

Transcript of the Annals of
South Presentation Convent, Cork
1771 - 1989

A short account of Miss Nano Nagle, our Venerable Mother,
The Foundress of the Presentation Order and of this Monastery
Its Commencement and Progress, etc.

Miss Nano Nagle, this eminent servant of God - the honour, the glory of this house and of her Order - and the true Benefactress of her country, was a descendant of a family not only respectable, but uniformly distinguished for its attachment to the true Faith. She was the daughter of Garret Nagle Esq., of Ballygriffin in the county of Cork, and of Ann Mathew of Thomastown and was born at Ballygriffin in the year 1718. When a child she was remarkable for the ardour and liveliness of her disposition. Her pious mother deemed it necessary to discourage this vivacity, and, therefore, often withheld from her those indulgences which she usually granted to her other children: - the observing eye, however, of her discerning father, discovered in all her little sallies, but the first impulses of a very elevated soul, and, upon those occasions, he never failed to express his belief that "Poor Nano would be yet a Saint". She was sent to France for her education, and at the desire of her friends, was introduced into the most brilliant circles of this fashionable Metropolis, and so much was she delighted with the gaities of Paris, that she began to think it impossible she could live happy elsewhere. Her unsuspecting innocence seeing nothing in all this which could disturb its calm, she remorselessly yielded to her unhappy inclination for worldly pleasures; but, this quiet was soon disturbed - and, a circumstance in itself trivial, made so deep an impression upon her reflecting and feeling mind, that the charms of dissipation by which she had been hitherto so entirely captivated, lost much of their ascendancy upon this occasion. - "Returning one morning from a Ball, she observed some poor people who patiently waited for admittance at the gate of a Church, which she had been passing at an early hour." - She was touched by Divine Grace - she was edified and confounded at the sight - she compared her situation with theirs - she was shocked when she reflected that she should be obliged to consume in sleep, the same precious moments, which they so piously dedicated as the first fruits of the day, to Him to whom alone they belonged, and to whom they were by so many titles so very justly due.

However, tho' in her youth, according to her own testimony, she was a lover of the world, of dress, and vanity, her reflecting mind drew from that very ardour for apparent and passing pleasures, a motive for seeking after those which are real and durable.

She was recalled from Paris to Ireland by her friends, and the extraordinary struggle, which she felt upon this occasion, led to those serious reflections which terminated in a firm resolution to embrace Religious life.

When living with her mother and sister in Dublin (her father having died before she quitted Paris) she one day requested of her pious sister to get made up a

splendid silk dress, the materials for which she had purchased for her in Paris. She often said she was never so edified or astonished as when her sister told her in confidence that she had disposed of the silk for a distressed family. This circumstance, together with the death of this sister soon after, wrought so powerfully on the heart of Miss Nagle, as perfectly to disengage it from the world, which she had enjoyed so much until then. She has often said to her Sisters in religion, that, "It was this trifling occurrence which fixed her determination to devote the remainder of her life to God in the service of the poor.

During her stay in Ireland she was deeply afflicted at seeing the total ignorance of the lower classes of its inhabitants - their consequent immorality - and the ruin of their souls. With these feelings she was still more deeply impressed during a visit she paid to a friend in her father's neighbourhood. Passing some time there, her affable disposition often led her to converse with the poor tenantry of the place, and in these little interviews her heart melted into pity, seeing their complete ignorance of their duty to God - the principal mysteries of religion - the great business of their salvation. Their faith was erroneous, their hope presumptuous and they had no charity. Their miserable condition was ever present to her imagination - no company, no employment, no pleasure, no pain, could mitigate her anxiety for these poor people. Not being then able to remedy the miseries she beheld, she determined to withdraw at least from the sight of it, and to deplore it for the remainder of her life within the enclosure of a Convent. She accordingly took leave of her friends, bidding them, as she thought, a last farewell, and returned to France for the purpose of putting her pious design into execution.

Some time after her arrival in France, she found her mind much agitated by the recollection of the vices she had witnessed among the poor in Ireland, during the short time she had passed in her own country: - thousands of tender babes seemed to implore her assistance; Tracing those vices to their true source, viz. the ignorance of religion among them, she conceived the most earnest desire of striking at the root of all their evils, by providing them with a proper means of instruction. Being, then, unprovided with property in any respect adequate to such an undertaking and fully aware of the almost insurmountable obstacles then raised by the penal laws to every laudable design, she determined to consult her Director on the matter, and to abide by his decision, depending upon God for assistance in the accomplishment of all He should require, with a courageous and generous confidence which were produced by Grace alone, since, by nature, she was timid and retiring. Having laid open her mind to learned Son of Saint Ignatius, and represented to him on the one hand, her original intention of embracing the religious life in France; and, on the other, the strong impulse she felt to return to her country, and devote herself to the instruction of the poor, she was strenuously recommended to follow that impulse as the voice of God. Equally obedient to the voice which called her back to her country, as she had

been to that, which, before, had appeared to bid her quit its shores, she promptly acted on the advice of her Director, and soon arrived in Dublin.

Her father was now dead, whose fortune and consequence would have been an encouragement to her; the laws were strictly in opposition to the plan she had in view – it was the more particularly obnoxious to them, as it completely clashed with the several chartered establishments. Besides this, “perpetual imprisonment” was posted, it may be said, upon the confines of ignorance to keep away the light, and to seize upon all those who should venture on instruction. Had all this penalty been confined to herself, she willingly would have risked it – but, she feared her friends might be involved in difficulties on her account, or, that a general persecution should fall upon the Catholics of the whole kingdom. She had therefore to encounter the censure of her friends – the shafts of worldly produce. She had to apprehend the sneers of ill- nature, and all that was disgusting in the probable failure of her design. She had, together with all this, to bear up against the weakness of her frame, unequal, as it seemed to be, to her intended painful undertaking. On the first onset, she was seized with a spilling of blood: - the field was truly discouraging before her; but, she reflected that it contained the “Evangelical Treasure” and at any risk she was determined to purchase it – “She hath considered a field, and bought it.” – She was deeply wounded at the sight of so many souls that were delivered up a prey to the miseries of ignorance – She saw the Pulpits deserted, and the voices silent which should have thundered aloud with all their energy – She saw the confessionals as carefully concealed as the transgressions deposited in them:- she was shocked to see the word of God thus chained down by injustice – and, the little ones crying out for bread, while there were none to break it for them:- with such incentives nothing could deter her.

She remained some time with her mother and sister in Dublin, and during her residence there, she commenced the work of God. - She took a small room – assembled about thirty children whom she instructed in the Christian Doctrine, and taught to read and spell. *(i) In this good work she was assisted by one of her Sisters, who was as charitably disposed as herself. From her having afterwards declared that she was absolutely terrified at their wickedness, we may easily suppose that the vulgar world in miniature, was delineated in this little assembly. Oaths, imprecations, resentment, envy and dishonesty, were so habitual amongst them, that it confirmed her in the idea that they required her sole attention, and that without patience, and prayer, and perseverance, she could never hope to make any lasting impression on them.

Footnotes:

*(i) According to an original letter written by one of our old Mothers and only lately discovered (1925) amongst some papers, the above is incorrect. She did not open her first school in Dublin, but Cork.

Some time after this, her Mother and this pious sister having died, she came to Cork, to reside with her brother, where, in secret, she recommenced her charitable exertions. *(ii) One of her schools being discovered accidentally, her conduct was highly disapproved of, from the apprehension of the persecution which it might bring upon the family, and even upon religion itself during that period of oppression.

Miss Nagle, however, far from being deterred by such obstacles to the work of God, rather extended than confined the range of her exertions. She established several schools for children of both sexes, being at this time providentially furnished with means to do so; a large fortune devolving on her by the death of her Uncle, Joseph Nagle, Esq. Being determined to exchange the goods of this world, for the riches of heaven and to lay up for herself treasures which neither moth nor rust consume, she resolved upon spending every shilling at her disposal in works of charity – depriving herself, for the relief of the poor, even of those things, which are commonly termed the necessaries of life - as to its comforts, she so perfectly renounced them, as even to know them not.

In her very dress, so very destitute was she of all that comfort or show, which could point her out as one removed from the rank of a mendicant, that pious persons were often moved to compassion seeing her apparently destitute condition, and presented her an Alms. Many times she was seen to receive with thankfulness to God and to her benefactor, the poor stipend of one penny; thro' humility, blessing that Providence, which in its treatment of her, was pleased to place her in the rank of beggars.

Roman Catholic schools at this time, were watched with a jealous eye; all her discretion must then have been necessary: persecution and heavy legal penalties hung over them. She was aware how useless it would have been for her to seek for the continuance of her friends – to rely on their protection would have been equally vain and fruitless: they never would concur with her, nor was it in their power to protect her. It became necessary, therefore, for her, to screen herself even from their observation. She prudently adopted such measures as enabled her before long to open schools at each end of the City, where she received as many poor children as she could bring together – She visited them alternately every day – she taught and catechised them for hours together, and in doing so, she was neither noticed by her family, nor interrupted by the malice of informers: like the pillar of fire which God gave to his people in the desert, she cheered these little ones, she pointed out the way, and raised their young minds to heaven. - At length, a petition at her brother's door discovered her occupation – but, not until sufficient time had elapsed to prove to her friends, that a persecution for her attempt, was not likely to fall upon the consummate prudence

Footnote

*(ii) She hired a room convenient to her brother's residence, in which she assembled 30 wicked children with a Mistress to teach them. She daily taught them herself unknown to her family; this was the opening of her mission of charity, and the first of the Order, which, happily for us, she instituted.

which conducted it; she had at this time pursued her good work for several months, and no person attempted to molest her. – In truth, no infliction of the law could have galled her half as much, as the displeasure of her friends in making the discovery. They accused her of misguided zeal – and her shameful indiscretion, and her inconsiderate piety, as they pleased to term it, formed, as we may suppose, the constant subject of their most vehement reprehensions. But, she was not to be intimidated by such phantoms – She knew that something should be hazarded for the poor children; and, she persuaded herself that malice would blush to persecute her in such a cause, or, that if she were attacked, common sense and humanity would assuredly plead in favour of her. She proceeded then, and, she prospered. Never was she known to have spared herself – nor could any inconvenience suffered by her, prevent her personal attendance. She seemed to acquire strength from her very fatigues; her constitution seemed renovated, as if it had sprung up from its own ashes, and she became more healthy and more hardy than she had been at any former period. The parching heat of summer, the piercing cold of winter had no effect upon her; the schools were her shade and her refreshment. Thro’ the rigors of every season, she has been observed to pass with steady composure, to wait on her little flock. How often has she been seen, after a well spent day, returning thro’ the darkness of the night, dripping with rain, mingled in the bustling crowd, moving thoughtfully along by the faint glimmering of a wretched lantern, withholding from herself in this manner, the necessaries of life, that she may administer its comforts to others. As the seasons changed, they occasionally might have spared her; but her own regularity, as it never changed, was never permitted to spare her.

