.S.A., Cork; Very Rev. D. O'Sullivan, C. M., Sunday's Well, Cork; Rev. R. Scully, C.M., do; Rev. J. A. Daly, C.C, Glanmire; Rev. J. Rice, R.C.A, Queenstown; Rev. H. Dennehy, C.C., do; Rev. D. Keller, do; Rev. S. Ashlin, C.C, do; Rev. W. Foley, C.C., Midleton; Rev. J. Buckley, P.P., Grenagh; Rev. T. O'Farrell, C.C., Cloyne; Rev. E. Barry, C.C., Aghada; Rev. M. Riordan, C.C., do, Rev. J Barry, C.C., Castlemartyr; Rev. J. Horgan, C.C., Killeagh; Rev. B. Shinnick, C.C., do; Rev. Jas O'Neill, C.C., Youghal; Rev. P. Horgan, do; Rev. C. O'Keeffe, do; Rev T. L. Coughlan, Queenstown; Rev. M. Ahern, C.C., Lady's Bridge; Rev. A. M'Donald, C.C., Lisgoold; Rev. J. Walsh, C.C., Carrigwohill; Rev. J Higgins, C.C., Ballyclough; Rev. W. O'Mahony, C.C., Clondrohid.

The ceremony of consecration then begun. The bishop, dressed in his proper habit, took the seat prepared for him in the centre of the church, and left again after a short time, one deacon alone remaining in the church. The doors of the church were then closed. The bishop and the clergy then proceeded to where the relics were placed, and recited the Seven Penitential Psalms while he was being clothed with the sacred vestments. The bishop having been vested, returned, accompanied by a deacon, sub-deacon, and acolytes to the front of the church, where a seat was prepared for him, and, having laid aside his pastoral staff, commenced the ceremony. After a number of prayers had been recited, his lordship knelt at the church door in prayer, while the singers intoned the litanies. He then rose, and having resumed his mitre and crozier, blessed the salt and water prepared for him, and sprinkled those around him with it. He then laid by his mitre and crozier, and, preceded by two acolytes holding lighted tapes in their hands, commenced the circuit of the church, beginning at the right hand, and sprinkled the walls with holy water. The circuit of the church being finished, his lordship, having assumed his mitre and crozier, came again to the door of the church and struck it once on the threshold with the foot of the crozier, repeating at the same time the words, "Attollite portas principes vestras et elevamini portae aeternales et intreibit Rex glorius." The deacon inside answered; "Quis est iste Rex gloriae," to which his lordship replied, "Dominus tortis et potens; Dominus potens in praeliis." His lordship then laying aside the crozier and taking the aspersorium in his hand,

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makes the circuit of the church, accompanied as before by the clergy and the people, and beginning at the right hand side of the building asperses the lower portion of the walls. This done, he returns to the church door a second time, and after praying for some time with the people, strikes the threshold a second time with his crozier, repeating the same words as before. He then made the circuit of the church a third time, commencing at the left hand side, and, sprinkling the middle part of the walls, as the choir sang the parts prescribed in the ritual. Having come back to the door a third time, the same ceremony was repeated and the same responses returned by the deacon inside, with this addition, that all the people outside joined in the response. "Dominus virtutum ipae est rex glorias," and repeated the word "aperite" three times. His lordship here made the sign of the cross upon the threshold with the extremity of his crozier, saying, "Behold the sign of the cross" The door was then thrown open, and his lordship entered attended by the clergy, the choir, and the masons who were to assist in closing the sepulchre where the relics were to be laid. On entering, his lordship sais, "Pax huic domui," to which the deacon answered, "In introitu vestro," and all the multitude responded, "Amen." His lordship then came to the middle of the church, where a place was prepared for him, and kneeling down with his face towards the great alter, intoned the hymn Veni Creator Spiritus. The hymn being aneded one of of the ministers sprinkled the floor of the church with ashes in the form of the cross, on which his lordship with his crozier described the Greek and Latin alphabets. All this time the choir were singing the psalms prescribed in the blessings and exorcisms prescribed, came again to the Church door and with his crozier made the sign of the cross on the upper and lower parts. Returning to the place where the water was prepared he commenced the consecration of the alter. Before concluding this portion of the ceremony a procession was formed which moved round the Church three times, his Lordship aspersing the walls with the water which he had previously blessed, first the upper portion, then the lower, and finally the middle. He then aspersed the pavement, beginning before the alter and ending at the principle entrance, after which he blessed the mortar which had been previously prepared. A procession was then formed, and the relics brought before the entrance of the Church, when his Lordship addressed the multitude in the words of the Pontificate. The procession the re-entered the Church, and the consecration of the alter was then preceded with the sepulchre where the relics were to be laid, having been anointed with chris. His Lordship then took the relics reverently and placed them in their proper receptacle. They were then incensed and the sepulchre closed up and sealed, his Lordship making the Sign of the Cross over the sepulchre with chris. Having incensed the alter on all sides, his Lordship then sat down, while the ministers cleansed the alter table with linen. This done, he went round the alter, incensed it three times, and made five crosses upon it, one in the middle and one at each corner. Having incensed the alter several times and anointed it with chris, his Lordship made another circuit of the church and anointed the twelve crosses on the walls before which lighted candles had been placed. Returning again to the great alter, he incensed it and placed five grains of incense on the crosses he had previously formed, and lighted them. After these had been consumed, his Lordship having made a cross in front of the alter with chris, blessed the alter linens, he ornaments, and the sacred vessels, and this concluded the ceremony.

