

ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH

A History



By Margaret M. Lyddy

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Preface

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, "You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make his home among them they shall be his people, and he will be their God: His name is God-With-Them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes: there will be no more death, and no more mourning and sadness. The world of the past has gone".

Revelations. 1-4



St. Joseph's Church.

Historical Background

St Joseph's Parish in Limerick city is a Parish since 1973. Before that it was part of the very large Parish of St Michael's with its parish church in Denmark Street. The parish church of St Joseph's however, is 90 years old. It was built in 1904 as a chapel of ease to accommodate the growing population in the newer buildings of George's Street (now O'Connell Street) and Military Road, (now O'Connell Avenue).

The Parish of St. Joseph's extends from Upper Mallow Street, down to the Docks, out to the end of Ballinacurra, at present the city boundary. This is an area of some 1800 homes. (The busy programme of new house building will increase the number of homes shortly). The church is therefore not very centrally placed in the parish.

"New and tasteful blocks of buildings are rapidly rising in this direction, which has many claims to

*architectural beauty from its churches, convents and schools"*¹

The Crescent, with the O'Connell Monument, Pery Square with the Spring Rice Monument, the Redemptorist Church and Convent, the Convent and Orphanage of Mount St Vincent, St Michael's Protestant Church, built 1843-45, the Model School, the Turkish Baths with their minarets and other oriental features, are all visible from Military Road.²

An English traveller, John Fobesan, in the second half of the 19th century noted the large Catholic population as follows:

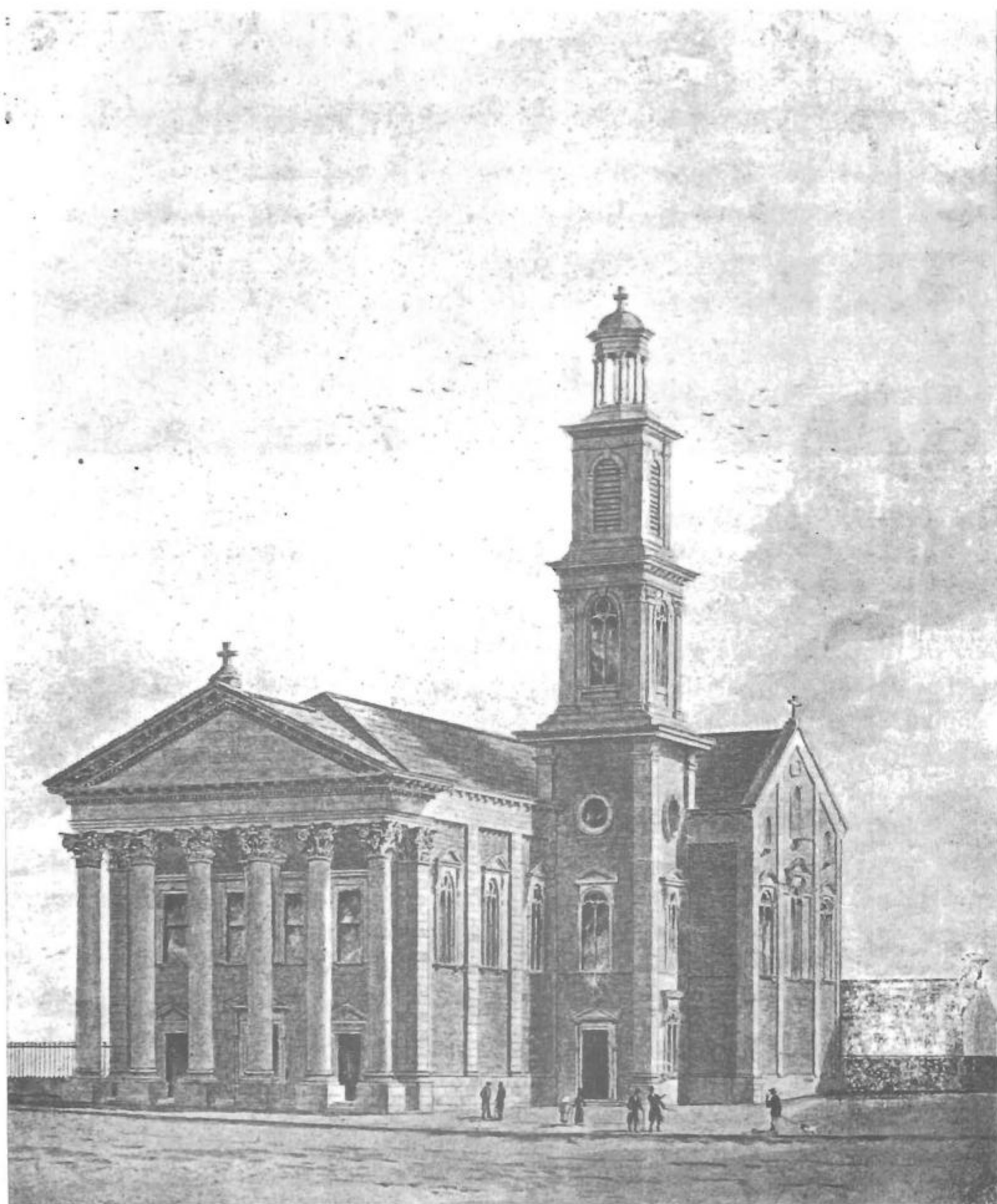
*"Being now in a large city in one of the most Catholic districts of Ireland, I visited two of the Catholic chapels, St Michael's and St. John's. Though they were large, I found them not merely crowded but literally crammed with people"*³

¹ Lenihan, P.534

² Lenihan, P.536 Footnote

³ Cited by John Fleming, St. John's Cathedral, 1987. P.41.

(A map of the area is included as in Appendix)



St. Joseph's Church, Limerick.
Design For Completion.
circa. 1904.

Historical Landmarks in the Parish

Ward Boundary Signs

A walk around the Parish of St Joseph's reveals Ward Boundary Signs at Punch's Cross and at the junction of New Street and South Circular Road. Erected in the 19th century, their purpose was to identify the limits of the city. At Punch's Cross there are two boundary signs erected by different Mayors: Martin Honan, Mayor 1842 and Stephen Hastings, Mayor 1878. The mayor responsible for erecting the boundary sign at the South Circular Road end of the New Street was John J Cleary 1882.

The Era of Horse Transport

One of the most vulnerable street antiquities is the mounting stone at the corner of Windmill Street and Henry Street. As the name suggests, it was used to give a 'leg up' to those mounting horses, when horses and horse drawn carriages were the main mode of transport. Another reminder of the horse transport days is the green cast iron horse trough which is situated at the Dooradoyle end of Ballinacurra, at the boundary of the parish.

Sarsfield Barracks

To the south west of St. Joseph's Church, an army barracks was built in 1798 and occupied about one square mile. It was known for many years at the 'New Barracks'. In 1845 a district military prison was added.⁴ With the founding of the state it was renamed Sarsfield Barracks.

Quaker Houses

The Quakers, who originally settled in Limerick in 1655, built some fine houses in the area, mainly Summerville

House, Richmond House and Laurel Hill House. The Quaker population in Limerick was significant in the 19th century. A list of the names in their graveyard at Ballinacurra recalls many former citizens.

(See Appendix).

Georgian Buildings

The buildings at the city end of the parish are fine examples of the Georgian period. Delicate fan lights, columns of wood or stone, intricate door knockers and boot scrapers are all here. The houses in Pery Square were erected by a group who raised a loan and agreed to share the annuity, the shares increasing as subscribers die until the last survivor gets all. The Tontine System.

Schools Dating from the 19th Century

In the early 19th century a lot of "enterprise and action" took place in the parish. Educating "the poor" was the great motive. Villiers (1835) Leamy's (1846) and the Model (1855) were established and each within a short distance of one another.

Villiers (1835)

Mrs Hanna Villiers, a wealthy widow of Kilpeacon, Co. Limerick, a devout Presbyterian, left a legacy to erect the Villiers' Boys School in Henry Street. In the 1950's this school moved to more extensive premises in the North

Circular Road. Later the Henry Street building became the Shannon Arms Hotel.

⁴ Lenihan, P.465

⁵ Lenihan



The Model School, O'Connell Avenue.

Leamy's (1846)

Mr Leamy, a wealthy trader directed: "All the rest and residue of my estate and effects whatsoever, I give to my executors, hereafter to be named, to be by them appropriated to the education of the children of the poor in Ireland, principally those in and about Limerick city".

As a result a fine Tudor style building was built in Hartstonge Street in 1843. It first became a Protestant School owing to a dispute between the various Church authorities. In 1894 it became a national school for Catholic boys. It closed in 1953.

