

# GLOWING EMBERS

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Welcome to the latest edition of *Glowing Embers*. We have another eclectic mix from the archival vaults (some might say dungeons). Buried treasures continue to intrigue us and we love to share them with you. For the literary minded, a collection of essays by John B. Keane were unearthed from our collection of the *Missionary Annals*. A battered and worn photo album, through a circuitous route, via Roches Street in Limerick made its way to our collection and revealing a lost world of a young missionary of in 1940s Nigeria. Closer to home, we have the story of a former Spiritan scholastic, through the War of Independence and the tragic Civil War as researched and recounted by his grandson. Another inspirational figure, Dom Helder Camara, was encountered in our cataloguing of the Brazilian Collection. And finally, we have the usual mix of embarrassing and laudatory photographs. These are just some of the stories which we encountered over the past year.

As well as the stories unearthed by researchers and archivists alike, the Spiritan Heritage and Archive Centre undertook a major digitisation project. This project aimed at making our Biafran, Nigerian and Doheny Collections available to the public through the digitisation of the documents. This was facilitated by a Heritage Council grant of €25,000. The collections will be available for online consultation in the very near future. One major publication was achieved during the period from 2023 to 2024. *Echoes of Pakistan*, written by Jim O'Connell, and beautifully designed by Brandcentral was the highlight of our heritage work. It is hoped that it will be the first of many such publications in a series dedicated to the life experiences and inspirational thoughts of some Irish Spiritans. Designed and conceived for a modern readership, they will open a window onto a world rarely experienced by contemporary society.

We hosted an exhibition highlighting some of the activities of the Doheny brothers across the world. Our staff participated in a one-day seminar on the digitisation processing in the Glasnevin Cemetery Heritage Centre. This was part of our professional development programme. We had many research visitors throughout 2024, notably the Holy Rosary Sisters' team preparing dossiers for presentation of the cause of Bishop Shanahan. All in all, 2024 was a very interesting and productive year.

**Fr Brendan Cogavin**

# The Keane Connection

Mark Bluett, Summer Intern, 2024

Occasionally, while searching for specific information, an archivist stumbles across little gems that need following up when time allows. One such gem was the discovery of a collection of short stories written by John B Keane and published in the *Spiritan Missionary Annals*. These contributions by Keane thus prompted its own research into the connection between Keane and the Irish Spiritan province.

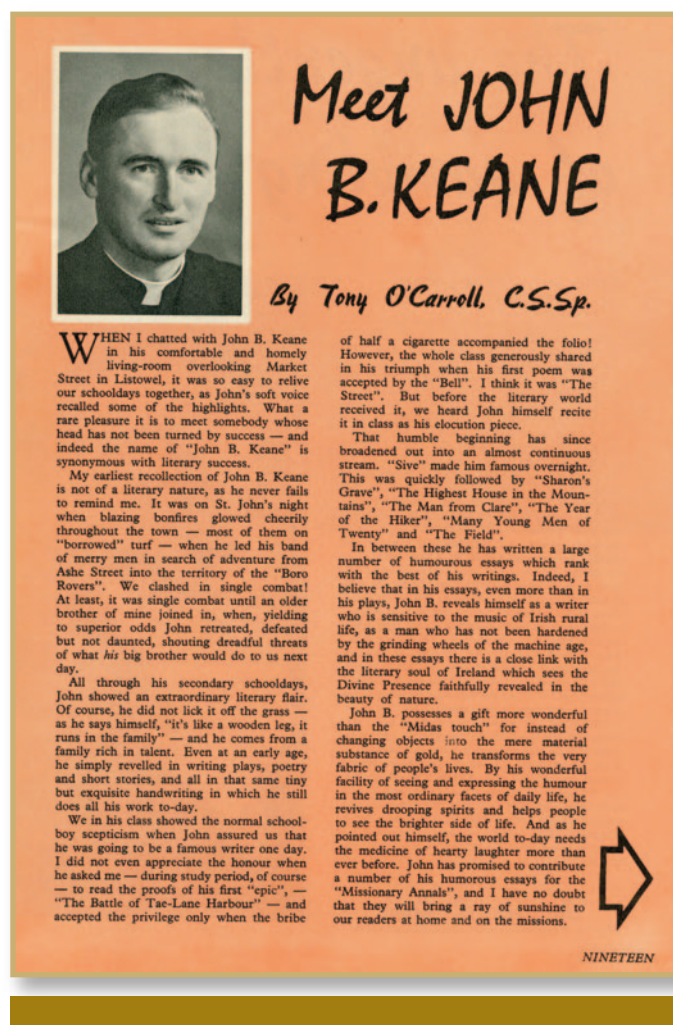
John B Keane was a popular 20<sup>th</sup> century playwright from Kerry. While known for plays like *Sive* and *The Field*, Keane was also a novelist and had many collections of essays and short stories. Much of his work spoke about life in rural Ireland.

