

# Frances Margaret Taylor – A Concise History

Aloysius de Gonzaga (1568 - 1591), an Italian aristocrat of Castiglione who entered the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) while still a college student, died shortly before midnight, 1591, aged 23; just before his ordination as a result of caring for the victims of a serious plague epidemic. Aloysius who was beatified in 1605 became canonized in 1726. It was in his honour our school and convent at Carrigtwohill was named, founded by Mother Magdalen's Sisters of the 'Poor Servants of the Mother of God' in, 1875, whose Order adopted similar rules of the Jesuits. That year Cardinal Henry Edward Manning with Bishop William Bernard Ullathorne consecrated the new church of Oxford dedicated St Aloysius. During the 1800s there were two additional schools of Cork established in his name run by the Sisters of Mercy; one in Clonakilty, the other in Cork City. Only Cork City still exist to this day.



On 13<sup>th</sup> June 2014, Pope Francis authorised the promulgation of the decree concerning the Heroic virtues of Servant of God Mother Magdalen of the Sacred Heart.

Mother Magdalen was born, Frances Margaret (more affectionately known as Fanny), 1832, the youngest of ten children to Reverend Henry Taylor and Louisa Maria Jones, Stoke Rochford, Lincolnshire, where Henry was parish Vicar. She, with her siblings are descended from two distinguished and respectable families of the City of London. The Taylor family being of the clergy, whereas, the Jones side being 'Blackwell Hall Factor' cloth merchants. Both families having close ties to London; namely Kensington and Mansion House, where Frances would spend much of her formative years.

When Frances was ten years old her father died at Stoke Rochford. Shortly after Louisa Maria would take her young family back to London. During these first ten years of her life saw a major shift of philosophy in the Church of England since the time of the reformation when the then Reverend John Henry Newman with is colleague Reverend Edward Bouverie Pusey established the 'Oxford Movement' whose philosophy was known as 'Tractarianism' after a series of publications 'Tracts for the Times' were issued between 1833 and 1841. It was almost certain that Henry Taylor was influenced by this movement.

At the age of about seventeen/eighteen Frances followed her sisters, Emma and Charlotte, into Anglican Sisterhood (Society of Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Trinity Devonport) established by Priscilla Lydia Sellon (1821-76). The actual date is unclear, but it is believed Frances was in the Devonport of Plymouth area during the Cholera epidemics of 1849. However, Paul Saw's research would suggest 1852. The Sisterhood was another movement Revd Pusey took a warm interest in, acting as their spiritual director, and had initially established an Orphanage in the town.

By 1851 census return, the Taylor family are found at 3, Hill Road, Marylebone.

Next saw the outbreak of the Crimean War (1853 - 1856). Although no longer a member of Miss Sellon's Sisterhood, Fanny was to be included with Mary Stanley's second party of volunteer nurses sent out to join Florence Nightingale who by this time was already there.

During her time in the Crimea Fanny documented her experiences of the war entitled; 'Eastern Hospitals and English Nurses', first published, London 1856, and referred to in the House of Commons by John Francis Maguire. It was while in Crimea Fanny was to be befriended by the Irish Catholic Sisters of Mercy under the leadership of Mother M Frances Bridgeman of Kinsale and the Jesuit priests with whom they were closely allied. Here too she would attend to the nursing needs of her beloved wounded and sick Irish soldiers and sailors who in turn loved her. It was during this period Fanny's conversion to Catholicism began with the assistance of the Jesuits. She converted at the hand of Father Sidney Woollett SJ, 1855, and receiving her First Holy Communion two weeks later on Easter Sunday, that same year. It was also at this point when her sister Charlotte arrived in the Crimea. By November, Fanny with Charlotte and two other ladies, stood on the deck of the 'Hydaspes', amidst cheers of their Irish soldiers they left the Crimean shores bound for home.

Upon her returned to London as a recent Catholic convert, there was much to learn with just as much to unlearn, whilst at the same time resuming her work with the poor and destitute of the capital under the guidance of the Revd Dr Henry Edward Manning (later

Cardinal), himself now a convert and widowed Priest. On the, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1857, Charlotte converted at the hand of Father Brownbill SJ.