The eminent positions in life attained by Leamy's boys during the school's heyday were astonishing.

The Model School (1855)

One of the most delightful landmarks in the parish is the Model School. It is a primary school, co-educational, run by a Board of Management and financed entirely by the State. There are now over 500 pupils on the roll books and

since 1931 all subjects, with the exception of English, are taught through the medium of Irish.

A disastrous fire in 1977 destroyed the building. It was subsequently rebuilt retaining the lovely facade. The school is now the most modern of its type in the country.

The Model School was formally opened on 5 September 1855. This was a great experiment uniting the children of different creeds into one system, while taking scrupulous care not to interfere with their religious beliefs. There were 25 District Model Schools in the country, managed by the Commissioners. The District Inspector of Schools was Manager of the school, in contrast to the usual system of the clergyman being manager of most national schools. Cardinal Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin, was to the forefront in the Catholic hierarchy's opposition to the concept of Model Schools, declaring that "the whole system tends to inspire children with the absurd idea that all religions are

equally good". Finally in 1862, Catholic children were forbidden by the hierarchy to attend model schools. Some of the multidenominational model schools continued as all-English schools while others, Limerick included, became scoileanna lan-Ghaeilge.

Many of the records of the school perished in the fire of 1977. However, records relating to the Boys' School, were retrieved and have been painstakingly restored.

Laurel Hill

On 5 September 1844 Madame d'Houet, foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, arrived in Limerick determined to found a Convent of the Order. In November she went to live at No 9 Victoria Terrace, South Circular Road, but in January 1845 she moved to a house in the Crescent, which had an entrance to Hartstonge Street, and there in February 1845 she opened her first school with 33 day-pupils. In June 1845, the Laurel Hill property was bought by the Faithful Companions of Jesus from the Newsome family, having tried and failed to purchase Ashbourne House.

In January 1863 St Philomena's Academy was opened, almost overnight, because of a notice read in churches forbidding Catholics to send their children to non-Catholic schools (e.g. The Model School).

In 1844 Maryville was opened. This house was originally called Albert Lodge, Albert Place, and was bought from the Walker family.

In 1994 Laurel Hill has a total of 590 pupils in the secondary school and 350 pupils in the Coláiste.

Mount St Vincents

On 3 April 1850 the Sisters of Mercy founded an Orphanage at Mount St Vincent. A Widows' Asylum, founded by Very Rev W A O'Meara, OSF, for 18 widows was begun near the Orphanage in 1861.

The building was originally a private house which was named Mount St Vincents when the orphanage was established. Peter Arthur, a Limerick businessman, was benefactor of this orphanage. Gradually during the 1860s several buildings including a chapel were completed.

In 1869 the orphanage was registered as an Industrial School under a grant which Parliament had lately given for orphans and unprotected children.

In 1963 a new primary school was opened at the Mount. In 1969 a new Secondary School was established. There are now over 500 pupils in the primary school and approximately 700 in the secondary school (Scoil Carmel).

St Clement's College

St Clement's College was founded in October 1884 as a Juniorate College for boys who hoped one day to become Redemptorists. In 1976 the small boarding school of about one hundred boys staffed entirely by Redemptorists became an open day school, and is now staffed almost entirely by lay people. There are currently 550 pupils at the school.

The Municipal Technical Institute

Technical instruction in Limerick in 1910 was being provided in several different centres in the city. The Technical Instruction Committee in that year decided that a large central institute was needed. A site was secured in O'Connell Avenue, and the

Municipal Technical Institute was opened in 1911. The increasing demand for technical education made it necessary for an extension which was completed in 1926.

During the 1960s the building of a School of Electrical Engineering, School of Mechanical and Motor Engineering was commenced on the MacCaffrey site in O'Connell Avenue. (This school has now become part of the Regional Technical College of Moylish).

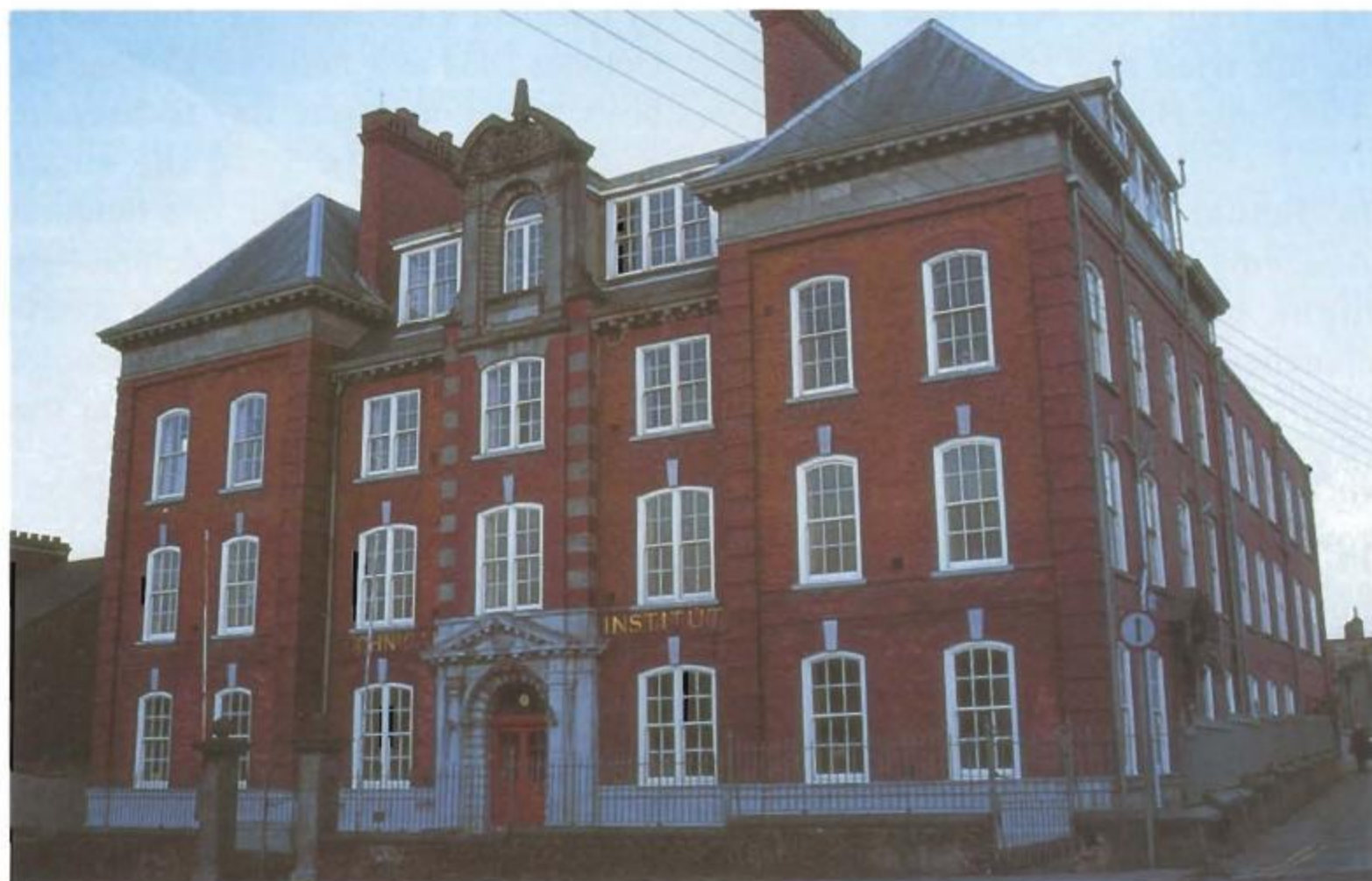
Mary Immaculate College

In 1898 the Limerick Sisters of Mercy gave land as a site for the building of a college to train teachers. The foundation stone of the college was laid in December 1899. The ceremony was performed by its founder, Most Rev Dr O'Dwyer, Lord Bishop of Limerick. The college may be said to be a lasting memorial to this great prelate's intense and practical interests in education matters. In 1901 the College opened its doors to 75 women students ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-five years of age.

The National Board of Education needed trained teachers in adequate numbers for the new National Schools, and recognised the college by way of grants.

The decades following the Second World War saw the expansion of the range of courses on offer to students to suit changing times and needs. Hand in hand with the development of courses went enormous physical expansion. New buildings, as well as extensions to old, were added in quick succession to accommodate an increasing number of students. By 1980 the number of students reached 800, male and female, for co-education had been introduced in 1969.