Keane was born in 1928 in Listowel, Co Kerry, and it was here that he spent his literary career, running a pub which provided him with inspiration for his characters and ideas. His first play, *Sive*, was presented by the Listowel Drama Group and won the All-Ireland Drama Festival in 1959. It was followed by another success, *Sharon's Grave*, in 1960, *The Field* (1965) and *Big Maggie* (1969); all widely regarded as classics of the modern Irish stage. But it was not just in his plays that Keane managed to portray all aspects of humanity with both wit and truth. He also wrote many fine novels, including *The Contractors*, *A High Meadow* and *Durango* along with essays and short stories.

It was discovered in an article in the *Missionary Annals* from December 1966 titled *Meet John B. Keane*, that the CSSp regular contributor, Tony O'Carroll was an old friend of Keane's, dating back to their schooldays in Listowel. The article described O'Carroll's memories of Keane, how even at a young age, he showed great promise as a writer. O'Carroll praised Keane's works, particularly the humorous essays he wrote in between his popular plays. With that, he announced that Keane would be publishing some of these essays in the following issues of the *Missionary Annals*. Keane published an essay each month, spanning from December 1966 to June 1968. Similar to his other works, they focused on

**Much of his work spoke about life in rural Ireland**

These essays can be found today in the *Missionary Annals* collection in the Spiritan Archives where Keane's humorous words live on.