For some time, after she returned home, she piously conformed to the habits of the family with which she lived, she joined their parties at home and with their friends: but, upon these occasions, when the sacrifice of her inclinations and will, were thus required, she previously most carefully discharged her duties of devotion, as well as her ordinary visits to her schools: no circumstance could ever prevail upon her to omit these. In company, she was always a subject of admiration and of edification – her conversation was interesting – her address dignified – there was no bitterness discoverable in her affability, nor austerity to be seen in her gravity – she never obtruded those harsh lectures, wherein pride garbed under the cloak of piety, is so apt to descant upon the failings of others: - her lessons were confined to her schools:- in all other places it was only by her example she spoke. In her presence detraction was confounded, because all knew that the character of the neighbour was peculiarly dear to her heart; all levity of expression was silenced when she appeared, overawed as it was, by the lustre of her virtue. While others were employed at the card-table, she retired to her devotions, without ever railing at their squandering of time; she taught them by this means but the more, the incomparable value of it. By degrees she withdrew from all intercourse with the world – she paid no visits but where charity conducted her – all other moments- which were at her disposal, she

employed in the exercise of compunction and prayer – For the remainder of her life, the Chapel, the schools and her apartment, divided her presence between them. At Chapel, assisting every day at the Holy Sacrifice her unaffected appearance was a lively transcript of her own perfect faith, and a new motive of credibility to all those who beheld her, so silent – so motionless – so absorbed in recollection was she! ! – In her schools, she was always laborious, patient, vigilant and judicious. She studied well the dispositions of her uncouth pupils, and the degree of capacity possessed by them; her instructions were adapted accordingly - She watched their countenances, which long experience had taught her to read, and, she proceeded, or turned back, or explained, or repeated, as she found them impressed with what she said. During Lent and when she prepared them for the Sacraments, she instructed them for five successive hours every day, without intermission. After her refection, which was both plain and frugal, she retired to her apartment for the performance of her evening devotions: there, in converse with God, the Great Teacher of truth, she advanced in the science of the Saints, and renewed her fervour for the ensuing day. In these heavenly communications, she conceived the noble idea of perpetuating the good work she had begun. She had at this time, a fortune at her disposal, and seeing it could not be more usefully employed, she determined upon establishing some permanent institution for the education of the poor in this country. She met with several obstacles, and much opposition to her designs; but, those, at length, gave way to her zeal, and she was seconded by the active co-operation of those whom God raised up, to carry on with her the good work.

The principal persons consulted by Miss Nagle with regard to her intended establishment, were, the Abbe Moylan, then Vicar General of the Diocese of Cork, and his Uncle, the Rev. Mr. Doran, a learned and holy Jesuit, who strongly recommended the erection of an Ursuline Monastery, as best calculated to second Miss Nagle's views. She was soon after this, deprived by death, of the benefit of Rev. Mr. Doran's counsels; but could feel no privation of human aid while blessed with the enlightened guidance, the zealous exertions, and active co-operation of Doctor Moylan. It was he, who most warmly entered into Miss Nagle's views – and moreover undertook to negotiate himself in France, all the measures necessary for carrying her design into execution. He accordingly went to Paris, - visited the first Monastery of Ursulines in that City, and made his proposals relative to the desired Foundation in Ireland. – This negotiation with all the obstacles to the object in view, which should be expected by all persons in undertaking and carrying on the work of God. Doctor Moylan met with long delays – disappointments – even refusals – but, in the end, by confidence in God, and perseverance in personal exertions, he effected his purpose, and arranged all the preliminaries with the Superiors of St. Jacques.

In that Convent it was, that the four young Ladies that the Almighty provided for the first subjects of the Ursuline Monastery in Cork took the Religious Habit and made their Noviciate. – Little did Miss Nagle suspect all this time, that these Ursulines were intended by Doctor Moylan for the education of young Ladies,

and not to be devoted to the only and great object which she had in view, viz. the instruction of the Poor. These young Ladies were Miss Fitzsimons, Miss Coppinger, Miss Nagle and Miss Kavanagh.

Miss Fitzsimons was a young Lady of respectable family and remarkable for her solid piety and great talents. Doctor Moylan became acquainted with her on his visit to Paris. He informed her of Miss Nagle's intentions – represented to her the immense advantage likely to result to religion in Ireland from the projected Foundation, and succeeded so well in communicating a share in his own ardent zeal for God's glory, and his tender compassion for the miseries of his oppressed country, that Miss Fitzsimons relinquished her intention of embracing the Order of the Visitation – fully acquiesced in the proposal of his Lordship, and on the 19th of November 1767, was presented by him to the Superioress of the Ursulines, Rue St. Jacques, where she shortly after took the habit and the name of Saint Angela.

Miss Coppinger who was uniformly distinguished for her piety and her attachment to the faith, was a native of the County Cork. She was induced by Miss Nagle to concur in her pious undertaking, and accordingly joined Miss Fitzsimons at St. Jacques, on the 5th of September 1769. There she took the veil and the name of St. Augustine.

Miss Nagle was a relation to our Venerable Mother and respected Foundress, Miss Nano Nagle. She accompanied Miss Coppinger to Paris, commenced her Noviciate in the same house on the 5th of September 1769, and, in taking the white veil received the name Mary Joseph.

Miss Kavanagh was one of the noble family of Ormond. She happened to be in Paris at the time Miss Coppinger arrived there; they were relations. Miss Kavanagh had previously determined on embracing the Religious life, and she was easily induced to join these young ladies who were destined for the Cork mission, at St. Jacques. She entered there on the 4th of September 1770, and merited by her fervour the privilege of receiving the religious habit with the name of Saint Ursula before the ordinary period. She was received on the 10th of February following, in the year 1771. These young ladies reserved their Profession for their own Convent in Cork.

In the year 1771, Doctor Moylan returned for them, and having failed in obtaining a Superioress to accompany them from among the Community in St. Jacques, he was obliged to have recourse to the Ursuline Monastery of Dieppe, in Normandy, where, with some difficulty he succeeded in prevailing on Mother Margaret Kelly, an Irish Religious of that house, to accompany them in the capacity of Superioress.

On their first day's journey, they stopped at St. Denis, to visit the Princess Louisa, daughter of Louis XV, king of France – she was then a Novice in that

house. They were most graciously received by her – spent several hours with her, during the two days they spent at St. Denis, and were greatly animated with zeal for the great work they were undertaking, by hearing her royal Highness express an envy for their sublime vocation, and assure them that “ she would be glad to be at the feet of an Ursuline in Heaven.”

They safely arrived in Cork harbour, under the protection of their kind Raphael, Doctor Moylan, on the 9th of May – They were received by Miss Nagle, and lodged in a small house in Douglas Street, at a little distance, but within the enclosure of their after residence: the building not having advanced farther than the raising of the Walls – This house was afterwards made use of by the Ursulines as a place for the reception of visitors, parlours having been fitted up there for that purpose*.

1771

September the 18th

The Convent, which Miss Nagle had commenced for the reception of the Nuns, being now habitable they removed to it, and took possession on the 18th of September. The act of agreement between Miss Nagle and the Nuns being drawn out shortly after, and duly signed according to the Constitutions, the Monastery was, in compliance with the desire of the Foundress, particularly dedicated to, and placed under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph.

After Miss Nagle had overcome all difficulties, as she thought, how trying to her feelings must it have been, and what an experience of her patience, to have found, that her new Institute was by no means adapted to the end she proposed. She expected her poor Schools would have flourished under the superintendence of such accomplished assistants, and that persons so well disposed, and so highly qualified, would give it the greatest perfection – God was pleased to direct matters otherwise. – Her heart was centred in the poor – her whole aim was to reform them, and tho’ her efforts did not flow in that channel to which all her solicitude was directed, still, they were thrown into one of very great importance too. Tho’ this professed friend of the Orphan and the destitute saw the work of her zeal fructify, in the prosperity of the Ursuline establishment, which in a few years had acquired such stability – tho’ she beheld its members multiplying – their exertions crowned with success – and their school opening a source of instruction to children of all descriptions, yet, her views were greatly disappointed, so far from being fulfilled, when she found that the Ursulines were bound by their Constitutions to enclosure, and to the education of the higher orders of society. Consequently, they could not, as she wished and intended, visit the poor and the sick abroad, nor devote themselves to the instruction of the poor at home.

Footnote: When the Ursulines removed to Blackrock, and that this Community succeeded them in this place, the small house alluded to above, was still occupied as a reception house for strangers; but, in September 1843 it was converted into an Asylum for the poor women, provided for by Mother Nagle and Mrs. Maher, and with whom this Community has been charged

This was her object – her most ardent and earnest desire: so that, the establishment of the Ursulines in this city, was more the accomplishment of God’s designs, than of Miss Nagle’s. She was the docile instrument, however, of the divine Mercy towards thousands here: and tho’ she discovered the Institute not to be altogether according to her own heart, this did not cool her zeal for its interests.

When the Convent had been completed, and the Religious become its inhabitants, Miss Nagle still continued to reside in the small house in Douglas St. already mentioned, which until then had served as a temporary abode; nor could all the entreaties which they could use, ever prevail on her to become an inmate of their new and commodious house. She never would consent to join them – in her absence, when occupied as she daily was, in her poor schools, these good Religious not infrequently had her bed removed, and an apartment prepared for her, in their Convent, thinking themselves happy to be lodged under the same roof with so distinguished and so saintly a servant of the great God – but, their efforts to effect their wished-for design, were always fruitless – she caused to be undone, what they had done; leaving them no hope, that their views with regard to her, in this one matter, could ever be realised. From their Refectory she daily received her repast of dinner, consisting of a portion, formed like those of the Religious, of whatever was served them all at table – without show – without the least peculiarity – often, perhaps, without either comfort or order. Altho’ she never could be prevailed upon to dine with them, or to spend the nights among them, still, she frequently visited the Nuns, and sometimes enjoyed the recreation hours with them. She was also accustomed to give one hours instruction on the Christian Doctrine to their young ladies, on each successive Saturday Evening.