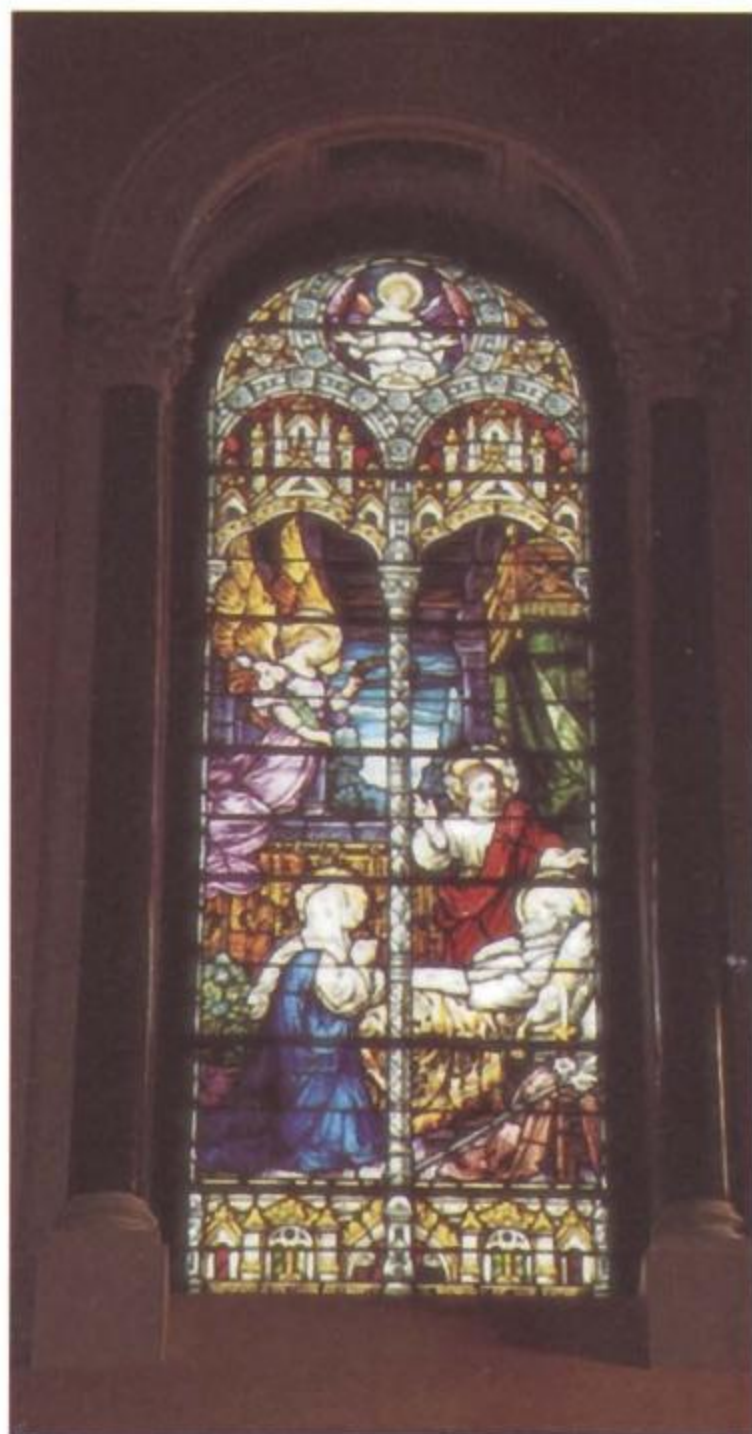
In November 1974 the College became a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland. November 1991 saw a further development in the history of the college when the Minister for Education announced the establishment of a new and dynamic linkage between Mary Immaculate College and the University of Limerick.



Technical School, O'Connell Avenue.

The Catherine McAuley School

An Irish Sister of Mercy, Sister Cillian, founded the Catherine McAuley School some thirty years ago. It is a school for children with special needs, and they are cared for in the school until 17 years of age. There are about 200 children registered at the school at present. The school is situated in the grounds of the Mercy Convent in Ashbourne Avenue.



Stained Glass Window St. Joseph's Church,



Fresco, St. Joseph's Church, O'Connell Avenue.
circa. 1926.

Other Historical Landmarks

St Michael's Church, Pery Square

The church was consecrated in 1844. In order to blend in with the Dominican church at the other end of the square, St Michael's was also given a romantic Gothic design. It was redesigned and refurbished and reopened in 1877.

Ozaman House

Beside Leamys is a tall house that looks strangely out of place — the headquarters of the St Vincent de Paul Society, known as Ozaman House, once the home of the O'Mara family, whose son Joseph became an internationally famous opera singer.

The Congregational Church

Across the street at the corner of Catherine Place stands the cut stone timbered building, established in 1882 as a Congregational Church. Early in this century it was used as a commercial college, and is now again in commercial use.

No. 13 Barrington Street

Many of the 1916 leaders visited No 13 Barrington Street, the home of John Daly, the freedom fighter. Tom Clarke was married to John Daly's niece, and his nephew John Daly was executed after the Rising.

Statue of Daniel O'Connell

Around the corner, in the main carriage way at the Crescent is the eight foot bronze statue of Daniel O'Connell, erected in 1857 on a granite plinth.

The Windmill

In 1786 an enterprising merchant, Launcelot Hill, built a Windmill on the high ground, overlooking the river, beside the present Windmill Street. It was destroyed by fire in 1803, reconstructed, only to be destroyed again in 1813. It remained a notable landmark until 1915 when it was dismantled.

Military Road (now O'Connell Avenue)

There is a lovely picture, taken about 1880, of this tree-lined avenue. There



O'Connell Avenue, Limerick, circa. 1880.

was great sadness in the parish in 1928 when it was finally decided to fell the trees between Wolfe Tone Street and the Crescent.

Collooney Street (now Wolfe Tone Street)

Fearing a French invasion the Government (English) set up a militia Limerick City Regiment in 1798, under Colonel Vereker, which engaged in a skirmish with French-Irish forces at Collooney, Co. Sligo. Limerick Corporation had a silver medal struck for presentation to the privates of the regiment, and a street was named Collooney Street, later renamed Wolfe Tone Street.

The Skating Rink

On 12 March, 1878, the Limerick Chronicle reported:

“Peter McCarthy and Sons, Auctioneers and Valuers, are favoured with instruction to sell by auction the valuable leasehold premises known as the Limerick Skating Rink, having an extensive frontage of upwards of the two hundred and twenty-one feet, situated on the Military Road, across the road from the St. Joseph’s Church.

An elliptic roof covers a space of 100 feet by 50 feet, under which is fitted up waiting and cloak rooms, managers’s and secretary’s offices, etc. The asphalt floor is extensive and in good order, with seats extending about 160 feet at each side, and attached is suitable gas arrangements. A portable wooden floor covers the asphalt.”⁶

In November 1879 the proprietor of the Rink announced that he has secured the great wonder of the age — the electric light — the second place in Ireland to have it. In 1910 the Rink had become an Electric Picture Palace and the

Derby Race of that year was shown among other features.

Turkish Baths

A little further up the road from the Skating Rink were the Turkish Baths.

In September 1872 it was announced that the Baths (13 years in existence) had undergone extensive improvements. A Mr Wormleighton was manager. The heating was improved in the gentlemen’s department. In the ladies departments there was better ventilation and more light than formally. The Baths were open from 6.00 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. and the prices were: Morning 1/-; Midday 2/-; Evening 1/-. There were hot, tepid and cold shower baths as well as a plunge bath.

The Redemptorists

The Redemptorists started off in Limerick in 1853, at No 8 Bank Place, where they had an oratory. In the same year they moved to Courtbrack. In August 1862 the Church was opened. The tower and a peal of bells were added later. These were the gifts of Mr John Quin who also made the street in front of the church. It is now a memorial to him — Quin Street.

Dockland

The newer industries and the current hum of traffic in the dockland area of St Joseph’s Parish is a contrast to the late 19th century when hundreds of dock workers were to be seen in and around the docks and quays, ships coming and going and the booming noise of machinery in the flour mills.

The floating dock was built in 1853, and extended in 1934. At the time of the extension a well known wit

⁶ Limerick Chronicle, 21 November

prophesied that the requirement of the extension would never materialise, and that “the dock needed a ‘tuck’ rather than an extension”.

The first mechanically operated mill was opened at the dockside in 1827 by John Norris Russell and Sons. It was known as Newtownperery Mill, and it was powered by steam. James Bannatyne joined up with Russells and they both operated the Newtownperery Mills, until 1930, when they were bought out by Joseph Rank, Ltd.