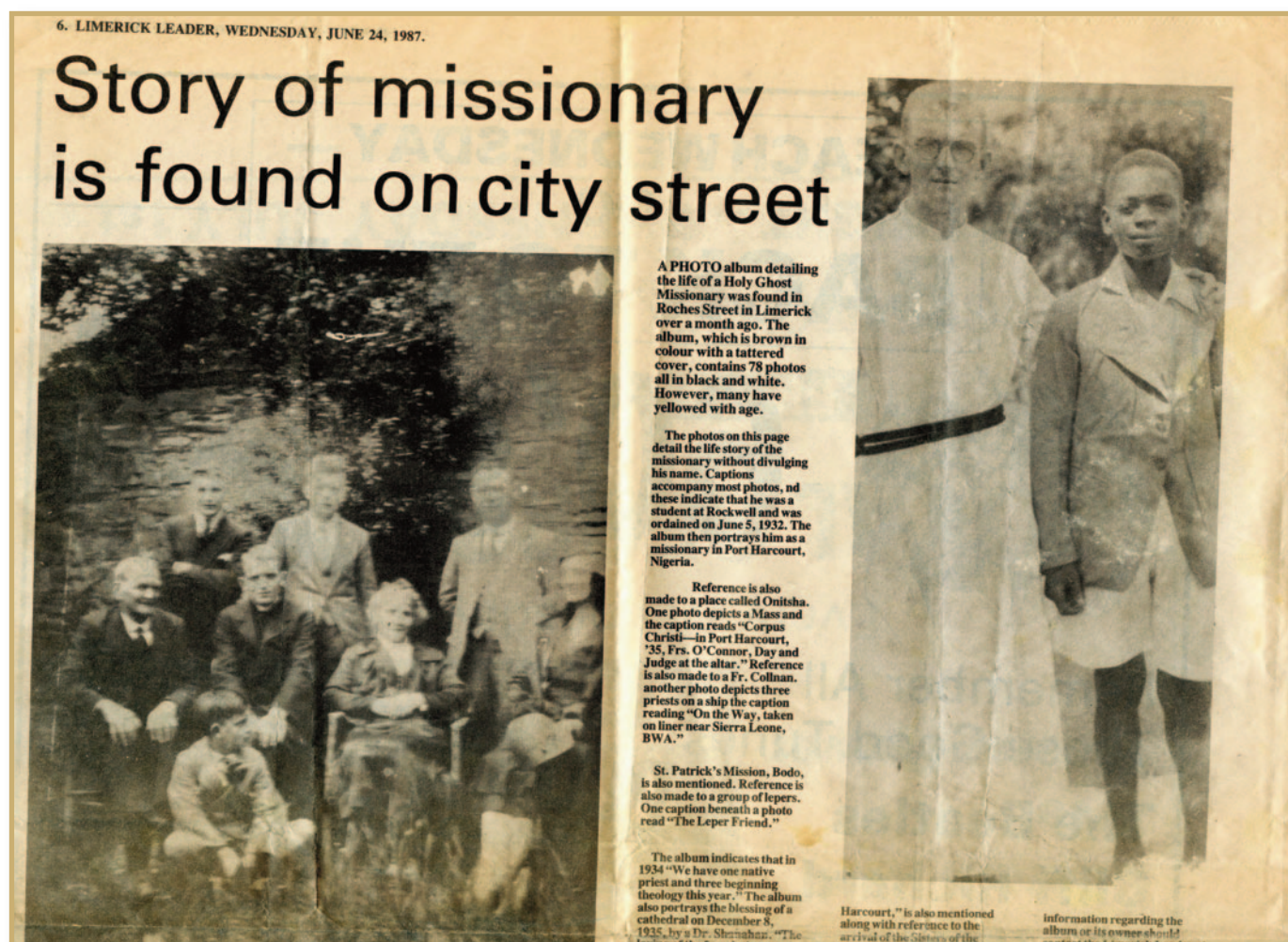
aspects of life in rural Ireland. Essays such as *The Ungentle Art of Gambling*, *Unexpected Telegrams*, and *Baking the Bread* were observations on common activities in his community.

These essays can be found today in the *Missionary Annals* collection in the Spiritan Archives where Keane's humorous words live on. Today, many of Keane's writings and papers are held in the archives of Trinity College Dublin, including, perhaps, the original editions of these essays.

# Unearthed Memories:

## *the discovery of a lost photo album of a missionary priest*

Margaret Bluett



Receiving a photo album of a missionary priest holds significant archival value, as it offers a unique and personal insight into the life, work, and experiences of the individual. Such albums often capture moments of cultural exchange, religious outreach, and community involvement, providing a historical record of the priest's contributions to both faith and society. These images can document a journey across different regions, showcasing the landscapes, people, and traditions encountered in various mission fields. Moreover, the photo album serves as a valuable

resource for understanding the social and historical context of the time, shedding light on the broader religious, cultural, and humanitarian efforts of missionary work.

In early 1987 the Limerick Leader received such a photo album; it had been found in Roches Street in Limerick. The album, weathered and worn, was filled with black-and-white snapshots, each capturing moments of dedication and devotion of a missionary priest. Its unexpected discovery sparked curiosity—whose hands had held it, and why was it left behind?

When the newspaper wrote a piece, including some of the photos in a bid to reunite the album with its owner, the provincial archivist Fr Leo Layden was made aware of its existence and arranged for it to be collected.

When received in the archive the missionary father was identified as Fr Philip Judge (1907-1942). Finishing his secondary education in Rockwell he entered the novitiate at Kimmage in 1924. Ordained in 1932 he was appointed to Nigeria and stationed at St Mary's, Port

Harcourt. He very soon got actively involved in all aspects of mission life, especially with young people and with the lepers at St Patrick's Mission, Bodo. He believed in having events and personalities recorded by the camera and a selection of these photos were sent home to his family and mounted in the album.