1775

Towards the close of this year, Miss Nagle laid the foundation of the Presentation Order, by assembling together under her direction, a few pious persons, to whom she communicated a share of her ardent zeal for the instruction of the poor. It was in this year also, that Doctor Moylan was removed from Cork, having been consecrated Bishop of Kerry.

After vast expense in erecting a Convent for the Ursulines, Miss Nagle had still as much left as might endow a second establishment; it was in this year, therefore, that she began to build a new one, and she did it the more generously, and with the greater complacency, as it was in pursuance of her favourite plan, and the better calculated to benefit the poor; for no matter what her disappointment might have been at seeing shortly before, her favourite plan frustrated, she still never abandoned it, nor did she become relaxed in her pursuit.

The site on which she commenced to erect her new building was quite close to her Ursuline Monastery – This circumstance, therefore, became the subject of an annoyance to the members of it; they, supposing themselves, probably, not as yet permanently established, and that a division in Miss Nagle’s solicitude, which

was, until then, all their own, might be more than prejudicial to their interests and future welfare – Accordingly, they remonstrated with Doctor Moylan, against the impropriety of a Convent being erected so immediately in their vicinity. He warmly entered into their views, and thus occasioned to the patient, self- subdued Miss Nagle, new sources of displeasure – new opportunities of proving by her patience, that she was the servant of a crucified God. He expostulated with her, but all in vain – her thoughts, her wishes, her labours were all directed to that one great object which she always had in view, nor were her designs to be frustrated by any arguments, any pointed difficulties, and fear of drawing upon herself the displeasure of the creature, she having ever acted but to please her Creator. Meanwhile, her new Convent was commenced, and the building was progressing, when, Doctor Moylan, seeing that her courage was undaunted, and that she spiritedly pursued the work of God in defiance of his efforts to prevent it, appeared himself on the very spot, and met her there. He threatened to have, what was erected of the building, destroyed, and ordered her to commence her work at the other end of the City, and be thus, far removed out of the way of his favourite Ursulines. She mildly bowed, beneath the pressure of his displeasure, only saying “ that if he was pleased to drive her thence, she would never pursue her intended object in Cork; but, would retire to some other part of Ireland, where, she should meet with no opposition, and more encouragement, to effect her purposes on behalf of those whom she always carried in her heart, the poor.” - Not willing to lose the exertions of one, whom he saw was conducted by the spirit of God; or to hand over to another diocese, a treasure, which was so much wanted in his own, he remained ever after silent on the subject – permitted her to follow on, what she had piously begun – She did pursue her work, and, it prospered.*

Miss Nagle now thought it time, to make some beginning to the formation of her intended pious Congregation; she, therefore, chose out from among her associates in her charitable efforts to instruct the poor, two, whom she looked upon as peculiarly calculated, to live in Community according to the spirit of religion, and to aid her in those laborious functions to which she had resolved to dedicate herself forever.

1776

Jan.25th

Miss Fuohy and Miss Elizabeth Burke were the young ladies whom she made choice of to assist her in the great, the arduous undertaking which she was about – They were both natives of the City of Cork, remarkable for talent and gifted with the most sincere Piety. Miss Nagle largely expended money on their improvement – She had them perfected in Painting, and in every other branch of polite education, which could afterwards tend to promote the glory of God and to make them worthy ornaments of the religious state. On the 25th of January, they broke their engagements with the world, by retiring from it; and took up their

Footnote

Doctor Moylan was only Parish Priest of the South Parish at this time and Nano Nagle was a secular, therefore she was free to build where she thought fit

abode in Miss Nagle's wretched dwelling in Douglas Street, (the house into which the Ursulines were received on their arrival from France, and in which they continued to live until theirs was completed) – On the 24th of December of the same year (1775), they were joined by Miss Mary Anne Collins, also a native of Cork. This young lady was remarkable for the most sincere piety, was an accomplished model of every virtue, and having imbibed, during her intercourse with our venerable Foundress, all her sentiments, all her spirit, she became in after life, a faithful copy of this admirable woman, this true and faithful servant of God. On this day, then, these four ardent and zealous followers of the humble and crucified Jesus, commenced their Noviciate; delivering themselves up unreservedly to the practice of the most severe Monastic discipline, and to all the privations and austerities, to which their future, poor, laborious, and annihilated life, was in every shape calculated, and likely to subject them. To this pious Congregation, destined by her to be the medium of instruction to the poor, she gave the title of "Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

1776

24th Jan.

On this day, our holy and venerable Foundress, Miss Nano Nagle, received the Holy Habit of her newly associated Congregation; and the name of Saint John of God, being then in the fifty-fourth year of her age. Her three companions had the happiness of being received with her, they having chosen as their patrons Saints Joseph, Augustine and Angela.

From this year we may date the foundation of the "Presentation Order". On first establishing it, Miss Nagle did not ambition it receiving any other appellation than that of a "Congregation" - She intended its members to be devoted solely to works of charity among the poor – Her views were so humble, that it did not occur to her to bind them to enclosure, or, by solemn vow – she merely wished them to become (what she herself was) the servants of the Poor; and to be free, to seek them out, in their hovels of misery and want, and woe – she wished them to deserve its being said of them, as it was of her, that, "there was not a single garret in Cork, which she did not visit, and did not know" – this was the road pointed out by Miss Nagle, to be trodden by members of her Congregation – She walked in it herself – her example traced the way to them – and they faithfully followed it. She was of a disposition most particularly austere. She never spared herself, and she exacted from her associates all those practices of self-denial, which she so unrelentingly imposed upon herself. Their meals were mean and frugal; and, poor and comfortless as they were, no sooner were they ended, than they were obliged instantly to repair to their schools, there to resume their wearisome, and often disgusting labours – this, they considered to be the most painful practice of self denial imposed on them by Mother Nagle. Their dress consisted of a black gown plainly made, without fashion – over it they wore a black silk handkerchief, crossed in front – a plain cap – made round, which fitted close to the head – When going out to attend the schools, they wore long made cloaks, the hoods of which they always threw over the small black

bonnets worn by them on these occasions . . . At this time they had three poor schools daily to teach in – one, adjoining their little mansion – one, in Cross Street – and, one, in Mallow Lane.

1777

Towards the close of this year, Mother Nagle had the happiness of seeing the building of her second Convent completed, after having most courageously overcome the various difficulties, and patiently endured the many trials, which Divine Providence destined to be her portion, during the time of its erection. It was opened on the solemn and appropriate Festival of Christmas Day, in honour of the Infant God, with a most uncommon act of hospitality – it was admirable in itself, not dictated by human prudence, and not the less acceptable to Him, in whose honour our holy Foundress had prepared the entertainment – She invited fifty beggars to dinner ! ! ! She waited on them at table with great joy and singular charity – She helped them as their menial servant, faith strongly representing to her the great Patron of the Poor, who, on that day made his first appearance among men, and who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister – While she lived, this same ceremony she punctually observed. Since her death it has been carefully kept up in this Monastery, and it is to be faithfully adhered to while ever the Community shall have an existence.*

Altho' edifying might have been Mother Nagle's preceding life, her conduct as a religious, was even more striking. The evening of this great woman's life, was the most brilliant part of her career. Her humility, her regularity, her application to prayer, her mortification, her zeal, her charity which was unbounded, were never before, so conspicuous; they can only be done justice to, by saying, that her life was "the Gospel and the Counsels, perfectly reduced to practice." A full conviction of her own weakness, made her loath the very semblance of applause. She made no display of her humility: neither did she ever descend to that low stratagem of self-dispraise, usually thrown out in order to obtain the commendation of others: her humility was above this meanness, for it was genuine. A faithful imitator of her Divine Master, when she was reviled, she did not revile – and, while she was bestowing her substance and herself in charity to the poor, she has received the most opprobrious insults in this City – It was her solid and practical humility which caused her to rejoice, when God permitted her to be publicly insulted and reviled as an Impostor. She certainly was an Impostor on one occasion, a holy Impostor! For, the poverty and wretchedness of her appearance, so far imposed on a stranger, as to cause him to offer her a few pence as an Alms, which she humbly, and no doubt joyfully accepted for the love of Him, for whose sake she had really classed herself, as to the sufferings of poverty, with the most destitute mendicants – She was accused of having squandered her money in building houses, to acquire for herself a good name – and, of deceiving the world, by her throng of beggar's brats. – Her schools were

Footnote:

*This practice was adhered to till 1887 when the Little Sisters of the Poor got charge of the old women, for reasons explained later on.

even said to be seminaries of wickedness and vice. These, and many other insults, she silently and patiently bore – nor would her humility have ever permitted her to disclose them, did she not feel it a duty to communicate them, that she may thus prepare the Religious of her Community, for the same humiliating treatment.

The invariable discipline of her life, for thirty years, bears ample testimony as to her regularity. It never could have been told of her, that she deviated from it during the whole of that term, by one single day's amusement, relaxation, or worldly business. She so totally, so generously renounced the world, that every action of her life was a condemnation of its vanities. – In the exercise of her charity towards the poor, her austerity towards herself habitually deprived her of common protection against the weather; so that she has often been met in the streets, drenched with rain and pierced with cold – an object of compassion to those, who knew not that she was at the same time penetrated with the sweet unction of God's grace, and warmed with the fire of his holy love.

To form an adequate notion of her spirit of prayer, a circumstance should be related, which her death alone disclosed to her pious companions. “In paying the last attentions to her dead body, they found that her knees had been long in a state of ulceration: and, it was only then, they discovered a cause for the uneasiness which she appeared to struggle with, while engaged at her devotions. What anguish must she not have felt, while from five in the morning until nine, these excoriated joints were daily applied to the ground! What renewed pangs, when her evening devotions were as regularly prolonged in the same unaltered posture - At Christmas, during her spiritual retreat of eight or ten days, which she made every year, and, on Holy Thursday nights, which she spent on her knees in presence of the Blessed Sacrament until morning, what pain must she not have felt! And how dead, at the same time, to herself, when these feelings are denied that lowest of all comforts – “permission to complain”.