Jewish Population

By 1900 there was a sizeable residential population of Jews in the parish, especially in Wolfe Tone Street — where there was a Synagogue. The Rabbi had a house on Military Road. The Jewish children attended the Model School.

Catholic Churches

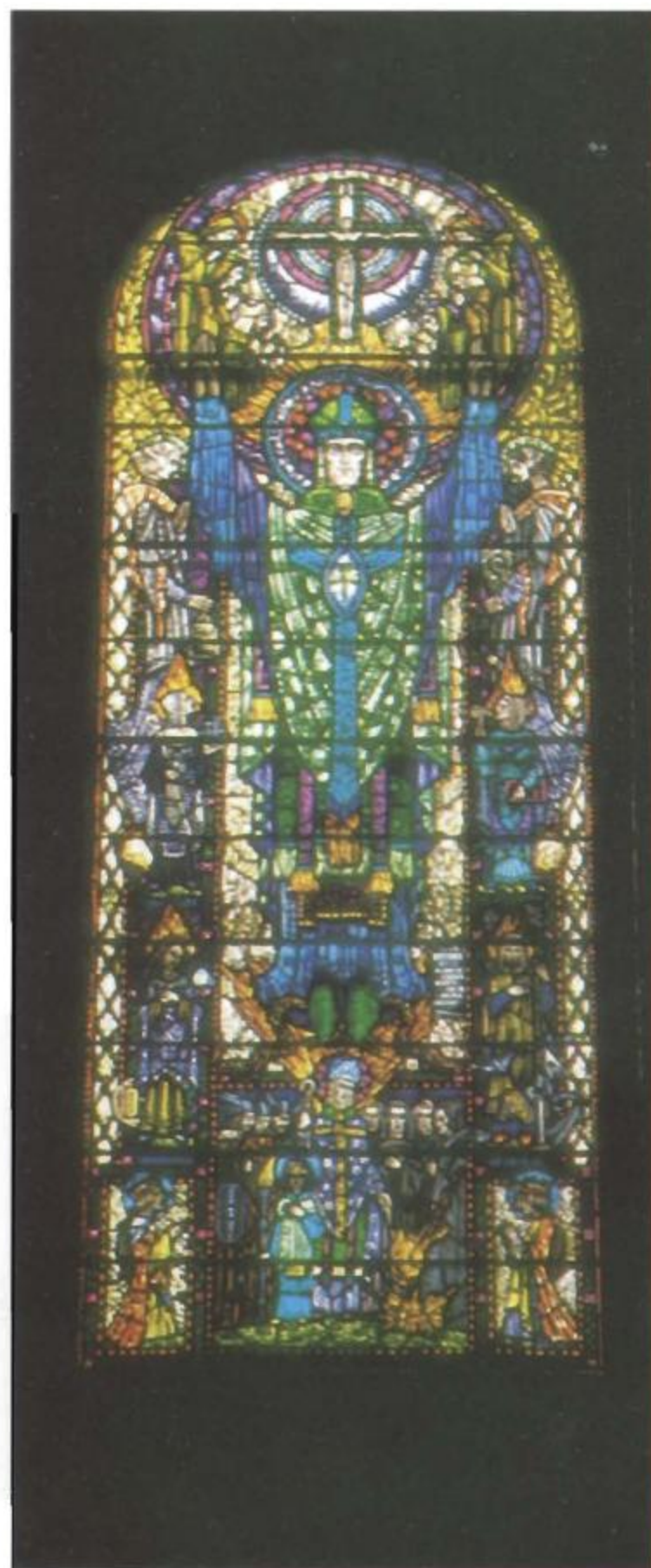
The Catholic Churches which were built in Limerick city in the second half of the 19th century were:

St. John's Cathedral	1856
St. Alphonsus	1862
Dominican	1868
Jesuits	1868
St. Michael's	1881 (rebuilt)

One of the most remarkable things about the churches is their presence on the street . . . the encouragement to enter is a common feature of these churches and is in conspicuous contrast to the Protestant tradition where railings, a gate, a garden path are used to define and separate the church from the street.

The difference between the two traditions is well illustrated by the

Baptist church and the parish church of St Joseph which stand side by side in O'Connell Avenue. The red brick Baptist Church, built in 1894, is protected by an array of railings and stone steps. St Joseph's, on the other hand, stands open to the street, two shallow steps rising from the pavement to the three doors in the west wall.



Stained Glass of St. Patrick,
St. Joseph's Church.

The Decision to build St Joseph's

By the 1890s, even though there were important new church buildings in St. Michael's Parish, all of them were founded and run by religious orders. St Michael's was the largest parish in the city and extended out to Ballinacurra. A new church was considered essential as an auxiliary to St Michael's, Denmark Street.

In early 1897 to meet the spiritual requirements of a parish, which was virtually three-fourths of Limerick, the Bishop, Dr Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, assisted by Fr Shanahan, P.P. V.G. decided on the erection of an auxiliary parochial church.

A site donated by Mr Byrnes was procured on Military Road, and a public meeting was held on 9 June 1897 for the purpose of formally getting possession and proceeding with the building. The bishop presided, and there was a representative gathering of parishioners. Amongst the speakers were the Mayor, Mr M Cusack; Dr O'Shaughnessy, D.L.; Mr McMahon Cregan, J.P.; Mr Bryan O'Donnell, J.P.; Mr John Clune, J.P.; Mr John Dundon, Solicitor. It was decided to proceed with the building, and Mr Corbett, C.E. was directed to supply the design, which in due course was produced and accepted. Messrs John Ryan and Sons, Builders, were declared contractors, and in less than two years from the time of laying the foundation stone, the nave was roofed in, and the first portion of the church finished.

Progress of Fundraising

A special public meeting of citizens was held in 1899, with a view to aiding the funds, and hearing a statement of progress.

The Mayor presided.

Rev James Cregan, Administrator, read the following statement:

"Some months ago, when appointed administrator of this important parish, it became part of my duty to take over from my predecessor, Father O'Donnell, the building of this church, which he had brought to such a very forward condition. I felt I was taking up a responsibility too heavy for my shoulders, but as it was at the command of our revered Bishop I did so. I felt I too, might count on that hearty co-operation which the citizens of Limerick always gave to every good work which has for its object the glory of God and the Welfare of the people. I was anxious to bring the parishioners together and to explain to them what we had done so far, and what we hoped to do."

The time for such a meeting did not appear opportune until the present occasion, when we have the slating just completed, and when we can, therefore, meet in the church itself, and admire its beautiful proportions, even in its unfinished state. I do not intend to weary you with a long array of figures, or with trifling details. I wish to remind you that in the beginning we intended to build only a part of the church, and we accordingly entered into a contract for that part. When that portion was finished, everybody felt that it looked very badly by itself, that it would be absolutely necessary to complete the building of the entire shell of the

church, so as to remove the horribly unfinished appearance of the part already erected.

A contract for the second part was therefore given, and as you look at the completed walls today, and stand inside what is soon to be God's Holy House, you can have no second opinion but that it was wisely decided to complete the church, and that it already stands forth as a thing of beauty and a graceful ornament to historic Limerick.

The second portion of the contract the transept was immediately commenced, and has been completed, while the tower has also been raised to a certain height, but much work still remains to be done, including the building of a facade, and the completion of the tower, which when finished, will be crowned by an octagonal cupola.

As to its financial position, I am happy to be able to state that the first portion of the church being completed, we have been able to pay off our contractor, Mr Ryan, the full amount of his contract, and face the second portion of the church without one penny debt.

As I have stated, our intention at first was to go no further, but as I have explained, it had become practically necessary to go on with the second part. For this purpose it has been necessary to anticipate our receipts, and, with the Bishops's permission, we have had to borrow from the National Bank to meet the contractors claims; and I have to say that the National Bank has met us with great liberality. Since last January twelve months we have received £1,544 towards the cost of the second part, and I have had to borrow over £4,000 from the bank.

Of course this, with the balance of the contract, will have to be met, but there is no pressure put on us, and I hope to spread the payment over several years. Then the parishes through the diocese are helping us very liberally, and this summer we hope to hold ten parochial collections. I am confident, too, that individuals, both lay and clerical, will help us, and therefore I am not discouraged by the rather heavy liabilities which we have incurred. But at the same time we must pay our way, and therefore I have asked you to come together to let you know how things stand and to take counsel with you.