Despite being damaged by water a glance through the album allows us to sample the life of the young missionary in Nigeria at the time when the cathedral was being built in Onitsha as a symbol of the church coming of age there. He is remembered as being selfless and untiring in his travels to bring spiritual aid to his flock. No matter where he worked in Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Aguleri, Nsukka this capacity to give was his distinguishing feature. Fr Phil died after a brief illness at the age of 34 and it was recorded that 'his funeral was a mighty cortege, perhaps the



mightiest ever seen in Onitsha. The people of Onitsha insisted on carrying the coffin the whole long way to the grave, for Fr

Judge had worked among them and they had learned his worth'.

So how did the album end up abandoned on Roches Street in Limerick over forty years after the last photo was taken. Fr Phil's file records that he was born in Sexton Street, Limerick which leads onto Roches Street. One possibility is that it was discarded by someone who inherited it but never felt a personal connection to the album. Time and circumstance could have caused it to be misplaced or forgotten entirely. Sitting in a box in an attic of a house being cleared out it may well have got left behind as part of the transition.



As an archival object, this album will become an important tool for researchers, historians, and future generations to explore the interconnectedness of faith, history, and global outreach

# Educating a Revolutionary

Dr Emmet O'Brien

*A common denominator in the history of Irish revolutionaries, is the part played by educated activists - Michael J O'Brien an alumnus of Blackrock College and Kimmage Manor, is one of a long list of Spiritan past pupils who played an active role during the War of Independence.*

On Monday 22 November 1920, the day following Bloody Sunday, Michael J O'Brien and Lil Clancy were married at St Joseph's Church, Terenure. Many of the attendees were active members of the independence movement, two of whom, Michael Collins and Gearoid O'Sullivan, would become household names. It is astonishing that this group would pose for a photograph when every available member of the British forces, police and army, were searching for Collins and his circle. The events of the previous day had begun with the dawn assassinations of fourteen British spies and later that afternoon, at Croke Park, the shooting dead of fourteen people with an estimated sixty to one-hundred civilians injured, by forces loyal to the British Crown. Who was this Michael J O'Brien, the groom on that day and member of Collins' inner circle, who till now has for the most part eluded historians? Who was this Spiritan-educated revolutionary?

Michael O'Brien was born in 1891 the youngest son of Patrick O'Brien, a farmer at Curragh, Skibbereen, Co. Cork and his wife Catherine Fitzgerald. Michael inherited his love of the Irish language from his father. All of Michael's family were bilingual. In 1904, at age 12, Michael went to Dublin to attend Blackrock College as a Junior Scholastic boarder, combining religious discipline with general secondary studies. Only boys with academic

potential, 'respectable parentage', 'good character' and 'a pious disposition' would be considered for a scholastic education. Candidates would be judged by 'Fr Director' based upon the testimonials of Michael's teacher and parish priest in Skibbereen. The fee to attend was £21 per annum. There was a special half-price fee of £12 per annum for some candidates like Michael (plus extra costs for items such as stamps, exam fees and the soutane). In Michael's final year 1911/12, he received a full scholarship from Blackrock, hence no fee. His fees were paid by his father, with additional support from his wealthy uncle and aunt, John Murphy and Annie Fitzgerald, the owners of the West Cork, Hotel in Skibbereen. Michael was the only member of his family to

receive a private fee-paying secondary education. The objective was that Michael eventually study for the priesthood and become a member of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. The scholastics boarded in a separate building, under the care of a spiritual director, nevertheless in all matters concerning studies, classes, meals and recreations, they were treated in the same manner as other students. In 1909 Michael 'received the soutane'. Michael's academic record was one of consistent improvement. In 1911 he was made a 'prefect'. In January 1912 Michael left Blackrock to attend the 'Congregation of the Holy Ghost' Order's seminary, Kimmage Manor, for preparation for the priesthood. The earliest known photograph of Michael O'Brien (age 16) was



The wedding party – Michael and Lil in the centre.  
Michael Collins and Gearoid O'Sullivan, back row, second and third from left.



**Blackrock College Band, 1908. Michael O'Brien, middle top with tuba**

taken on the front lawn of Blackrock College in 1908. Michael is shown here playing the tuba, in the Blackrock College Band. This photograph still hangs in the halls of Blackrock College today.