Paul Shaw advised the congregation's annals confirm:

*'...on St. Raphael's Day, October 24 [1868], we took possession of four small rooms in a little court leading out of Fleet Street. Lady Georgiana bought an image of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, and placed it on a little altar in one of these rooms. She, Father Biemans, the two postulants and myself, said together the Litany of Our Lady, and put the work under her protection. A month passed and difficulties arose: the people of the house would not allow the poor to come to us. We began the Novena of the Immaculate Conception on November 29, and before its close The Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate in Tower Hill invited the little group to carry on the work in their mission, in connection with an industrial school for girls. Mary Ward [one of the postulants] was willing to go to Tower Hill, and the work was accordingly transferred there on the Feast of Our Lady's Espousals, January 25, 1869.'*

For the census return of 1861, Fanny was living with her mother at 4 Houghton Place, London which was bequeathed to Louisa Maria Taylor, by her aunt, Jane Davies. Then the following census of 1871 Fanny was recorded 'Head' of 'Sister of Mercy' at 26 Cavendish Square.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1872, Fanny Taylor took her final vows, with this date being retained as the founding day of "The Poor Servants of the Mother of God".

During 1874 Fanny met Father Augustus Dignam S J, who was to become her spiritual director, and an important adviser.

In London, the Sisters' principal works were the visitation and nursing of the poor in their own homes, began rescuing young women from prostitution.

In January, Mother Magdalen left London for Ireland. It was her ardent desire to have a convent in the "Island of Saints", the dear country to whose people she had been irresistibly drawn since her Crimean days. An opportunity presented itself at the large Jesuit College, Clongowes Wood, Co. Kildare. Another was in Limerick. Both, however, had failed; Limerick in 1876 and Clongowes 1880.

March 1874, negotiations were afoot to invite the newly established Order to locate a community at Carrigtwohill. It is here at Carrigtwohill, that Mother always considered the "Mother House" of the Irish branch of her Order to be. Many reporting this element of the story have incorrectly stated that that Miss Dora Fitzgerald's letter was followed by Father Seymour's. This was not the case as Sister Mary Campion Troughton (1835-1908) correctly stated;

*"Miss Fitzgerald wrote at once to Mother Magdalen enclosing a letter from the old priest."*

Dora Fitzgerald of Rockville, (daughter of Thomas Fitz Edmond FitzGerald of Rockview House, Carrigacrumpp, near Aghada) and Richard Seymour's involvement, with Father Horgan whom it is believed was once Curate of Carrigtwohill and Middleton, this process commenced, 26<sup>th</sup> March that same year.

Within three years of taking her final vows the, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1875; the Feast of St. Aloysius, Mother Magdalen and two of her Sisters had established a community in Carrigtwohill. Upon their arrival at the Railway Station, they were astonished to be met by the entire village, including the children, all in festive attire, being led by Richard Seymour. They processed to their new parish church, as flowers were strewn beneath their feet, under a triumphal banner which read "Cead Mile Failte" held aloft by the men of this community. Here they recited the rosary and held a hymn service.



Firstly, Richard Seymour had built his St. Mary's Church. Once this was accomplished, at an age when most would have been content and retired; Father Seymour commenced the construction of the convent home for his newly arrived Crimean Sisters. During their first year,

they had resided in rooms over a shop Ahern's, Main Street, (now Franks takeaway), whilst, chiefly at his own expense, this charitable priest erected the Sisters' Convent.

However, and in an effort to obtain additional funding for this venture, a Bazaar was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September 1876, in the hope that it would provide additional finances to realise Richard's desire to house the Sisters in the comfort that he had promised.

This quest had come to the attention of His Holiness in Rome, Pope Pius IX. Lady Georgiana Fullerton, another faithful friend authored an article which appeared within the "Irish Monthly, Vol. 4, 1876," entitled "A Village Convent at Carrigtwohill," where amongst other general descriptive accounts of Carrigtwohill, she made the following statement;