The Bishop, and we, the clergy, think that a church ought to be made worthy of its sacred uses, that as it is to last not for our time, but for centuries, it ought to be a solid and beautiful structure, and I would add, in this parish of St. Michael's, which is undoubtedly the first in the diocese in extent, population, and importance, we ought to have what we never had, a parish church worthy of so great a parish".

A resolution of continuous support was passed by all.

To augment the new church building fund the "Kincora Fete" was opened in the Market's Grounds on Wednesday 13 June 1900. The then Primate, Cardinal Logue, performed the opening ceremony of the Fete, and 300 voices sang "The Flashing of the Oars" under the direction of Mr O'Riordan. It was a great success financially.

Description of the Church in 1904⁷

The church which faces north, is cruciform in shape and Italian in design. It is built of Limerick limestone throughout, the exterior work being very handsome. It is approached by two flights of cut-stone steps. There are three entrance doors of chaste design. The interior, which is well lit by windows in keeping with style, is capable of holding a congregation of 2,000 or over. The greatest length is 66 feet by 40 feet, and the height 46 feet. The length of the transept is 100 feet.

The ceiling is broken into panels, which have capped mouldings with a three feet girt. The floor is of wood with a passage of rich mosaic tiles running through the centre of the church.

The organ gallery faces the high altar, and is sustained by two granite columns, bearing carved caps and moulded bases.

In the sanctuary an oak wood block floor is laid down, and the Communion rails which runs the entire length of the transept, is capped with beautifully polished oak, supported by metal columns. The sanctuary walls are tinted in light blue Duresco.

The High Altar is of its kind one of the finest in Ireland, and consists of different types of marble. The principal part of the altar table is supported by two clusters of circular columns of Empress Red marble.

The Tabernacle, which is of Carcara marble, is surmounted by a canopy also of Empress Red, with carved caps and moulded bases.

Statues of SS Peter and Paul adorn the altar at each side, while removed further out are the figures of two angels bearing candelabra.

The panel in front of the altar is of Sicilian marble, and represents The Last Supper.

The side altars, which are dedicated to the Patron of the church, and Our Lady of Victories are of chaste and imposing design.

The chancel arch is sustained by two marble pilasters of rouge royal, with richly moulded bases.

The sanctuary lamp, a massive piece of silver workmanship, was presented to the church in memory of James O'Mara and Hanora his wife, by their children, and was executed by Messrs Egan, Jewellers, Cork.

The edifice is lighted throughout by electricity, the Ampere Company being responsible for the installation, while the heating apparatus was carried out by Messrs Musgrave and Company, Belfast.

This then is the detail of the church as it was ready for the official opening on April 14, 1904, Feast of St Joseph.

St Joseph was a simple village carpenter, the guardian of the child Jesus, who has become the guardian and patron of Christ's universal church.

⁷ Limerick Leader, 25 April 1904

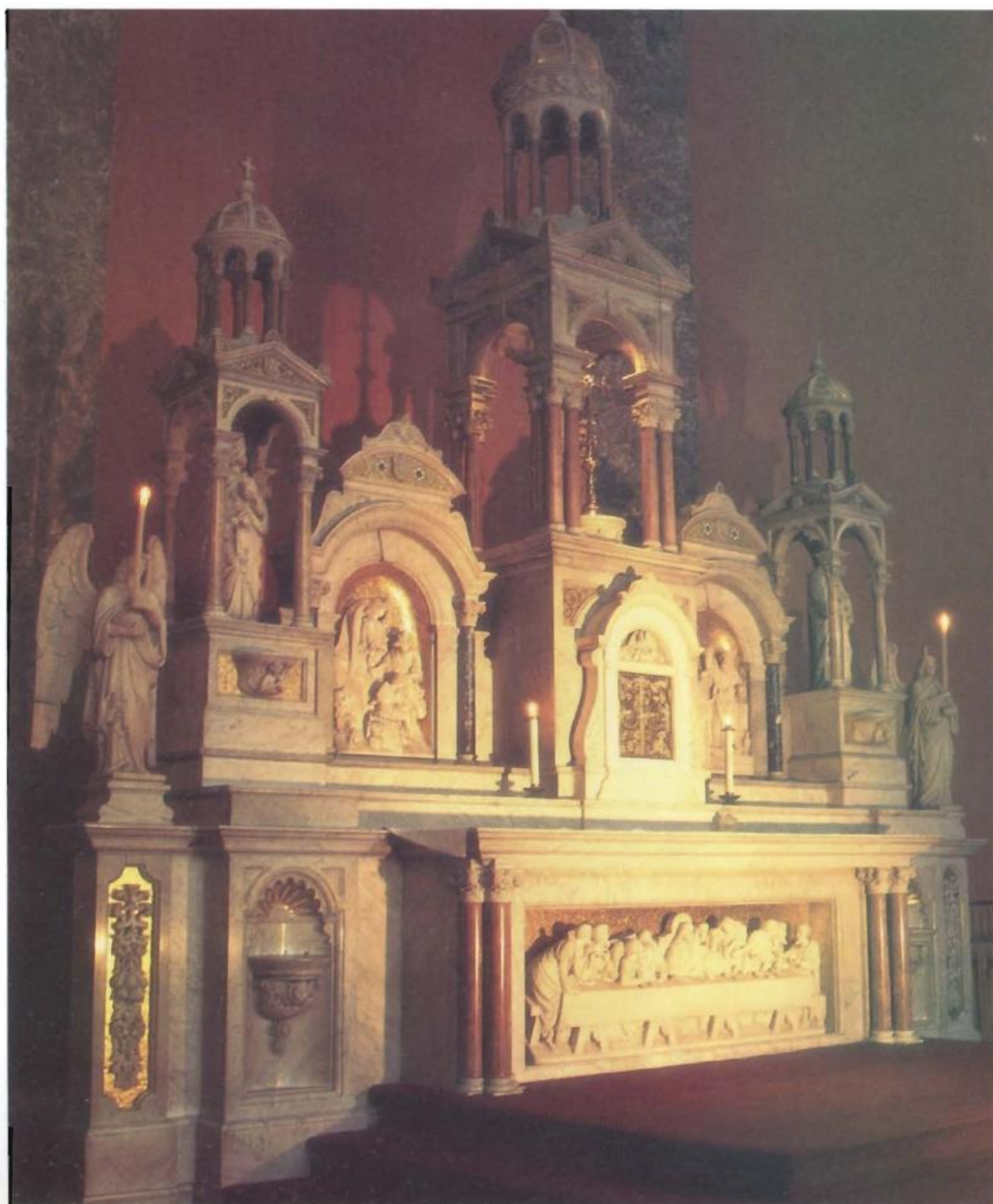


The Opening Ceremony

On Sunday April 14, 1904, the church was formally opened and dedicated.

At 12 noon High Mass was sung, presided over by Most Rev Dr Fennelly, Archbishop of Cashel, and was attended by Rev T R Shanahan (St Munchin's). Dr Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick attended, assisted by Rev Andrew Murphy, President, St Munchin's College. The celebrant of the Mass was Very Rev

Monsignor Hallinan, V.G., Newcastle West; Rev Fr O'Connor, C.C., St Michael's, Deacon; Rev Fr Devane, C.C., St Michael's, Sub-Deacon; Rev Fr O'Shea, St John's Master of Ceremonies; Also present: Very Rev Dean White, P.P., Nenagh; Rev J Cregan, Adm, St Michael's; Rev John Lee, C.C.; Rev Dr O'Riordan, C.C., St Michael's; Rev Fr O'Leary, St Munchin's College and Rev Fr O'Driscoll.



The High Altar, St. Joseph's Church.

The Sermon

Dr Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, bishop of Limerick was the preacher at the official opening. He said that:

It was quite probable that the work of building this church, which has so far progressed towards completion, would impress many people with feelings different from those which the congregation gathered round its altar for the first time today experienced. It was, or rather would be, a fine church, simple in its outlines, massive, monumental in its architecture, as every church should be, being the symbol of the Church of God, built upon a rock and lasting for all time. Interiorly (sic) it would be made worthy of the exterior, and this would involve a large expenditure of money which would seem to many people uneconomical, and altogether at variance with the practical and utilitarian principles of the twentieth century.

Why this waste they would ask? Were there not in Limerick many ways in which this money might be more profitably and remuneratively (sic) spent than in adding another to the many rich churches in the city?