Michael was among the first group of fourteen Holy Ghost seminarians to start their training for the priesthood at Kimmage Manor seminary (Dublin) in 1911. Previously the Congregation of the Holy Ghost's seminarians were sent to France. He attended for the years 1912-1915. He attended the arts faculty at University College Dublin (while living and studying at Kimmage as a seminarian) to read philosophical studies. He attended first year and second year for his arts degree in 1913/14 and 1914/15. As Michael left the seminary at the end of 1915, he did not complete his BA Arts degree at this time. However, he was to return to UCD in 1923/24 to complete his BA Hons Arts degree after his

involvement in the revolutionary era. In September 1915 Michael was to leave the congregation.

In the winter of 1915 Michael returned to Rockwell College Co Tipperary as a teacher for a year, 1916 – 1917 having previously prefected there. Rockwell was, during this period, home to some teachers actively involved in the Gaelic League, promoting the Irish language and the Irish Nationalist movement. Seamus O'Neill, most important of these, was a fellow teacher of Michael's. O'Neill set up a Corps of the Irish Volunteers in Tipperary. Michael was influenced by O'Neill and joined both the Gaelic League and the Irish Volunteers sometime between 1915 and 1917.

Michael was reported attending an IRA assembly at Drimoleague, about 10 miles north of Skibbereen in October 1919. This report was published in the Police Gazette (Hue and

Cry) produced by the British Home Office and the Metropolitan Police Service. Its primary purpose was to publish notices of people wanted by the British police or government, with requests for information, and where appropriate to offer rewards.

On the 1 January 1920 Michael was recorded by a Royal Irish Constabulary sergeant, as 'being on the run and acting in the capacity of organiser for the Loan for some time in the Skibbereen District'. As Minister for Finance, Collins had to raise the money to run the independent government. Collins was able to achieve this by successfully organising the 'Dáil loan'. Only the most trusted members of the IRA were asked to manage the Loan 'on the ground'. Collins would have chosen or been well briefed on the 'Loan Organisers', especially in his home county of Cork. This places Michael close to Collins. Michael, unlike most of the higher-ranking IRA activists, was never caught or imprisoned by British forces. His visual anonymity would have been hugely valuable to Collins and the various republican organisations.

In 1921, following their wedding, Lil and Michael were living at 93 Ranelagh Road, Dublin. Michael is listed as running a business; 'Michael O'Brien, milk purveyor and provision merchant' at 96 Harcourt Street. Running a dairy made taking trips to rural towns across the country an expected task. Close by at 6 Harcourt Street was the focal point for revolutionary activity in Dublin, Sinn Féin HQ. It was not a coincidence that the business was set up at that location. Michael and Lil played an active role in the War of

**Michael and Lil played an active role in the War of Independence, however they both remained tight-lipped about their involvement throughout the remainder of their lives**

**THE POLICE GAZETTE OR HUE-AND-CRY****DUBLIN, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13 1920**

Description of MICHAEL O'BRIEN, mother's name Fitzgerald, native of Skibbereen, who is charged with having on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1919 in the barony of the West Division of East Carbery in the parish of Drimoleague taken part in unlawful assemble contrary to Section 7 of the Criminal Law and Procedure (Ireland) Act 1887. Walks very erect, Cork accent, clean-shaven, dark eyes, long nose, fair complexion, long face, medium make, 5 foot 9 inches high, about 21 years of age, fair hair, generally wears navy blue or brown suit. Is a school teacher. Warrant issued.

Bantry 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1920**The police Gazette Hue-and Cry**

Independence, however they both remained tight-lipped about their involvement throughout the remainder of their lives.

The Civil War was a tragic period in Ireland's history with brother fighting brother and friend against friend. This was the case for Michael and Lil. Of the adults in the wedding photograph almost all but two supported the treaty with Britain and fought on the side of the 'Free State'. Michael and his best man, Michael Lynch (member of the IRB and leading Irish Volunteer during both the Easter Rising and War of Independence) were the two that would oppose the treaty and fight against their friends during the Irish Civil War. Michael was captured at the end of February 1923 and brought to Oriel House on Westland Row. Oriel House in Dublin was the headquarters of the CID (Criminal Investigation Department). It is estimated that at least 25 anti-treaty republicans, some of them prisoners in Oriel House custody, died at the hands of the CID during the Civil War.