Mother Nagle's private austerities were so uncommonly severe, that, they were in fact, more likely to excite astonishment than imitation. She might justly use the words of Saint Paul, and say, “I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become reprobate.”

Her zeal was most unremitting and most ardent. Those who have been intimately acquainted with her, have declared, that she would cheerfully have gone to the very extremities of the earth, could she by this means, promote the salvation of a fellow creature. She often assured the Sisters who laboured with her in religion, that she never enjoyed any more sensible pleasure in her life, than that which she experienced on seeing great crowds of children assemble round her to receive instruction. It was under this virtue she sunk. –

Her boys' schools, she perceived ever on the decline, for want of a sufficient fund to support them; she therefore requested the interference of some

gentlemen, who, for some time were so kind as to collect contributions for her: but, seeing afterwards, that their exertions did not correspond to her first hope, she undertook by herself the disgusting solicitation. She went from door to door begging a support for these schools, which her own exhausted finances could not administer. In making this charitable sacrifice of her own feelings, she exposed herself to the rude refusals of some, and to the malignant sarcasms of many more; satisfied, if even at this expense, so painful to nature, she could succeed in obtaining the aid of some humble benefactors. It is related by those who knew her, that having arrived one morning, at a certain shop, the owner of which was one of those, from whom she experienced great generosity and kindness, she was most contemptuously repulsed by his shop-man, who rudely ordered her several times to quit the place. She received with great mildness his insolent behaviour, merely replying, that she was satisfied to wait until she could see his Master. From seven until nine, she waited with untiring patience, sitting behind the shop door upon a bundle of skins. When the gentleman was up, and had appeared at breakfast, a formal complaint was made him, of the importunity of an old mendicant, who had taken her place in the shop, and who could not be induced to leave, until she had seen him – he was requested to go without delay and turn her away. Having heard the length of time she had waited for him, he drew a curtain, and looking into the shop, to his great horror and consternation, whom did he behold in this humble position, but, the woman, who, of all others upon earth he venerated the most. And exclaimed, “O, that is Miss Nagle.” Covered with shame and confusion, he went to meet her, loaded her with apologies and kindness; and, no doubt, redoubled the donation which she came to beg, and which in any case he would have given her. He never after could relate the circumstance, without being penetrated with admiration at the patience, meekness, and humility, of this humble servant of the Lord, and without the most heartfelt regret, that in his house she could have been treated with so much contumely and disrespect – what was, to him, however, a source of so much suffering and displeasure, created but in her, sentiments of her own lowliness and of thankfulness to Him, who had thus managed for her, this occasion of humiliation and of merit. – Many instances could be produced, to show how she suffered, and how she laboured for God’s greater glory, when occupied in calling for, and receiving, these dearly earned contributions in support of her boys’ schools. One circumstance, which was only discovered after her death will throw new light upon this her last act of fortitude. “Such prominent and such angry excrescences were then observed upon the soles of her feet, as to make it a matter of surprise how she could by any possible exertion even stand upon them, much less walk as she did so much and so constantly during the last three years of her life.”

1777

June 24th

Being now fixed, with her Religious Sisters, for some months, in her new Convent, “of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,” our holy and venerable Foundress had

the consolation of pronouncing her simple vows * in presence of the Rt. Rev. Doctor John Butler, Bishop of Cork, and of her three Sister Novices, Mary Angela Collins, Mary Joseph Burke, and Mary Augustine Fuohy. At the conclusion of her Profession, she was confirmed Superioress of her Monastery by his Lordship. Thus, did she charitably devote her person and her wealth to the gratuitous instruction, of the poor and desolate little ones of the Lord: and she did so, with so much piety and zeal, as to give joy to the Angels and to men, not, for the conversion of one sinner alone, but for that of an infinite number of souls, who are, and who will be, for generations yet to come, thro' her means, daily drawn from the deep Abyss of Hell. – On this morning, also, and at the same time, were professed, the Sisters, Mary Angela Collins, who was Sister to the pious and learned clergyman, Rev. Joseph Michael Collins, of the Order of Saint Francis: a branch of which was then established in Cross Street in this City, and of which he was one of the most brilliant ornaments, Mary Joseph Burke, and Mary Augustine Fuohy. – These young ladies were animated to additional fervour in pronouncing their simple vows, by the edifying example of our venerable Mother, who had just preceded them, in making this most acceptable sacrifice to God.

1779

November 11th

On the 11th of November 1779, the Ursulines put on the Holy Habit. For eight years after their arrival in Ireland, they did not venture to exchange their French night caps, and black gowns, for the veil and Habit of their Order. Days of ceremony only, such as Professions and Receptions were exceptions to this rule. On those days, the Habit was worn by all the Religious, and on the day following also. But, even this privilege was not obtained without difficulty, nor enjoyed without restraint, as, Mother Nagle's natural timidity led her on all occasions, to require even more, than the precaution, which the temper of the times appeared to render necessary. However, on this occasion, the Nuns were all inspired at once, to make a bold attempt at continuing to wear their Habit.

Mother Nagle came to expostulate with them on their rashness – but they replied half joke half earnest, that “the weather was exceedingly cold – consequently, to take off a warm dress would be more imprudent than to wear it.” She desisted for that time, from further argument, only observing dryly, “that Doctor Moylan would be in town shortly;” his presence, she expected would soften the atmosphere and would remove all their fears of taking cold. On his Lordship's arrival, he affected as much surprise at the Nuns' new costume as if he had not heard the whole affair from Mother Nagle. Still, contrary to her expectation, the Bishop did not proceed further than to recommend the Nuns to reflect seriously on the step they were taking – on the dangerous ground on which they were treading – and on the imprudence of even remotely risking the persecution of

Footnote: From this period until the year 1793, when the Rules of the Order were approved of by Pope Pius VI, the Religious continued to make annual Vows: but they did so, in private.

their Infant Establishment, merely for the consolation of wearing the Habit. He consented, however, to their making the attempt, trusting to Providence, and depending that He, who clothes “ the lilies of the field” would not disdain to watch over, even the dress of his chosen “servants”. – In that hope they were not confounded. From this period forward they continued to wear the Habit and carry on their religious ceremonies with as much solemnity and publicity, as if, they had been sanctioned by the law. During Mother Nagle’s life- time, nor for years after her decease, her newly formed Congregation durst not wear their Habits except on solemn festivals and on Ceremony days

1780

September 8th

This day, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was that, appointed for the first election, which took place in this Monastery. Mother Nagle was re-elected Superioress by private suffrages, and confirmed in her Office by the Rev. Nicholas Barron.

1782

April

It was during this Month that Miss Oliffe entered this Monastery, and with great fervour commenced her Noviciate.

November 21st

On this day Miss Oliffe received the Holy Habit of this Congregation and the name of it.

It was early in this year that Mother Nagle received into her Noviciate, Miss Hodnett, a young lady, whose piety, good sense, education, and talent, gave every reason to hope that she would one day become, not only an invaluable and useful subject in Religion, but, also, a bright ornament to that Infant Establishment, to which, it appeared, the Spirit of God had conducted her – She was daughter to a gentleman who possessed at the time, a large portion of both the respectability and wealth of the City. At the age of twelve, she was brought by her Mother, to pay a visit to Mother Nagle; and, when about to depart, to the great amusement of those present, she stood across the door, holding the posts at either side, and protested to her Mother that she would not allow her out, until she promised in presence of the Nuns, that when she was grown up, she would consent to her becoming a Religious in this house – (the child was struck by the piety, amiability, and cheerfulness of the Nuns; and by the calm, peaceful serenity which reigned throughout the house, but which she particularly noticed in her visit to their Cells). The Mother did make this promise to her interesting little child, not supposing for a moment, there was the least likelihood she should be ever called upon, to fulfil her engagement. At sixteen, our young aspirant announced to her pious parent, that it was her fixed determination to leave the world and enter Religion, reminding her at the same time, of the promise she had

formerly made, and of the scene which had once passed at the Convent – Her designs were not opposed altho' delayed for a while - She entered upon her Noviciate at the age of eighteen – her mother was not put to the trial of parting with her favourite child; before this period, God had called her to Himself – hope sweetening by means of hope, all that could have been painful in this temporal separation.

On the morning of this day, Miss Connell entered the Noviciate. She was a young lady highly gifted with every virtue, and was a very near relative to Mother Nagle.

On this day Miss Anto Tobin entered the Noviciate. She was a young lady from Thurles, and seemed to be a subject of some promise.

1783

This was the year in which Miss Hodnett received the Holy Habit of this Congregation, and the name of Saint Agnes.

Mother Nagle went on thus, prospering every day in all her works under the guardianship of an all wise and all seeing Providence - she had now six subjects associated in her Congregation, from whom she expected much, and whom she daily led on in the practice of every religious virtue, as much by her example as by her words. – Their lives were laborious, their food meagre, their clothing poor and never exceeding the limits of the most indispensable necessity. Still they were always happy, always gay, serving the Lord with joyfulness, and filled with hope. – In conducting them she was, of the two, rather rigorous in the practices she required of them – but, their courage never sank – they cheerfully followed her along that path of austerity and penance, which was long, very long familiarized to her, and which she pointed out to them as the surest way to attain to their hoped for future bliss – She often told them, she never expected to see her Congregation raised a degree beyond what she then saw it, her unworthiness being too great, for God to permit her to live to see it placed on the permanent basis of being raised to a Religious Order. Her words were verified, for, it was some years after her happy death, that Pius VI, thro' the interference of Doctor Moylan, confirmed it, a Religious Order.

It was her zeal for the salvation of souls, and her consciousness of the dangers which await the death bed of aged poverty that prompted her at this period, to erect an Almshouse near her Convent, where poor old women may spin out their last thread, and be assisted when quitting this world. For this purpose, she took a house which she furnished, and sunk a sum of £200 for their future comfort and support. Since her death, this Institution has been regularly kept up; and is placed under the superintendence of this Community, who are bound to administer every spiritual help and to afford all the bodily comforts in their power, to its indigent and miserable inmates.