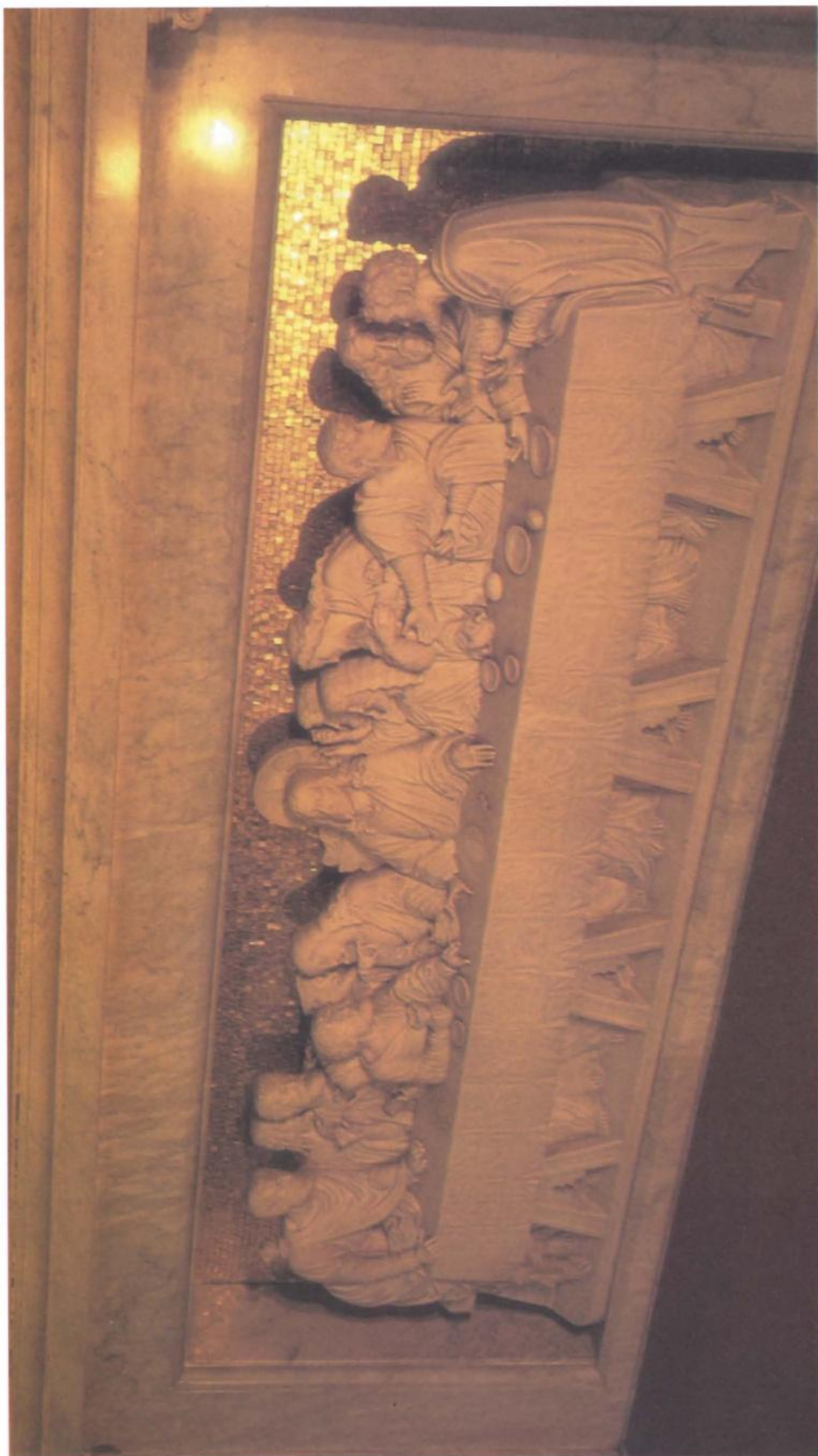
The cost could float a company for some industrial purposes, build and equip a factory giving employment to the population, and add to the trade and commerce of the town and the wealth of the community, instead of seeing all this capital sunk for ever in this church without return? If these kindly people, whose hearts were breaking over the uncommercial and unbusinesslike spirit of the Catholic Church in Ireland, only knew the half of it, he feared they would shrink from the judgement to be pronounced. The Catholic community of Limerick was not, on the whole, wealthy, yet by far

the largest portion of the cost of the church came from the poorest, from the workingman and the farmer. There was still a heavy debt on the church, but the confidence of the clergy to meet it would not be disappointed. In the contrast that struck some people between the costliness of the church and the poverty of the Irish people it was sometimes alleged that the outlay was attributed entirely to the zeal and ambition of the clergy, who wrung out of an unwilling people the funds necessary for their purpose. In his opinion there was no truth whatever in that suggestion.

If there was anything wrong in making the house of God rich and beautiful, then the laity were as much to blame as the clergy.

They all down to the poorest and humblest took an interest in the church, regarded it as their own, were proud of it, and with some instinctive untutored feeling they recognised what was true and lovely in its architecture and decorations. They had a striking illustration of one recently. A short time ago from an old Irish lady living in Brooklyn in the United States, who received a sum of ten thousand dollars (or £2,000) to improve the church of the parish from which she emigrated more than fifty years ago in the great exodus after the Irish famine.

What I wanted to draw attention to, however, was that the donor stipulated that the altar of the church should be of marble, the thought on her part being spontaneous and the donor being in this but a type of her countrywomen. They would have an altar of richer material than marble if they could. This old Irish lady in America also wishes to have the window over the altar of stained glass,



The Last Supper - Detail from the High Altar, St. Joseph's Church.

so that the light of heaven, as it came streaming in on priest and people, should be rich with the glory of some spiritual scene. That feeling explained itself to Catholics, but to others it was useless to speak of these things.

But surely in asking those outsiders and strangers not to intrude on their most sacred feelings with observations incongruous as they are offensively irreligious. As with the material building of the church, so too, its purposes were strangely at variance with what was called the spirit of the time. The spirit of detachment and independence, in regard to all temporal possessions, was rooted in the Christian faith, and the theory which was heard propagated with more or less openness in these days that success in this life was the natural outcome of the true Faith was contradicted and condemned in every page of the Gospel. What would people have said had they lived in the days of the early Christian Church? What would an Englishman or an American say to a modern Japanese, absolutely heathen, more prosperous relatively in recent years than any Christian country in the world? Whatever the conditions on which material strength and power of nations depended, however distinguished, Christianity was in its essence, aims, spirit, something above and beyond them all; but there was something utterly repugnant in the teaching of Christianity in what was called the spirit of empire, among strong nations trampling upon human liberty and crushing out the weak nations of the earth.

That spirit of empire and domination was the very contradiction and denial — aye, and defiance — of the Cross of

Christ from them in Ireland, more familiar with failure than success, whose lot had been to suffer for justice sake and to mourn, there had been infinite consolation in the Gospel.

The Faith kept Ireland a nation, and but for her religion her people would have perished long ago.

In conclusion his lordship referred to the necessity that existed for the erection of the new church, owing to the extension westward of St Michael's Parish.

The work of the clergy would be done without lessening in the least degree the good work done so devotedly, so successfully, in the regular churches in the neighbourhood.

It is clear that Dr O'Dwyer in his opening remarks knew about the feelings of some people on the decision to build a new church across the road from the Jesuit Church. The Jesuits had a two-tier plate offering in those days, which continued right into the middle of this century. (Dr O'Dwyer, it is said, did not approve).

The music at the Mass under the baton of Mr C Kendal Irwin was by the members of St John's choir, assisted by that of the Redemptorist Church. In the evening an eloquent sermon was preached by Rev Father Marron, CSSR.

The chalice used at the Mass was the same one used by the Papal Legate, Cardinal Rinnucini, at St Mary's Cathedral in 1646, when he celebrated Mass and intoned the Te Deum in thanksgiving for the victory of Owen Roe O'Neill at the Battle of Benburb.

Recollections on St Joseph's Church

by
Mr Anthony Riordan,
Parishioner

St Joseph's Church was built in 1904 as a 'chapel of ease' to St Michael's Parish. As time went on and as the population moved away from the city centre, the chapel of ease seemed to become more important than the parish church in Denmark Street. The administrator had his confessional there and it became popular for Christenings and Weddings. Funerals however were always carried out in St Michael's Church until St Joseph's became an independent parish.

The site for St Joseph's was formerly occupied by Transfield's Circus. Among other activities carried on there, boxing matches took place. Joe Dalton (RIP) the former owner of the City Printing Company, who was a well known amateur boxer, told me when I was very young that he had often 'fought' there. This type of 'sport' which is quite taken for granted in these days, was often condemned and 'read off the altar' by the clergy as being 'brutal and cruel and degrading'.