Mass was then celebrated by his Lordship.

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At the conclusion of Mass, his Lordship addressed the congregation. He commented warmly on the glorious sight that was presented in having so large and so respectable a congregation assembled on that day to signalise the completion of a work which would for ever redound to their honour. That was a great work which they had just finished; and in signalling the triumph achieved in the erection of the Church, they would first return thanks to God for all his mercies to them, for it was to Him they should return thanks for everything, and next the benefactors who contributed to the erection of that temple – well, he would call it so – and “he had no hesitation in saying in addressing his dear people of Carrigwohill, that in the two sense of the word, it was a temple of which they might well be proud. It was such a church as the stranger wished to see – it was a proof of the recuperating power of the Catholic Church. What elements there must be in that faith, when, for three hundred years they were not allowed to have college, church, chapel, priests, bishop, religious convent, or school, and yet they found so glorious a sight as was presented when they look to every part of this country to-day. Yes, Catholics of Ireland should be proud of what with God's blessing they were able to accomplish. Let them look about in every direction, and they would see, as in the spring-time of life, as if a new spring-time had come upon our persecuted country – a generosity, a nobility, a zeal on the part of the people that surpassed anything they were aware of. They began there not very long ago – and how Well, the ways of Providence were wonderful. There was there that day a clergyman, and he and his Lordship very nearly 50 years ago were fellow students to an old – well he did not know he could call him a parishioner – he did not know if he was born in Carrigwohill, but he was certain of this – that his ancestors had been in Carrigwohill for very many generations. He got acquainted with him there, and afterwards that rev gentleman was employed as a military chaplain and did missionary duties in various parts of the world. He came home only a few years ago in bad health. He was living in Queenstown, and he (his Lordship) was delighted to meet him and he enjoyed his company whenever he had a leisure moment. Well, he found his last day was approaching, and he went to Cork to live under the shelter and under the hospitable roof of a fond relative, who was also from that parish, and he said to that relative – “I have saved so much money; I am neither parish priest nor curate; I have enough to live upon during my life, short or long as it may be, and I beg of you to accept it. Take it, make your own of it, and take care of me – my days are short, and most willingly do I give you all I can call my own, that it might be your property and the property of your family.” Well, he lived only a short time after that, and the good relative, who could have called the money his own, went to him (his Lordship) and said he had a favour to ask of him. He replied, “Well, that is it; I am at all times most willing to oblige you.” Well,” said this gentleman “my cousin, the Rev. Edward Murphy, made such a present to me. I accepted the money. I have it now. I can call it my own, and I ask you to accept it for the benefit of the parish of Carrigwohill from which he and I came.” He accepted the money, and that was the beginning of the building. It was as high a figure as £600 or very near to it. His Lordship had only one request, and he knew he would meet a full response from their warm, Irish Catholic, hearts – and that was that till the day of their deaths, every time they entered that church and especially on Sunday and holidays, they would offer a prayer for the soul of the Rev. Edward Murphy, and for the soul his good relative and members of his family who were the first to open a subscription list for the splendid church of Carrigwohill. And let them now fervently pray might God have mercy on their souls