Her heart was fixed upon one institution more; and had God been pleased to prolong her existence, she would have most strenuously endeavoured to effect it. This was, an Asylum for those unhappy females, who would, after being tired out in the ways of iniquity, have returned to God and to repentance, had they only a place to receive them: she calculated upon their daily labour furnishing them with a sufficient means of support.

But, her hour is come! After so laborious a course, and such unwearied efforts to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of her neighbour, is it not time to deliver her from her fatigues, and to receive the faithful servant into the joy of the Lord! A mortal sickness brought on by these fatigues, announced to her sorrowing Sisters the approach of her death: a general languor, a heavy oppression, loss of rest and appetite, a most afflicting cough were its harbingers: or rather a cool resignation – a longing to be with God – a humble confidence in the merits of her Redeemer, increasing at each moment, declare that the Bridegroom is at hand.

1784

April 25th

Being fortified by the last Sacraments, which she received with the tenderest compunction, she fixed her heart on Heaven, where alone her treasure was – and thus did she await with steady fortitude the expected signal of her departure. Her afflicted little Community assembled around her, learning from her how to die, as they had learned from her example how they should live. They united their sighs with hers, prayed for her victory in this last conflict, and recommended with grateful tears, her precious soul to God. They then implored her blessing and last advice – She gave it to them – “Love one another,” she said “as you have hitherto done.” It was a heavenly sentence! One worthy of the life it concluded. She then gave up her charge of Superioress into the hands of Sister Angela Collins, recommending her to be vigilant; to be kind to those whom she committed to her care; and, by her efforts to ensure, as much as possible, a continuation of the good work she had only begun, and the progress of which she was not worthy to see. Shortly after, this great and extraordinary servant of God breathed her last, giving up her pure soul into the hands of Him, for whom she always laboured, and whom she always loved.

One of Mother Nagle’s great admirers gives her character in the following words, with that justice, energy and solidity of expression which distinguished his style –

April 26th:

“Miss Nagle.” says he, “ was a person gifted with a mind which appeared almost divinely inspired to foresee and to remove every obstacle to a great work – a mind, beneficent by nature- gentle from habit – generous from disposition – and exemplary from the workings of divine grace. A mind, in fine, formed at the School of the Cross – and there convinced by Jesus Christ, who is meek and

humble of heart, that his yoke is sweet and his burden light: and that those who hope in him shall not be confounded. Her manners gained and engaged the heart – her authority commanded respect, without seeking its rights – her piety showed good example, while it strove to hide itself – her prudence excluded every excess – no labour could abate or relax her zeal – nor could any difficulty shake her resolution. She was ever equally submissive, and willing to receive, as to communicate advice or instruction.”

A woman, of whom the pen of Truth could hand down such a character, and whose own works bear the strongest of all testimonies in her favour, met, as may be supposed, the hour of her dissolution, with the peace and delight of the Lord. Requiescat in pace. Amen - !!! -

1784

April 30th

Mother Nagle’s remains were interred in the Cemetery belonging to the Ursulines, and enclosed in the large Tomb, which stands in its centre. Her own most anxious wish was, that she should be buried with her own Sisters and children in Religion, “the members of her Congregation”; but, she consented to be laid in the Ursuline’s Churchyard, on condition that these, should also be buried there. This condition was also agreed on – whence the Ursulines and Presentation Nuns had for many years a common burying ground.

Some time previous to the last illness of Mother Nagle, she was applied to by a respectable family in Cork, who were then about to quit it for Lisbon, entreating her to provide a secure asylum for their relation, Miss Dove, who, being somewhat simple, they did not choose (thro’ consideration for her) to subject to the inconveniences attendant on a long voyage, or, to the newness of those manners and customs, which she should necessarily be obliged to submit to, when residing in a strange land. The Mother and the brother of this young lady made so piteous and so powerful an appeal to the charitable, compassionate heart of our venerable Mother, that she no longer could resist, and, after some consideration and much consultation, she at length consented to grant the request made, of “receiving her as a lodger in the Convent”. Two considerations activated our Mother on this occasion: first, she wished to shelter this young lady from the sneers and the injustice, which there was too much reason to fear, would be largely her portion were she cast, half idiot as she was, into the hands of pitiless strangers: and secondly, as the Monastery was very poorly circumstanced at the time, the sum of £300 which was to have been added to the funds of the house for her support, seemed to have been, trifling as it was, an object of too great moment, to be inconsiderately rejected. Terms were, therefore, made and, when completed, the house received Miss Dove as their inmate; she, of course, not pursuing with the Nuns, the exercises of the Community, nor wearing any other garb than that of a secular lady. She was a great charge on the Community: one which they would not have so willingly assumed, had not the purest charity and the deepest poverty, been such powerful

motives to influence them to embrace it. She became each day more idiotic, and, consequently, a greater subject of solicitude and care. She was peaceable and ever easily managed.

1784

July 16th

On this morning, Miss Margaret and Miss Mary Tobin entered this Monastery to serve their Noviciate, previous to their establishing a Convent of our Congregation, for the instruction of the Poor in Thurles: an Institution about to be founded there by the Right Rev. Doctor Butler, Archbishop of Cashel. These young ladies would have entered sooner, had not their ardour for Religion been in some measure dampened, by the illness and death of our venerable Foundress; they being prevented by their friends from entering the Congregation, until this heavy Cross had been embraced and borne, by the sorrowing Sisters with whom they were about to be associated.

August 27th

Sister M. Joseph Connell pronounced her simple vows and took the black veil on the 27th of this month.

1785

January 3rd On this morning Sister M. Anto. Tobin pronounced her simple vows and received the black veil.

January 8th

Sister M.J. Connell departed this life on this day: after suffering all the pain, debility and other inconveniences attendant on the disease of Consumption, with a patience, and conformity to God's holy Will which was truly edifying. This Sister was one, from whom our holy Foundress and Community expected much – She was remarkable for piety, and regularity in observing the most exact discipline of the house; and, in her, this Infant Establishment would have found a treasure, had not the Lord, in his own wise designs, been pleased to deprive it of her – She was interred, according to the agreement entered into with the Ursulines in their church yard.

January 10th

On the day of Sister Connell's burial, an event took place which added not a little to the grief of our little Community, in their present deeply felt bereavement. The Ursuline Religious, began Mother Nagle's interment, a custom, which was ever after observed by them on similar occasions: viz. they came processionally to the Church yard when the funeral bell began to toll, and stood round the Cemetery in prayer, while the deceased was being buried – on this memorable day, they also paid this mark of respect to the remains of the departed Sister in question. When all had been concluded, the Ursulines, with much politeness, after the usual salutations, offered the testimonies of their condolence on the day's melancholy event, with a sweetness and a cordiality, which quite won the

heart of the too susceptible Sister Anto Tobin. She entered into close conversation with them – she opened her mind too freely to them – she forgot, or perhaps, she happened not to hear, that, “it was one of Mother Nagle’s last dying injunctions to her beloved Religious who stood weeping around her, to live always in the utmost charity, and on the most cordial terms with the Ursuline Religious: but, never to become too familiar or too intimate with them, as being of a different Institute, and, consequently, differing widely in opinion and sentiments in matters, which, altho’ insignificant in themselves, may, still, cause disquiet to the mind, and prejudice to the heart.” On this occasion, our venerable Mother also added, “that none, but the imperfect, would wish to indulge such indiscreet intercourse; and therefore, for this very reason, it would not be judging rashly, to say, their conduct and conversation cannot fail to be, both imperfect and disedifying,” After a protracted interview in which it was represented to our Sister, that there could be no stability in a Convent such as ours – that our devout Congregation was merely an Association without the least prospect of its being raised to the dignity of a Religious Order. She, in the fervour, or folly of the moment, agreed upon quitting the “ house of the Sacred Heart of Jesus” (as our Monastery was then called) and joining their more permanent Foundation. She came home, was dispirited, and unhesitatingly declared her intention of joining the Ursulines. This was a stroke, a sad stroke, for this new and struggling Institute – it was a wound inflicted in a special manner on the heart of her Sister, Margaret, then a Postulant in the house; she bitterly deplored it, she wept at the remembrance of it day and night; nor could she ever be consoled, when reflection brought the recollection of it anew to her mind. Miss Mary Tobin, the eldest of the three, had left, previously to this event; not imagining the austerities of any Order, or any Monastery, in any degree equal to those, which she was called upon to practice – she lived in Thurles for many years after, the life of a Hermit and of a Saint, she became a martyr by her severe penances, and must have been a great favourite of heaven, by means of those virtues which she practised, particularly that of charity to the poor.

1785

January 10th

On this day Sister Anto Tobin has put her resolution into execution. She has quitted us, and has joined the Ursulines! ! ! - Circumstances, probably, not enabling them at the moment to keep her; or perhaps prudence, which might have urged the propriety of their not, at once, after so inconsiderate an act, retaining her amongst them, she was sent home to Thurles, where she remained for more than 12 months, daily and diligently applied to the instruction of poor children, as she had been taught to do, under the superintendence of our dear Mother Nagle. At the expiration of this period, she was enabled by Doctor Butler to return to Cork and join the Ursulines, his object being, to establish an Ursuline Convent in Thurles. She did pursue her Noviciate, was professed; and joined by the two Miss Lubys, afterwards established an Ursuline Monastery in

her native town under the patronage of the Most Rev. Doctor Bray, then Archbishop of Cashel.

1785

January 21st

It was on this day that Miss Margaret Collins joined our Congregation, and commenced her Noviciate. She was younger Sister to Mother Angela Collins.

April 11th

On this day, Miss Margaret Tobin received the holy Habit of this Congregation and the name of Saint Francis of Assisium.

April 26th

This being the anniversary of the death of our holy and venerable Foundress, it was celebrated by a solemn Office and High Mass, for the repose of her soul, in the Ursuline Chapel. We had the consolation of assisting at it – and while we did so, the recollection of her sanctity and extraordinary virtues, and the conviction in our minds of her actual enjoyment of God, were a strong temptation rather to invoke her intercession, than to pray for the repose of her happy soul. We trust she is not unmindful of the spiritual necessities of her children, whose salvation was so dear to her upon earth.