The first High Mass in St Joseph's in the presence of Bishop O'Dwyer was celebrated by the Vicar General Mgr Denis Hallinan PP of Newcastle West. Mgr Hallinan was destined to succeed Bishop O'Dwyer as Bishop of Limerick. The deacon was Fr William Dwane afterwards for many years administrator of St. Michael's Parish and as far as I recollect Parish Priest of Patrickswell and Newcastle West. He was very popular and had a great devotion to the poor, who used to call

in large numbers at the presbytery in Barrington Street. Fr Jeremiah O'Connor, afterwards Parish Priest of St Mary's, was administrator in the early days of St Joseph's. Among the curates was Fr Richard Devane, brother of the late Dr John Devane. Fr Devane who eventually joined the Jesuits was very much a 'man of his time', denouncing any infringements of what was then regarded as the 'moral law' — setting up vigilante committees and presiding at the public burning of English Sunday Papers!

Among other priests of these early days was Fr Pat Thornhill who later became Parish Priest of Adare and Canon of the Cathedral Chapter.



Old Map of Limerick,
before St. Joseph's
Church was built.

Quakers Graveyard Ballinacurra

Graves on the right of the graveyard

- 1 Agnes Fitt widow of Edward C Fitt, Springdale Limerick died 18th of February 1947 aged 80 years.
- 2 William Birket Fitt 3rd son of Thomas and Anna Fitt died 28th of May 1945 aged 85 years beloved husband of Agnes A. Fitt.
- 3 Edward George Fitt Springdale Limerick died 22nd of February 1944 aged 81 years.
- 4 Emile Victoria Fitt fourth daughter of Thomas and Anna Fitt died the 16th June 1942 aged 80 years.
- 5 Francis Matthew Fitt died 19th of August 1908 aged 50 years.
- 6 Thomas Fitt died June 7th 1901 aged 33 years.
- 7 William Fitt son of Wm. B. and Agnes Fitt died the 11th of the 8th month aged 1 and 10 months.
- 8 Anna Gertrude Worrall widow of John Worrall M.D. died 29th of the 3rd month 1947 aged 90 years.
- 9 Alice Webb wife of William W. Webb Limerick died 13th June 1927 aged 75 years.
- 10 Alfred Davis of Limerick died 10th of the 12th month 1897 aged 57 years.
- 11 Susanna Widow of Edward Fitt of Corbally Limerick died 6th of the 8th month 1906 in her 79th year.
- 12 Edward Fitt died 1st of the 7th month 1887 aged 70 years.
- 13 Katherine Elizabeth daughter of Thomas and Anna Fitt Limerick died the 8th of December 18 — aged 18 years.
- 14 Anna Fitt of Thomas Fitt Limerick died September 15th 1874 aged 40 years.
- 15 Isabel Mary Fitt daughter of Thomas and A. Fitt died the 15th April — age 91 years.
- 16 Beecham died the 11th of ?? month 1884 aged 79 years.
- 17 Samuel Hill died 20th of the 12th month 1880 aged 65 years.
- 18 Isabel Hill aged 49 years died 13th of the 8th month 1861.
- 19 Anna Alexander of Evergreen Villa Limerick born the 4th of the 11th month 1799 — died 4th of the 1st month 1892.
- 20 Deborah Martin widow of William Jacob Martin died the 13th of the 3rd month 1908 aged 83 years and 8 months.
- 21 James Johnston Ruddock (Jack) called home 16th of the 6th month 1941 aged 11½ years.
- 22 Susanne Ruddock died at Limerick 25th of the 1st month 1935.
- 23 Raymond Victor Doherty infant son of Victor and Sobel Doherty called home 6th of the 3rd month 1944.

24 Joshua Richard Gough died 24 of the 9th month 1837 aged 32 years.

25 Reginald Phelps Harvey son of Joseph Massey Harvey born May 25th 1870 died January 29th 1880 aged 10 years.

Graves at the very back of graveyard

26 Benjamin Clark Fisher aged 81 years died 16th of the 7th month 1860.

28 Sarah Maria Bisher aged 18 years died 16th of the 1st month 1850.

29 Susanna wife of Thomas Grubb — Terrace Limerick died 12th of the 2nd month 1889 aged 47 years.

30 Iaasc W Unthank of Limerick died 18th of the 3rd month 1865 aged about 52 years.

31 William Henry Grubb died 26th of the 12th month 1861.

32 Thomas Grubb aged 52 years died 5th month 1861.

33 Francis Cherry Sikes River View died 24th October 1865 aged 59 years.

34 Eliza Sikes widow of the later Francis Cherry Sikes River View died 4th of the 2nd month 1892 aged 83 years.

35 Elizabeth Sikes daughter of the later Francis Cherry Sikes River View died 27th July 1871 aged 28 years.

36 Elizabeth Charrol daughter of James Carrol of Cork died at Limerick on 28th of the 2nd month 1900 aged 70 years.

Graves on the left side of the graveyard

37 Elizabeth Scarr daughter of John and Mary Scarr died 20th of the 4th month 1856 aged 6 months.

38 John Scarr son of John and Mary Scarr died 20th of the 8th month 1857 aged 4 months.

39 George Scarr son of John and Mary Scarr died 8th of the 8th month 1861 aged 86 years.

40 John Scarr died in the 11th of the 8th month 1887 aged 67 years.

41 Mary P Scarr daughter of John and Mary Scarr died the 5th of the 8th month 1890 aged 31 years.

42 Mary Scarr wife of John Scarr died 28th of the 8th month 1902 aged 85 years.

43 Joseph Thomas Seymour died 10th of the 3rd month 1876 aged 76 years.

44 Alfred Alen of Limerick died 5th of the 1st month 1899 aged 80 years.

45 Georgianna Alen widow of Alfred Alen died at Limerick 16th of the 12th month 1901 aged 78 years.

46 Alice Mary Woodhouse eldest daughter of William John and Anne Woodhouse died 7th of the 10th month 1945 aged 84 years.

47 Annie Pedlow Woodhouse daughter of W.J. and a Woodhouse died 11th of the 2nd month aged 28 years.

- 48 Walter Sydne Woodhouse son of W.J. and A. Woodhouse died 25th of the 2nd month 1899 aged 17 years.
- 49 Priscilla T Fayle daughter of George and Priscilla Fayle died 29th of the month 1873.
- 50 Elizabeth Newson daughter of William and Phoebe Newson died 18th of the 3rd month 1841 aged 2 years.
- 51 Henry R Newson of Limerick died 30th of — month 1907 aged 80 years.
- 52 Joseph Fisher Bennis of Limerick born 21st of the 11th month died 30th of the 2nd month 1929.
- 53 Emile Bennis wife of Joseph F. Bennis died at Limerick on the 3rd of the 12th month 1919 aged 84 years.
- 54 Helen Margaret Bennis wife of Ernest Bennis died 30th of the 10th month aged 86 years.
- 55 Ernest Henry Bennis son of Joseph F Bennis died 3rd of the 5th month 1965 aged 87 years.
- 56 William Ernest Bennis son of Ernest Henry and Helen Bennis died 22nd of the 10th month 1948 aged 36 years.
- 57 James Frederick Bennis son of Joseph and Emily Bennis died 28th of the 6th month 1885 aged 6 years and 8 months.
- 58 Robert Sikes son of Francis Sikes died 28th of December 1859 aged 23 years.
- 59 Charles Edward Bennis Son of Joseph and Emily Bennis died 15th of the 10th month 1876 aged 1 year and 3 months.
- 60 Gabriel F Untank of Limerick died 13th of month 1895 aged about 81 years.
- 61 died 6th month aged 57 years.
- 62 William John Woodhouse died 10th of the 3rd month 1918 aged 33 years.
- 63 Anna Woodhouse of William Woodhouse died 12th of the 10th month 1922 aged 79 years.
- 64 Martin Woodhouse the son of William and A. Woodhouse died 10th of the 9th month 1921 aged 50 years.
- 65 William John Woodhouse the 2nd son of William Woodhouse died the 11th month 1828 aged 25 years.
- 66 Letitia Wilson the wife of William Whitaker died on the 11th of the 4th month aged 75 years.
- 67 William Whitaker died 22nd of the 2nd month 1860 aged 74 years.
- 68 Martha Jane Woodhouse 3rd daughter of William John and Anne Woodhouse died 6th June 1880 aged 88 years.
- 69 Alfred Eustace Woodhouse 3rd son of William J. and Anne Woodhouse died the 3rd month 1938 aged 71 years.

This List courtesy of Limerick Civic Trust.