Michael was sent to Mountjoy Prison in Dublin on 28 February 1923. His prison number was 1220. As the conflict evolved

into guerrilla war after August 1922, the Provisional Government sought to counter the growing anti-Treaty threat by legislating for internment. Michael was moved from Mountjoy Prison, on 8 June 1923, to an internment camp at the Curragh in Kildare. During this time, Irish republican prisoners began the 1923 Irish Hunger Strikes. These men and women were protesting that the continuation of internment without charges or trial was wrong. Michael joined the hunger strike in the Curragh camp, which had the largest number of strikers (3,390) in all the prisons in Ireland. Four prisoners died in the Curragh as the result of hunger strike. Michael was released on 3 November 1923.

During the period covering 1924 through 1926 Michael taught at, Belvedere College, Dublin. In 1923/24 Michael returned to UCD to sit his final year. His subject was Legal and Political Science. Michael then attended King's Inns to study for the degree of barrister-at-law.

Michael's reputation as a principled person and as an individual broadly-respected by all sides following the Civil War is highlighted by the fact that he was chosen as the barrister

to prosecute law-breaking IRA members in the 1930s. This would have been a brief that few barristers wanted. In 1931 a military court called the Constitution (Special Powers) Tribunal was created. This tribunal would be staffed by five members of the defence forces and sat in Collins Barracks, Dublin. The tribunal was empowered to try persons with a wide range of offences to protect the Irish State from attack. The IRA were now a relatively marginalised group. Michael was called on many occasions to act as prosecuting barrister at this court.

In 1939 Michael was made Chairman of the new Pigs and Bacon Commission and in the latter part of his career, in his late sixties took a step back from leading roles and became a Planning Officer for Dublin Corporation and the Land Commission.

Michael and Lil had four children and lived for most of their lives at their home in Scholarstown, Rathfarnham. Their love for the Irish language led them to spend holidays in the West of Ireland where they could enjoy speaking their native tongue. They are buried in Bohernabreena Cemetery overlooking Dublin. Go dtuga siad suaimhneas.

The article was researched and written by Michael O'Brien's grandson, Emmet O'Brien who is also a Blackrock College past pupil. It is an edited piece from an original five-page article which is available on request from [archives@kimmagemanor.ie](mailto:archives@kimmagemanor.ie)

# Don Hélder Câmara

Dr Séamus Maguire

**D**om Hélder Câmara (1909-1999) had a somewhat unusual and unconventional career for a prelate of the Catholic Church in Latin America in the twentieth century. While he is still well known in his native Brazil, for a time his fame also spread well beyond the borders of his home country.

He was born in the impoverished north east of Brazil to a middleclass family and was educated locally. He entered the seminary in 1923 and was due to his youth granted a papal dispensation in 1931 to be ordained a priest. Not uncommon among his social class, he was initially a supporter of far-right politics. However in time this position gradually changed due to the social and economic realities faced by many of his flock. In this context he founded two social organisations: 'Ceará Legion of Work' and 'the Women Workers Catholic Union'. In 1952 he helped establish the CNBB (Brazilian Bishops Conference) serving as its first general secretary. It was this organisation which over saw the formation of Caritas Brazil in 1956. Following on from this in 1959 he founded: 'Banco da Providência' in Rio de Janeiro with the intention of combating social inequality by the extension of financial credit to the poor.

Pope Paul VI appointed him archbishop of Olinda and Recife in 1964. He quickly became known as the 'bishop of the slums'. In this new role he attended the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Whilst there, he organised a meeting with forty other like-minded bishops. It produced the 'Pact of the Catacombs', a charter which appealed to their fellow prelates to live lives of 'evangelical



Don Hélder Câmara

poverty' and, in the spirit of ecumenism, to promote the needs of the greater majority of humanity that lived in straitened circumstances regardless of their faith.