The Sisters of this Community have entered into the pious and praiseworthy resolution, of reciting each year, the office of the dead, on the Anniversary of Mother Nagle's death, for the repose of her soul, and those of the deceased members of the Community. It is hoped, while ever our dear Mother Nagle's Community is in existence, to give this testimony of their undying charity, towards those, once so linked with them within the limits of the Sanctuary, and united to whom, they hope yet to be for ever, in the bosom of their God. Amen.

June

Our dear and amiable Novice, Sr. Hodnett, having been seized by symptoms of Consumption, was ordered by the Physicians to return home, that she may thus be the more speedily restored to better health, if such should be the Will of the Most High. This was the mandate, which inflicted a deep wound on the heart of this pure innocent soul, whose delight was centred on the silence and retirement of her beloved retreat and solitude. But, she obeyed – first extracting from Mother Angela Collins a promise, that, “should she, after a short trial of another air, be pronounced irrecoverable, she would at least be permitted, to return and die in that venerated spot, wherein, she did hope, she would be soon, consecrated solely to her heavenly Spouse; and in the midst of those cherished Sisters, with whom, she hoped to journey along, the wearisome and tedious path of life, on her way to an anticipated blessed eternity”. This promise was made her- how could it be refused? She left – and soon, too soon, did death appear inevitable. She quickly returned to her Monastery, - she flew again into the arms of religion and shortly after she died a holy and happy death, giving to us all an edifying

example of blessed patience, and pious resignation to the Will of Him, whose happy Spouse she only sighed and breathed to be. She has been buried, to us, sorrowfully buried next to Sister Connell, in the Ursuline Church yard. Requiescat in Pace. Amen.

August 29th :

On this morning Miss Margaret Collins received the Habit of this holy Congregation, and the name of Saint Monica

1786

January 11th

On this day, Miss Lucy Curtayne entered this house, to serve her Noviciate, previous to her being entrusted with the establishment of a Convent of our Congregation in Kilkenny, which had been for some time in contemplation.

March 10th

It being 15 months now, since Miss Anto Tobin bid us farewell for ever, she has returned to Cork and has joined the Ursulines, being sent by the Rt. Rev. Doctor Butler, Archbishop of Cashel, to serve her Noviciate with them, preparatory to his employing her, in the foundation of their Order in Thurles.

July 22nd

On this morning Miss Lucy Curtayne had the happiness of receiving the Habit of this pious Congregation, and the name of Saint Joseph.

1787

January 23rd

This was the month, this was the unhappy year, no sooner commenced than it unfortunately ushered in the first intelligence of that fatal secret, the prevarication of the ill fated Doctor Butler. - He resumed his titles to the honours of the earth, and at the same time resigned his claim to a place in Heaven.

A few months after the apostacy of Lord Dunboyne, the prostrate and afflicted Diocese of Cork was cheered by the appointment of the Right Rev. Doctor Moylan to the See of the fallen Prelate. The news of this event spread universal joy. His Lordship's auspicious arrival in his native city, was a healing balm to the wound which religion had received within her very sanctuary. His appearance was literally hailed by every heart, and every voice: but, nowhere more warmly than within these walls. His little flock here received him with delight as their future Bishop and Superior.

It was in this year also, that the Rev. Robert McCarthy was appointed our Father Superior and Confessor. He was an Ecclesiastic whose appearance was an admonition to sanctity – whose maxims were spirit and life, but whose example was the most eloquent of all lessons.

1789

November 21st.

On this day we were presented by our Blessed Lady with a gift she brought us, as a postulant, Miss Margaret Lane; who, with all the fervour of religious zeal, on this morning presented herself to God, and entered our Noviciate.

1790**May 23rd**

Miss Margaret Lane was on this day admitted to Reception – she received the Habit of our Congregation and the name of Saint Teresa.

Doctor Moylan saw, with great delight, the invaluable and innumerable advantages resulting from the labours of those, who devoted their lives to God in this Infant establishment. He therefore became anxious to ensure its future stability and further perfection, by introducing into it some regular rules, and a more unchanging system. For this purpose, he prevailed upon the Rev. Laurence Callanan, to read over and study well The Rules and Constitutions of the Ursuline Order, and from them, to extract such practices and such observances, as would, when regulated and appropriated to the duties, appointed by Mother Nagle for her Nuns, place this meritorious Institute, upon a firmer basis, and ensure to it a lasting success. Mr. Callanan, having faithfully and assiduously applied himself to this study, and to this work, which had been confided to him, at length drew up the substance of those rules, which all Presentation Convents are now so strictly bound to keep.

1791**September 3rd**

Having seen these rules formed, and placed, according to the most perfect order, Doctor Moylan forwarded them to Rome for the inspection of his Holiness Pope Pius the Sixth, who was graciously pleased to distinguish them by his “approbation”, and to which he affixed his seal on the third day of September, in the year of Our Lord, one thousand, seven hundred and ninety one. – This happy news infused, as may be easily supposed, unutterable joy, and great spiritual consolation, into the heart of each member of our Congregation. How fondly did not their every respiration breathe forth their warm gratitude to their God, who had thus so wonderfully commenced “to do great things”, both for them, and in them. With what lively sentiments of love and thanksgiving, did they not redouble their zeal and their efforts, to prove by their fidelity to Him, their acknowledgements for all the benefits, but for this one in particular, conferred on them, the weak but willing instruments, of his Will, in the service of the Poor. May his name be eternally glorified – and may He ever find, in this, his favoured Monastery, true and faithful adorers – ardent and active labourers in that Vineyard, which he has chosen them to cultivate, that his power may be made manifest, and that his glory may arise, even from the efforts, of the weak and the little ones of the world.

Seeing, at this period, every likelihood, that this Congregation, in the merciful designs of God's providence, would one day be raised to the dignity of a Religious Order, the Sisters became most desirous that it should be designated by some more appropriate name; they, therefore, repeatedly solicited Rev. Mr. Callanan (who had already done so much for them) to bestow upon it a title worthy of so grand, so meritorious an Institute. This, his humility always prompted him to refuse doing. At length, urged by the earnest entreaties of Doctor Moylan, he meekly and simply observed; that he had ever known Miss Nagle, the venerable Foundress, to have had a particular and marked devotion to the festival of the Presentation of our Blessed Lady; and, that he would not, therefore, feel any hesitation in giving it the name of the "Presentation Order".

From this time, the Congregation assumed this glorious title – they, however, only changed their appellation, because they were and are, and ever will continue to be, in spirit and in truth, "Sisters united, closely united, in word and work, by, and in, the Sacred Heart of Jesus." Live, Jesus for ever !!!

November 17th

On this day, Miss Frances Doyle entered this Monastery, in order to serve her Noviciate, preparatory to her establishing a Presentation Convent in Dublin.

1792

April 5th

On this day, Miss Catharine Callaghan, a citizen of Cork, entered the Noviciate.

May 23rd

Miss Bridget Doran arrived from Dublin today – intending to join Miss Doyle in the Dublin mission; she has, for that purpose, entered upon her Noviciate here.

September 18th

Miss Margaret Donegan, a native of Charleville, in this County, has entered our Noviciate today.

1793

January 2nd

On this day, our three postulants, Miss Frances Doyle, Miss Bridget Doran and Miss Catharine Callaghan, received the Holy Habit of this Order and the names of Saints Francis Xavier, Ignatius and Clare.

August 15th

This day, the Feast of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady, was rendered particularly solemn to us, by the animating ceremony of the religious Profession, of our four fervent Novices, viz. Miss Margaret Tobin, Miss Margaret Collins, Miss Lucy Curtayne, and Miss Margaret Lane. They had the happiness of

Footnote: On this day commenced the practice of making those Simple Vows publicly.

pronouncing their simple vows* in presence of the Right Rev. Doctor Moylan,

Bishop of Cork, of the Rev. Doctor Florence McCarthy (his Vicar General) and of our Rev. Father, Jeremiah Collins, (our Superior and Confessor). Mother Angela Collins renewed, upon this edifying occasion, the simple Vows, which she had made, sixteen years before, with our holy Foundress, Mother Nagle. In presence of the Right Rev, Doctor Butler, who was then Bishop of Cork.

September 26th

On this day, Miss Donegan received the Holy Habit of this Order and the name of Saint John of God.

October 3rd

We parted this morning with our two amiable and beloved Sisters, Mary Francis Lane and Mary Joseph Curtayne – the occasion of our bereavement was, in itself, something joyful – still, how could we not have felt, at this first breach made, in our happy, holy, little society. They have gone to Killarney, for the purpose of establishing a Convent of our Order there, under the patronage of the Right Rev. Doctor Teahan, the respectable and worthy Bishop of Kerry. Lord Kenmare, (Thomas Browne) with a magnificence which was worthy of his noble character, has, for the purpose of promoting the good of religion, and ensuring the success of this mission, bestowed upon them, a house, garden and field; and has also, very liberally, allotted them the annual sum of sixty pounds, as a fund to secure them from distress under any emergency.

This is the first branch transplanted from the Parent Tree – watered by the dew of heavenly grace, and animated by the warmth of the love of Jesus, may it take deep root, and may it prosper. A.M.D.G.

While in Killarney, prospects were daily becoming more bright, more animating, and while all things were working there according to the designs of God, to promote the well being of the Sisters who went there, the temporalities of this, the parent house, were undergoing a painful change, and presenting incessantly to its happy but suffering inmates, several occasions of practising that poverty of which their Master had given them an example. They felt, however, that in possessing God, they had found all things: “Only give me Thy grace and Thy love; I am then sufficiently rich, and nothing more do I ask.” (Saint Ignatius). After all, how could they complain of not being rich, when, some among them witnessed the fact of Mother Nagle having possessed but one guinea and a half, at her death.

February 28th

On this day, Miss Anne Curtayne entered this Monastery, for the purpose of serving her Noviciate, previous to her joining our Sisters, who have gone on the Killarney mission.

April 28th

On this day, Sisters Mary Xavier Doyle and Ignatius Doran were professed for the Dublin mission – They pronounced their simple Vows, and took the black veil, in presence of our Bishop, Doctor Moylan.

August 20th

Miss Anne Curtayne, on this day received the Holy Habit of our Order and the name of Saint Angela.