Clergy - St. Michael's Parish 1904 - 1974

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1904 James Cregan, Adm
John Lee
Michael O'Riordan, D.D., D.C.C.,
Jeremiah O'Connor</p> <p>1905 James Cregan, Adm
John Lee
Michael O'Riordan, D.D., D.C.C.
Jeremiah O'Connor
James Carroll
Richard Devane</p> <p>1906 James Cregan, Adm
John Lee
Jeremiah O'Connor
Jeremiah O'Shea
James Carroll
Richard Devane</p> <p>1907 James Cregan, Adm
John Lee
Jeremiah O'Connor
Jeremiah O'Shea
James Carroll
Richard Devane</p> <p>1908 John Lee, Adm
Jeremiah O'Connor
Jeremiah O'Shea
James Carroll
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan</p> <p>1909 Jeremiah O'Connor, Adm
Jeremiah O'Shea
James Carroll
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan</p> <p>1910 Jeremiah O'Connor, Adm
Jeremiah O'Shea
James Carroll
William Dwane
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan</p> | <p>1911 Jeremiah O'Connor, Adm
Jeremiah O'Shea
James Carroll
William Dwane
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan</p> <p>1912 Jeremiah O'Connor, Adm
Jeremiah O'Shea
James Carroll
William Dwane
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan</p> <p>1913 Jeremiah O'Connor, Adm
James Carroll
William Dwane
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan
Patrick Thornhill</p> <p>1914 Jeremiah O'Connor, Adm
William Dwane
James Carroll
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan
Patrick Thornhill</p> <p>1915 Jeremiah O'Connor, Adm
William Dwane
James Carroll
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan
Patrick Thornhill</p> <p>1916 Jeremiah O'Connor, Adm
William Dwane
James Carroll
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan
Patrick Thornhill</p> <p>1917 Jeremiah O'Connor, Adm
William Dwane
James Carroll
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan
Patrick Thornhill</p> |
|--|---|

1918 William Dwane, Adm
James Carroll
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan
Patrick Thornhill
Michael Tracy

1919 William Dwane, Adm
James Carroll
Richard Devane
Michael Hannan
Charles Moriarty
John Kelly

1936 W.P. Harty, Adm
Maurice Fitzpatrick
W.J. Carroll
James Cowper
Charles Moriarty
Robert O'Sullivan

1937 W.P. Harty, Adm
Maurice Fitzpatrick
W.J. Carroll
James Cowper
Charles Moriarty
Robert O'Sullivan

1938 Maurice Fitzpatrick, Adm
W.J. Carroll
James Cowper
Charles Moriarty
John White
Robert O'Sullivan

1939 W.J. Carroll, Adm
James Cowper
Charles Moriarty
John White
Robert O'Sullivan
John Chawke

1940 W.J. Carroll, Adm
James Cowper
Charles Moriarty
John White
Robert O'Sullivan
John Chawke

1941 W.J. Carroll, Adm
James Cowper
John White
Robert O'Sullivan
John Chawke
Timothy J. Lyons

1942 W.J. Carroll, Adm
James Cowper
John White
Robert O'Sullivan
John Chawke
Timothy J. Lyons

1943 W.J. Carroll, Adm
James Cowper
John White
Robert O'Sullivan
Timothy J. Lyons
Martin O'Donnell

1944 James Cowper, Adm
John White
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
Timothy J. Lyons
Martin O'Donnell

1945 James Cowper, Adm
John White
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
Timothy J. Lyons
Martin O'Donnell

1946 James Cowper, Adm
John White
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
Timothy J. Lyons
Martin O'Donnell

1947 John White, Adm
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
Timothy J. Lyons
Edward O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell

1948 John White, Adm
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
Timothy J. Lyons
Edward O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell

1949 John White, Adm
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
T. Lyons
Edward O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell

1950 John White, Adm
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell

1951 John White, Adm
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell

1952 John White, Adm
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell

1953 John White, Adm
Robert O'Sullivan
Michael Minahan
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell

1954 John White, Adm
Robert O'Sullivan
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Patrick Lyons

1955 John White, Adm
Robert O'Sullivan
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Patrick Lyons

1956 Robert O'Sullivan, Adm
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Patrick Lyons
Michael Manning

1957 Robert O'Sullivan, Adm
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Patrick Lyons
Michael Manning

1958 Robert O'Sullivan, Adm
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Patrick Lyons
Michael Manning

1959 Robert O'Sullivan, Adm
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Patrick Lyons
Michael Manning

1960 Robert O'Sullivan, Adm
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
John McCarthy
Michael Manning

1961 Robert O'Sullivan, Adm
Timothy J. Lyons
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Michael Manning
John McCarthy) *In Our Lady*
Martin Madigan) *of Lourdes*
Presbytery

- 1962** Timothy J. Lyons, Adm
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Michael Manning
Liam Boyle
John McCarthy) *In Our Lady*
Frank Moriarty) *of Lourdes*
Presbytery
- 1963** Timothy J. Lyons, Adm
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Michael Manning
Liam Boyle
John McCarthy) *In Our Lady*
Frank Moriarty) *of Lourdes*
Presbytery
- 1964** Timothy J. Lyons, Adm
Edmond O'Dea
Martin O'Donnell
Michael Manning
Liam Boyle
- 1965** Edmond O'Dea, Adm
Martin O'Donnell
Michael Manning
Liam Boyle
Joseph Hourigan (Killaloe Diocese)
- 1966** Edmond O'Dea, Adm
Martin O'Donnell
Michael Manning
Liam Boyle
Joseph Hourigan (Killaloe Diocese)
- 1967** Martin O'Donnell, Adm
Michael Manning
Liam Boyle
Liam Kelly
Joseph Hourigan (Killaloe Diocese)
- 1968** Martin O'Donnell, Adm
Michael Manning
Liam Boyle
Liam Kelly
Joseph Hourigan (Killaloe Diocese)
- 1969** Martin O'Donnell, Adm
Michael Manning
Liam Boyle
Liam Kelly
Thomas Fennell
- 1970** Martin O'Donnell, Adm
Michael Manning
Liam Boyle
Liam Kelly
Thomas Fennell
- 1971** Michael manning, Adm
Liam Boyle
Liam Kelly
Thomas Fennell
Donal Guiltinan
- 1972** Michael Manning, Adm
Liam Boyle
Liam Kelly
John O'Shea
Fergal McAuliffe (Dublin Diocese)
- 1973** Liam Boyle, Adm
Liam Kelly
John O'Shea
John Fleming
Michael Noonan
Maurice Costello

Clergy - St. Joseph's Parish 1974 - 1993

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1974 Liam Boyle, Adm
Liam Kelly
Michael Noonan
Maurice Costello
Michael Manning) <i>In St</i>
John Fleming) <i>Michael's</i></p> <p>1975 Liam Boyle, Adm
Liam Kelly
Michael Noonan
Albert Nix</p> <p>1976 Liam Boyle, Adm
Liam Kelly
Michael Noonan
Paul O'Higgins</p> <p>1977 Liam Boyle, Adm
Liam Kelly
Michael Noonan
Paul O'Higgins</p> <p>1978 Liam Boyle, Adm
Liam Kelly
Michael Noonan
Donal McNamara</p> <p>1979 Liam Boyle, Adm
Liam Kelly
Donal McNamara
Maurice O'Sullivan</p> <p>1980 Liam Boyle, Adm
John Ryan
Donal McNamara
Maurice O'Sullivan</p> <p>1981 Liam Boyle, Adm
John Ryan
Donal McNamara
Damian Ryan</p> <p>1982 Liam Boyle, Adm
John Ryan
Donal McNamara
Damian Ryan</p> | <p>1984 John Ryan, Adm
Donal McNamara
Michael Donovan
Denis Daly</p> <p>1985 John Ryan, Adm
Donal McNamara
Michael Donovan
Harry Beegan</p> <p>1986 John Ryan, Adm
Donal McNamara
Michael Donovan
Harry Beegan</p> <p>1987 John Ryan, Adm
Donal McNamara
Michael donovan
Harry Beegan</p> <p>1988 Donal McNamara, Adm
Michael Donovan
Harry Beegan
John Donworth</p> <p>1989 Donal McNamara, Adm
Michael Donovan
Harry Beegan
John Donworth</p> <p>1990 Donal McNamara, Adm
Harry Beegan
John Donworth
John Walsh</p> <p>1991 Donal McNamara, Adm
Harry Beegan
John Donworth
John Walsh</p> <p>1992 Donal McNamara, Adm
Harry Beegan
John Donworth
John Walsh</p> <p>1993 Donal McNamara, Adm
Harry Beegan
John Donworth
John Walsh</p> |
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