Upon his return to Brazil he became a proponent of 'liberation theology' and under his direction the Catholic Church in Brazil became increasingly critical of the 1964-1985 military dictatorship in that country. It was in this context he was

criticised for providing inspiration for the violent revolutionary movements which swept through Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s. However, he repudiated these charges in a written treatise: *Spiral of violence* (1971) which indicted states themselves for their violently repressive policies which he insisted led to a chain reaction of counter violence. Its intended target was both domestic and foreign as the United States for example was engaged in an

**‘if I give bread to the poor they call me a saint, if I ask why they are poor they call me a communist’**

increasingly intractable interventionist war in Vietnam.

Not unlike the current pope, Dom Helder eschewed the trappings of episcopal status to live a simpler more ascetic life in his own diocese. He preferred to delegate administration and executive appearances to his auxiliary Bishop Jose Lamartine. This somewhat explains why he was dubbed the ‘Red Bishop’. However Camara himself identified as a socialist and not a Marxist. He is on record as stating that he earned this categorisation simply because of his belief in

social justice, ‘if I give bread to the poor they call me a saint, if I ask why they are poor they call me a communist’. However as outlined in the political tract mentioned above he did support dialogue with communists. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the AFSC (American Friends Service Committee) in 1973 but vested interests including the Brazilian Ambassador in Oslo very effectively undermined his candidacy. In late 1976 he charged the United States ‘National Security Programme’ with being responsible for facilitating the depredations of brutal dictatorships in Latin America. Given this context it may appear remarkable to a contemporary reader as to how the bishop enjoyed the freedom to make such critical statements. Camara himself maintained that

‘they let me alone because I am a bishop. They let me travel as a piece of propaganda to prove that there is freedom here in Brazil. Were I a simple priest, they would have taken away my rights long ago’.

Due to his enjoyment of such privileges he was invited to Ireland in 1977. He attended the Gort Mhuire conference centre in Dundrum, Dublin organised by Pax Christi and then concelebrated mass with Cardinal Alfrink of Holland among others at the Church of St John the Evangelist, Ballinteer, Co Dublin on 24 April 1977. He stated at this mass that ‘it was the church’s duty to work for the liberation of the people not merely to offer relief’. He then travelled to the peace conference held in Derry City, 25-28 April 1977. This was the ‘International consultation on non-violence’ organised by the



Irish Spiritan Brazilian Group, circa 1970s

International Secretariat of Pax Christi in association with the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. Before this conference began Archbishop Camara concelebrated mass with bishops Edward Daly, Donal Lamont and Thomas Gumbleton (U.S.A.) in the Long Tower Church in Derry's Bogside to a congregation of 3,000. In addition to the local parishioners some European Lutherans, Finnish agnostics and British humanists were also present. A press report of this event stated that 'Dom Helder preached from the heart about the Irish missionaries circling the globe, our country's visible sign of its capacity to love our fellow man in remote corners of the world. He mentioned specifically, by name, a nun and two Holy Ghost priests who worked in his diocese of Recife. The press report concluded by emphasising that the conferences significance in the context of the conflict in 'Northern Ireland' and elsewhere was as a 'peace laboratory' which was seeking non violent means of securing social change through dialogue.

Camara often stated that the 'church has to reform itself before it can bring reforms to society'. However not all were pleased with Dom Helder's world view and wanderings in order to