August 27th

The second Convent of our Order was founded in Dublin, under the patronage of his Grace, Doctor Troy, Archbishop of Dublin; a house, garden and funds having been supplied and provided for the purpose, by the Venerable Mary Teresa Mullally. This Lady was a native of Dublin, where she lived to an advanced age, enjoying the respect and veneration of all who knew her. Never having chosen for her portion, as most others do, the cares, the vanities, and false pleasures of this foolish world, she was at full liberty to follow her great attraction, which was God. For Him, her life was spent and, for His sake, whole hours were dedicated daily by her, to the instruction of the poor. Finding, at length, the infirmities of age increasing, and that, the old woman's strength was going, she determined at least, before time for her should be no more, to establish her cherished poor school upon a firmer basis, and to give to the destitute and forlorn little ones of her native City, the last testimony which she could give, that "she loved them" and "loved them to the end" - She therefore applied to His Grace, to provide her with a certain plan, of perpetuating her charitable designs - He proposed to her a method of accomplishing this, which she most joyfully caught at, - it was, to procure Nuns from Cork, of the Presentation Institute, and to commit to them, for futurity, the pursuance of that work of mercy which she had so piously begun - The number of Religious here, being so limited, as to prevent the possibility of sending any on the Mission, the two Sisters, with whom we have this day parted, offered themselves to the Archbishop as future members of Mrs. Mullally's intended Convent, and were sent by him to serve their Noviciate here - and having done so, to the great edification of all around them, giving every hope of an unremitting zeal in the arduous undertaking, which by their fervour they have been urged to enter upon, they (Sister Xavier Doyle and Sister Ignatius Doran) have started this morning for Dublin, there to commence the arduous duties of their Mission, in the Convent prepared for their reception at George's Hill in that City.

September 9th

On this morning Miss Judith Clynych and Miss Clare Bigger, arrived from Dublin, and entered our Noviciate, preparatory to their joining the newly commenced mission in that City.

December 9th

On this day, Miss Clynych and Miss Bigger received the Holy Habit of our Order and the names of Saints M. Magdalen and Angela.

1795

January 5th

On this day, Sister Mary Clare Callaghan pronounced her simple Vows and took the black veil.

April 1st

Miss Fanning entered our Noviciate this morning. Miss Ellen Power also entered to serve her Noviciate for a Waterford Mission.

June 4th

On this day, Miss Mary McSwiney entered the Noviciate.

September 25th

Miss McSwiney returned to the world on this day, with the unanimous consent of the whole Community, it being decided she had no vocation for the Religious state.

October 19th

Sister Mary John Donegan and Sister Mary Angela Curtayne, were on this day professed. They made their simple Vows in presence of Doctor Moylan and took the black veil.

November 17th

After having governed the Killarney Convent for three years as Superioress, Mother Teresa Lane returned to us this day; being replaced there, by Sister Mary Angela Curtayne (lately professed) and having resigned the office which she filled, with so much glory to God and credit to herself, into the hands of Sister M. Joseph Curtayne who accompanied her there.

A very considerable time elapsed, owing to the great negligence of our venerable Mother Nagle's friends and Agents, before her Will was executed: consequently, each day added new privations and new wants to the friendless little flock which she left sorrowing behind her. This painful delay, deprived the Community of the resources, which she had left for their support, on entering into "the better land," where ("having fought the good fight") she was destined to enjoy the bliss of Angels. They were poor and unprotected – the world knew them not; their

works of mercy, labour, and charity were seen but by God – by men, they were despised and disregarded.

Our Saintly Foundress was not long entombed – the thorn, which her death had planted in the hearts of her bereaved children had scarcely commenced to suffer its wound to heal, when a visit from Mr. Roche, the Agent, added a new and bitter pang to those same hearts, which were all but broken. With sternness he called for all her private papers. He was shown them, no suspicion being entertained of what he was about to do. He seized them, and took them away; thus, depriving the simple, guileless Religious, of such documents as they necessarily should have wanted, to secure their claim to that portion of property, which to them had been bequeathed.

The sufferings, which they endured in their extreme poverty, were prolonged, scarcely endurable, and quite demonstrative of their charity, and zeal, and love of humiliation – truly did they prove themselves to be, the disciples of their self-denying Saviour – they willingly chose their abode at the foot of his precious Cross. Having abandoned the comforts of home – the endearing enjoyments of family and friends, for the sake of Him who was to be henceforth their only treasure, they devoted their time to His praise, in the dreariness of their solitude; and, to the instruction of the poor, regardless of the countless insults, and unmeasured portion of contempt which their zealous efforts so often drew upon them. In God they found all, if for Him they left all – and soon did experience teach them, that better is one day spent in the obscure solitude of His house, than thousands passed, in the gay, frivolous, and perishable tabernacles of Sinners.

The number of these “Subjects, in the house of our Lord,” having now increased to ten, only five had wherewith to provide them a competent support: - but, when all were to be provided on their slender means (no payments being made by dear Mother’s Executors) what could be the result but want and privation, more than sufficient to exercise the patience, the virtue of others, not so dead to self as they were - not so devoted to God, as they were, and wished to be. Well did these martyrs of zeal for God’s greater glory prove, “that the poor in spirit feel but few wants, - because little for them suffices”. Happy was it for them, that they listened to the voice of their annihilated Lord and Master – that they felt consoled by His example: “Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on .” Often did they accomplish this lesson, by experiencing the want, both of ordinary food and clothing:- gratefully would they have received, and often did they receive, a trifle, to provide for a necessity, in either.

Their dwelling house was so low, small and ill-contrived, as to furnish them with ample opportunities of subduing nature, and rendering it subservient to the inspirations of grace. It afforded no comfort; and, only one convenience, because, it was a shelter. Still the Sisters were gay, content and happy. “I come not, to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.” Their Community,

and their Cells, were low and narrow. They admitted no air, and insufficient light for any ordinary purpose. In them, during the winter, hours were spent, without fire, and often, from necessity without candle- light. In them, was to be seen, no ornament, except, that, as poor Religious, divested of all things, they could have viewed, as such, gloomy, unfinished walls, exhibiting to view but mortar, brick, or stone - they were only half finished; and they were unfurnished, as was the stable in which their Lord was born – “The Servant should not be greater than the Master.”

Their schools scarcely deserved the name of schools. They were small and inconvenient. In summer they were hot even to suffocation, so numerous was the attendance of poor, ill-dressed, half-dressed ill-conditioned children. In winter they were damp and unwholesome owing to the entrance of the rain through the roof, in such abundance as to form ponds of filthy waters on the floors, where these abject Nuns were standing. In proportion to this inconvenience, was the cold extreme, during the severe months of the year; but, those, doomed to endure it, felt it not; their souls and bodies were consecrated to their God: their love, their hopes, their fears, were, long before, laid at His feet: they were the children of Providence; they felt no terrors for the present – no desires for the time to come: they trusted in Him, who “openeth His Hand, and filleth with blessings every living creature” - “He will do the will of him that fears Him.” Their diet was not only poor, but scanty. It usually consisted of some bread accompanied with a little milk, or, occasionally, some poor beer. They were enabled sometimes, by the liberality of a friend, (for, a few there were, who to them were kind), to procure themselves more substantial fare. In such cases, they received these gifts with gratitude; but they neither sought nor desired them. “Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him.” (James ii5 - Luke xvi.22)

Having suffered long, and patiently, all the inconveniences which to them could result, from poverty’s rigorous effects, another humiliation awaited them, which, they cheerfully threw, with all the rest, into that cup of sorrow, with which their Lord had presented them; and which, for his sake, they had determined to sip, to the very dregs rather than consent to relinquish the work of charity which, they believed, He had given them to do. “If I suffer for Him and with Him, I shall reign also with Him, and be glorified with Him.”

They had no money, and were refused further credit by the Baker. Their necessities then became truly depressing: but they desponded not; and still trusted in the mercy of Him, who, always, sweetened their sufferings, by reminding them, of His. At this period, their daily sustenance often depended upon the sale of a book or some other trifle, to a child in the school; and not infrequently, the day was far advanced, before they could calculate upon the certainty, of their being provided with, a very late repast.

Many a time, did morning dawn, to disperse the gloom of a sleepless and comfortless night, spent by the kind-hearted, solicitous Superioress, Mother Angela Collins, without its presenting to her view one chance, one hope, that the day would not be passed in hunger and in want, by the laborious, uncomplaining Sisterhood of whom she was the anxious provider, as well as, spiritual guide. While she lamented their exterior trials, their unmitigated poverty, she had much subject of consolation in witnessing their spirit of self-abnegation, and love of the Cross. They were truly great in their humility and lowliness. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. (Matt.v.3)

The result of this extreme destitution, necessarily should have been, a perfect overthrow of all Mother Nagle’s plans for the instruction of the poor; and the dispersion of the few members, who had been entrusted by her, with carrying out her noble and charitable designs, had not God interposed, and lent them a helping hand, at the very moment when they were reduced to the last extremity – How wonderful are the ways of God! How unlimited His goodness and His power! ! One day, that the distress was more than usually great, and not a prospect of relief by any human means, two of the Sisters, shedding abundant tears, prostrated themselves before the Blessed Sacrament as if clinging to the Altar, and implore of Him, who resided thereon, never to allow the Community to separate, or, to be torn from the Sanctuary and from His adorable protecting arms. They arose, filled with confidence, and much consoled. The recital of an unexpected little incident will prove that their prayer was not made in vain; and that the Lord never rejects the petitions of those who approach Him with confidence, and place in Him, their whole trust: for in two days after, they were presented with a sum of £50 coming from a quarter whence they least expected to obtain relief. Mr. Andrew Mahony, who had died some time, previously, bequeathed this sum to the Nuns; but, from some cause unknown to them, they had not been informed, that such good fortune, providentially, had been theirs. On the night, after the two Religious had made the above named supplication to the Throne on High, as Mrs. Mahony (the widow of the benefactor) and her Niece lay asleep in the same Chamber, the latter was most dreadfully tormented in a dream. She thought her uncle appeared to her, and unmercifully beat her. Her screams awakened her Aunt, who had some difficulty in calming her, and inducing her to resume her slumbers. Again, she seemed to see him; and again she thought he beat her – On his third appearance, she fancied she heard him utter, with a voice of deep displeasure, the following words: “Go, and tell your Aunt to pay the Nuns the money that I left them.” The girl, on the next morning, related to her Aunt, all her terrors of the night: and she, participating in the same alarms, lost no time in procuring the money and bringing it to the poor Nuns; who, for the first time, then learned, that this donation had been charitably bestowed upon them. In proportion as this timely aid was unexpected, great also, was their gratitude to God, and their kind benefactor. Their joy was extreme, in as much as they received this welcome boon as a mark of God’s Providence over them; and as an assurance, that He would still watch over them, and enable them to pursue the good work, which had been only commenced, “the

instruction of the poor.” O! the mercy of our God: -“who is it that ever confidently turned to Him, and was permitted to suffer in despair!”