*"Perhaps we may be allowed here to relate a little instance of the Holy Father's kind and genial sympathy, which may interest some of our readers, and incline them to help in the Carrigtwohill Bazaar. One who has its success greatly at heart, asked a friend, a dignitary of the Church at Rome, to solicit from Pius IX. Some little prize for the charity-sale in the remote Irish Village, and spoke of the Sisters' work amongst the poor. His Holiness had before him on his table white boxes containing some small cameos. He smiled, and said: "These would not be good enough." The answer, of course, was that, had they been less pretty than they were, the gift of the Holy Father would make them most precious. "Take two of them, then," he said, in his kindest manner, and then spoke of other things. But the thought of the poor little humble convent near Cork was still in his mind, for before his visitor left, he said: "Two are not enough, take four for that Bazaar." And thus four chances of possessing the gifts of the Father of the Faithful are held out to those who will kindly respond to the oft-repeated request "to take tickets," the acceptance of which will help on the holy work we have described. Many other prizes of various sorts will swell the list of the Carrigtwohill Bazaar. But the richest that could be devised would hardly tempt the faithful children of the Church as much as the little gifts of the Holy Prisoner of Rome.\**

*\*Tickets for the raffle, and also for the special drawings of the Pope's presents, can be had from the Convent, Carrigtwohill, County Cork."*

## CARRIGTWOHILL CONVENT:

It will be seen by an announcement which appears in our advertising columns that a bazaar in aid of this convent will take place on Wednesday and Thursday next at Barry's Court Castle, which has been placed at the disposal of the respected parish priest by Mr. A. H. Smith Barry. Apart from the varied attractions of the bazaar, the old feudal mansion of the Earls of Barrymore and its surroundings would well repay a visit. This castle was built in 1176 by Phillip De Barry, and at the present date few, if any castles in Ireland of that period are in better preservation; and if the various apartments which it contains could only be made available to the requirements of the present age a moderate outlay would make it habitable. We trust that the public will on the 6th and 7th insts. give the respected parish priest of Carrigtwohill, the Rev. E. Seymour, substantial proof of how much they appreciate the zeal and activity he has on all occasions evinced in promoting good works in his parish.

## B A Z A A R

IN AID OF THE NEW CONVENT, CARRIGTWOHILL. THE following are the Winning Numbers in the Grand Drawing held at the above:-  
 £15—No. 8283, Mr. Jerome Murphy.  
 Worked Chair—No. 12840, Rev. E. Linehan.  
 Chest of Draw—No. 1123, Mr. D. Cunningham.  
 Fat Sheep—No. 13350, Mr. Patrick Walsh.  
 Ottoman—No. 9265, Mrs. Jerome Murphy.  
 Gold Watch—No. 10059, Mr. D. Treaney.  
 Fender Stool—No. 6022, Miss Ellis.  
 Buxton Cooler—No. 1378, Mr. J. Daly.  
 Shirt Pin—No. 5473, Mr. E. McManus.  
 Bangle—No. 2850, Mr. T. Pigott.  
 Desk—No. 10662, Rev. E. J. Field.  
 67 1690 3184 9548  
 108 1885 3201 10612  
 152 1416 3314 10740  
 384 1468 3848 10806  
 392 1755 3418 10833  
 618 1843 3545 10888  
 642 1887 4161 13106  
 818 2681 7119 13458  
 891 2067 8018 13468  
 1034 3104 9081 13912  
 In the Special Drawing for the Prizes presented by His Holiness the Pope, the Cameos which was by—  
 Mr. John Waters (No. 4855), Mr. Patrick Doyle (No. 188), Rev. Chas. McCarthy (No. 8110) J. J. Ryan (No. 3169).  
 Application for Prizes at Convent, Carrigtwohill (8154)

Upon hearing of Mother Magdalen's death, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1900, the Convent of Mercy, Kinsale, where she was well known since her meeting with the Sisters in the Crimea, the following message of sympathy was received by the Poor Servants of the Mother of God Order. The author is unknown.

*"We had general Communion for her on the 9th (the day of her death) and will have another for her dear soul.*

*We here very sincerely sympathise with you and your Community in your sorrow, and are grieving at the death of your Mother General whom we loved and revered as a sincere and kind friend – a very much valued friend and fellow-labourer of our beloved Mother M Frances Bridgeman"*

## PRAYER FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF MOTHER MAGDALEN

Heavenly Father you gave to Mother Magdalen Taylor a profound insight into the Mystery of the Incarnation and a great love and compassion for the poor and needy. We pray that her life of deep faith and loving service may continue to inspire us and that, one day, she may be beatified to the glory of your name. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

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