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(responses of "Amen."). That was the opening of the subscription list. Now, he came to the people themselves – to the clergy and to the laity of the surrounding neighbourhood, not only of Cork, and other places which they might mention. When there was a question of erecting such a church as that, when there was a question of building a school, a college, a university, or anything calculated to promote the faith of the Irish people, all boundaries were to be put aside, for the Irish Catholics had been Irish Catholics, not merely for parochial, not merely for diocesan, not merely for provincial purposes, but they had been Irish Catholics for national purposes at large. And this he said without hesitation, though he spoke as an Irish Catholic, that they and he and every Irish Catholic – every Irish priest, and everyone from one end to the other of Ireland, ought be proud of what Irishmen had done for the last seventy or eighty years. Let them go back for a while. England insisted long ago that the Irish people should give up their faith, but the Irish people made up their minds to accept of any sacrifice, to lay their heads on the block before they would ever say that they were not Catholics. They adhered to that faith, without which it was impossible to please God; they preferred martyrdom and the scaffold, to all the world could bestow on them. Well, England persuaded herself rightly or wrongly, that if Irishmen did not give up their faith she would not have a faithful ally in Ireland, and for over 250 years a system of persecution was carried on which he could say for duration and intensively was unparalleled in the history of the world. Their ancestors were steeped in poverty, their properties were taken away, they could have no schools, no colleges, no grade or character of any kind; and taking into account the ordinary feelings of men, there was worse than all the unfortunate Irishmen, a poor man, an uneducated man, as misrepresented as man could be, pointed out as one that should not be trusted, and held up to the ridicule of the nations of Europe. Ridicule enough was cast upon him; but in the meantime the Irish Catholic, under the guidance of heaven, worked away; the poor Irish Catholic under every penalty was patient, and at least he made up his mind that if he could not be a great scholar he could be a great saint. What was the result? The sharp sword of persecution became blunted – men saw it would be a foolish task to try longest to tear away from the hearts of the Irish people the faith they treasured more than life itself – they left them alone some time ago. And now let those dear people he addressed listen for a moment to the result. They had on this day not entirely, but nearly 3,000 priests ministering to the wants of the Irish nation – they had nearly 5,000 schools built almost by their own money – they had colleges got up in various parts of Ireland – they had 2,300 churches, costing some of them thousands. More of them thousands of thousands, and none of them less than £700, and all of this immense sum was subscribed – by whom – by the impoverished, by the persecuted, by the martyred people of Ireland. And thank God when his dear people of Carrigwohill made an appeal those who had it in their hands in the diocese of Cork and Cloyne responded to the call. Subscriptions and money had been with God's blessing able to perform miracles. Yes, miracles was not too strong a word applied to what had been done by their land of Ireland for the last sixty years. They could now stand forth and raise their eyes to heaven and say, "Oh, thank God, the virtue of our ancestors triumphed over the persecution waged against them," and he might add, speaking from the alter of God which had been consecrated a few moments before, he could say with a knowledge of what he was saying, that they were now in Ireland a people of virtuous, nay more virtuous than any on the globe, when compared to its population; and he believed that the nation was now having its true revenge in carrying

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its ancient faith into every part of England – into the heart of London, Birmingham, Glasgow, and all its great manufacturing towns – and in carrying it to distant colonies where without the Irish element there would scarcely be one Catholic Church. Let their vengeance be never any more than that – it was the noblest that one nation could take of another; and to prove that Ireland had had it if they withdrew at present from England and other places the Irish Catholics they would have nothing but a heap of ruins. Now, they were in the presence of clergymen from various parts of the diocese, and he wished to tell them what they had done for their beautiful church. They looked about then and saw it was a temple worthy of worship of the living God – was a temple not only any large town but any city in Ireland might be proud. And now let them consult their own he said, let them go beyond their own thoughts, when he asked them, were they not all better pleased have contributed if it in their power twice the sum that enabled them to erect that splendid temple to the living God. But he would not be doing his duty to them, he would not be doing his duty to himself, if he did not in the presence of his brethren there say that in more than an especial manner the honor – well, let them not say honor or gratitude that merit before God was due to the energy, zeal, perseverance, and patients, of the good parish priest placed over them. Might God grant that he would live long to celebrate ceremonies of their church in that house, which he has done so much to erect to the living God. His Lordship then, in very impressive language reminded them that while they should labour anxiously and earnestly for the erection and preservation for God's honor or the material temple, they should remember that they had also to preserve from stain or blemish the temple of their heart, which God expected they should keep ever pure for Him. He prayed that the people of the parish might enjoy every earthly blessing here, and every heavenly joy in the world to come; and he concluded by giving them his blessing and extending to all who had taken part in the ceremonies an indulgence one year and forty days.

An efficient choir, under the direction of Miss M'Kenna, Cork, sang Winter's Mass in an admirable manner.

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, his Lordship and the other clergymen were entertained at a sumptuous luncheon supplied by Mr Tanner, Grand Parade, Cork.