**Camara often stated that the 'church has to reform itself before it can bring reforms to society'.**

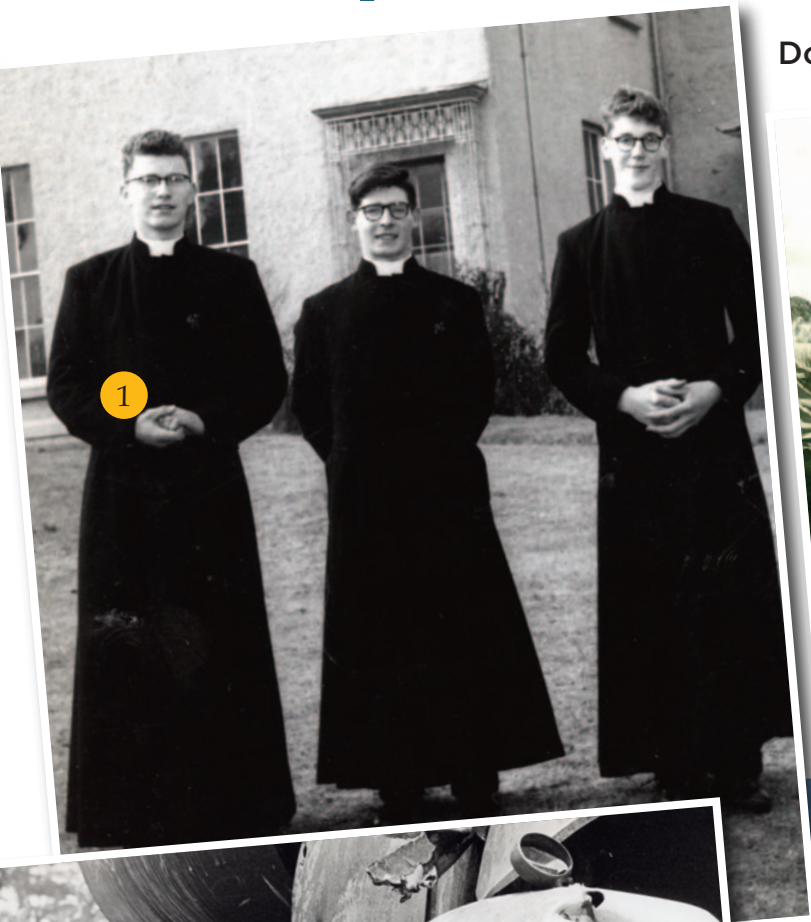
spread the 'good news'. In 1978 conflicting reports emerged of a travel ban being imposed by the Vatican itself, although this was officially denied. Nonetheless he continued to enjoy support in high places as the former Archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Michele Pellegrino stated that same year that he: 'would have learned better how to be a bishop if he had met Archbishop Camara ten years earlier than he did'. Archbishop Camara himself stated that he would seek the view of the Vatican authorities on the matter as he was reported to receive as many as eighty invitations to lecture abroad per year but only accepted an average of five. He was at pains to stress that he rejected ones received from communist countries or political parties. Pope John Paul II visited Brazil in 1980 a country which had undergone a remarkable transformation over the previous twenty years in which the Catholic Church was the largest and arguably the most radical in the world. Camara reflected this change in his statement: 'now we

want to be not for the poor but with them'. Due to such sentiments Dom Helder received death threats before the Pope's arrival in the country in July 1980. These were taken seriously as Archbishop Oscar Romero had been shot dead in El Salvador the previous March. Despite this fraught atmosphere he refused to be intimidated and continued to conduct his business as normal. Following a successful and popular papal visit Camara stated that the 'pope couldn't have given more direct and concrete support to the church and people'.

Dom Helder continued to work for social justice and campaign against inequality until his retirement. He died in Recife on 27 August 1999 aged 90. In 2015 representations were made to the Vatican by the incumbent Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, António Fernando Saburido. Consequently, Camara was granted the title of Servant of God and the opening of the beatification process took place in Olinda Cathedral on 3 May that same year.

# Glimpses into our Photo Albums

Dolorés Stewart





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12



13

1. Opening of Ardraccon  
St. Patrick's Day 1956 – Bro John Doyle,  
Bro Gerard Cummins, Bro Bernard Doran
2. Herculândia Brazil 1968 Fr John Fitzpatrick,  
Fr Phil Doyle, Fr Brian Eyre, Fr Ned Nealon
3. Biafran Soldier
4. Kilshane Departure of Professed Novices to  
Kimmage
5. Fr Terry Smith and Fr Michael Begley  
Kimmage 1983
6. Brothers in Ardraccon
7. Fr Seán McGovern, Pokot
8. Jazz Trio, Frs Noel O'Meara trombone,  
Paddy Guckian, clarinet, Mick Malone drums
9. Christmas Play, Frs Vincent Browne,  
Paddy Carrol, Michael O'Looney
10. The Papal Legate his Eminence Gregory  
Cardinal Agagianin, Patrician year 1961  
Kimmage
11. Promotion Sale of Work
12. Construction altar Kimmage Manor
13. Fr Brian Cronin and Students Njiro Seminary  
Arusha Tanzania, seminary, Chapel and staff  
house being built 1995 approx