1796

January 3rd

On this morning, Miss Margaret Fitzgerald entered our Noviciate.*

January 4th

Miss Ellen Power and Miss Margaret Power, received the Holy Habit of Religion on this day, having adopted Saints Francis and Jane F. de Chantal, as their future patrons: at the conclusion of their Noviciate, it is intended, they should return to Waterford and establish there a Convent of this Order.

January 4th

On this day also Miss Fanning entered the Noviciate.

February 4th

This morning we parted with two most amiable and dear Sisters, Mary Magdalen Clinch, and Mary Angela Bigger. They left, en route for Dublin, to join our Sisters at George’s Hill: it being for that reason they passed their Noviciate and were professed here.

April 25th

Sister M. Magdalen Fanning, having worn the Holy Habit of Religion four months, was obliged to return to the world, the extreme delicacy of her health having rendered her incapable of fulfilling the arduous functions of the Institute.

July 5th

On this morning, we received into our Noviciate, Miss Catherine O’Brien, a native of Cork, she being destined as one of those, intended to undertake a mission in the North end of this City.

July 25th

On this morning, Miss Fitzgerald and Miss Kenny had the happiness of receiving the Holy Habit of our Congregation; the former, having chosen Saint Patrick as her special patron, received his name – and the latter indulged her devotion to Saint Joseph, by placing herself under his protection, and adopting his name.

September 30th

Miss Margaret Murphy, a native of the County Cork, under the patronage of Saint Jerome, entered the Convent this morning, for the purpose of serving her Noviciate, preparatory to her entering on the projected mission, at the North end of this City.

Footnote *Miss Fitzgerald was sent, on the 14th of January 1799 to establish a Convent of the Order, in the North end of the City – She died there on the

October

Our Sisters in the Killarney Convent have delighted us by their account of Lord Kenmare's great liberality, and attention to them – to his former annuity, (settled for ever on that Community) of sixty pounds, he has now added forty – His present generous gift to them is £100 per annum; and a large piece of ground.

November 15th

A young Lady from the County Kerry, Miss Johanna Hayes, arrived here today, to enter upon her Noviciate; and when Professed, to become a member of our flourishing Convent in Killarney.

1797

January 9th

Miss O'Brien received the Holy Habit of our Congregation, on this morning; in religion. She has taken the name of her patron, Saint Augustine.

January 31st

Miss Frances Mahony, from the County Limerick, arrived here this day, for the purpose of serving her Noviciate. She is intended for the mission which is shortly to be commenced in Kilkenny.

April 7th

Miss Mary Moloney has come from the Diocese of Waterford, to serve her Noviciate here; it being her intention to join the missionaries, who are to enter upon the laborious task, of establishing a Convent of our Institute, there.

May 2nd

Two of our Postulants received the Holy Habit today. Miss Hayes took the name of Saint Francis de Sales, taking him as her patron – and Miss Murphy, soared as high as the Seraphic Saint Teresa, as a future model – and received her name.

July 18th

Miss Mahony and Miss Moloney, received this morning, the Holy Habit of our Congregation; and the names of Saints Patrick and Teresa.

November 8th

How glorious to see the work of Mother Nagle prospering !! On this day two young Ladies, natives of Kilkenny, entered our Noviciate, their intention being, to dedicate their lives and their fortunes to the attainment of the ardent wish of Right Rev. Doctor Marum (their Bishop) to establish a Convent of our simple and laborious Institute, in Kilkenny. They were accompanied by Miss Margaret Lyons, also a native of Kilkenny. With them she has commenced her Noviciate, intending to join them in their projected mission.

1798

January 8th

We witnessed today a sight, most imposing and edifying. Four of our Missionary Novices, Sisters Francis (Ellen) Power, Jane F. de Chantal Power, Mary Patrick Fitzgerald, and Mary Joseph Kenny, pronounced their Vows, in presence of the Right Rev. Doctor Moylan, and of a number of persons who came to be delighted and edified, by seeing so many ardent lovers of their dear Redeemer, voluntarily severed from this world, when they pronounced their sacred engagements. May their present fervour remain undiminished to the end

July 24th

On this day, Miss Isabella McLoughlan, Miss Catherine Meighan and Miss Margaret Lyons received the Holy Habit and the names of Joseph, de Sales and Angela.

July 31st

This day was one of unutterable joy to the two missionary Novices, Sister M. Patrick Mahony, and Sister M. Teresa Moloney – they had the happiness of pronouncing their Vows, in presence of our venerated Prelate, Right Rev. Doctor Moylan.

August 4th

On this morning, Sister Mary de Sales Hayes and Sister M. Francis Mahony left us, for the purpose of joining our Sisters in the Killarney Convent, for which house, they have served their Noviciate and were professed here.

September 3rd

With great regret, we parted this day, with three very dear Sisters, who proceeded to Waterford for the purpose of establishing there, the third Convent of our Congregation: Sisters M. de Sales Power, Mary de Chantal Power and Mary Teresa Moloney. They left us after renewing their consecration of themselves to God; determined, if necessary, to bear any Cross presented to them in the various painful and laborious functions of this mission. The two Sisters Power are the sole Foundresses of this Convent – they have devoted their properties, £108 per annum, to the promotion of this good and holy work, under the patronage of the Right Rev. Doctor Hussy, Bishop of Waterford. The incident was, in itself, very trifling, which led to the establishment of this Convent; and shows, the many wonderful, and often, in appearance, insignificant means which our merciful and all-wise God makes use of, to bring about His unfathomable designs of love and mercy, in regard to His worthless and ungrateful creatures. A poor girl, reared up in our school, was necessitated to quit her home, and to accept some lowly situation in the City of Waterford - She was indeed poor, as to this world's fleeting, and fast-fading goods and pleasures: but, she was taught, early in youth, to lay in a store of virtue, the advantages of which, for her, would last for all eternity. Absence, from friends, who anxiously watched the movements of her inexperienced heart and mind, did not prove to be

in her, any source of laxity in the observances of her accustomed pious exercises, and religious duties. She approached the Sacraments as frequently as ever; and in her conduct, she was a model for those around her. Her Confessions were made with so much exactitude, and she seemed to be so thoroughly instructed in the necessary form or method of Confessing (a knowledge, at the time, confined to the better classes) that her Confessor, in surprise and admiration, enquired of her, where she was from and how it had been that she was so very well versed in all that appertained to her duty of “serving God”? She said she was from Cork and that it was at the Convent, there, she had been taught her catechism so well, and initiated in all the principles and practices of our holy Faith. This zealous and worthy Parish Priest heard, in this accidental manner, and for the first time, that there existed in this City, an Institute, so replete with Charity; and so calculated to impart Instruction and to infuse virtue and sanctity into the minds and hearts of our neglected, and despised, and necessitous ignorant fellow Mortals, the “Poor Irish”. – Having written here, and obtained satisfactorily all the information sought for, regarding our rules and practices, and obligation of instructing the ignorant poor, he expressed to his Bishop, Right Rev. Dr. Hussy, his great desire to establish in his parish a Convent of our “Charitable Congregation.” His Lordship approved of the design; and not only permitted him to make all the necessary exertions for the accomplishment of his pious desire but promised also, that he would, on his part, lend every possible aid; and use his influence with others, to assist on the good work. It was at this crisis, that Miss Ellen Power, and her Sister-in-law, Mrs. Margaret Power (a young widow, of great virtue and piety) offered to his Lordship, themselves and their property, as a commencement to the establishment of a mission, which they looked upon as so essential to the present and future happiness of their uninstructed fellow creatures, in, and around Waterford. As may be supposed, it was not, until after the lapse of a long time, that the principal difficulties were removed, which seemed to be such insurmountable obstacles, to the contemplated Establishment – and now, it flourishes – God has blessed it; and, to Him be given, praise, honour and glory, there and here and everywhere, now and forever. Amen.

1799

January 9th

On this, to them, very joyful day, Sister Mary Augustine O’Brien and Sister Mary Teresa Murphy, pronounced their Vows in presence of Right Rev. Doctor Moylan; who is, with the true zeal of a Pastor, endeavouring to expedite all the arrangements being made, preparatory to their departure to open a Convent of the Institute, at the North end of the City.

January 15th

At six o’clock on the evening of the 15th, we parted with our three dear Sisters, Mary Patrick Fitzgerald, Mary Augustine O’Brien and Mary Teresa Murphy. They were conducted to their future home at the North end of the City. Mrs. O’Connell was the pious lady who devoted her property to the establishment of

this new Convent, under the patronage of our esteemed Bishop, Right Rev. Doctor Moylan. Our parting scene with them was highly painful, they and we being so closely linked together, by ties of friendship the most sacred. Sister M. Patrick Fitzgerald has been appointed Superioress and Mistress of Novices. After wishing them a last farewell, our house became like a desert: - each Sister having sought the solitude of either cell or choir, to weep over our universal loss. On entering their new abode, they found it destitute of the most ordinary necessaries. Three beds and a few chairs was the extent of their furniture; neither these wants, however, nor the frightful gloom of their habitation (which was situated in a narrow lane, and without even the smallest yard or garden) could daunt the courage or depress the spirits of our heroic missionaries. On the night of their arrival, a potato, in which was stuck a candle, served the use of candlestick for two cells in the same dreary corridor. The day after their arrival, the house was blessed by the Bishop who deposited the Blessed Sacrament on the Altar of their little undecorated Chapel. A pair of brass candlesticks and two small white cream ewers, to hold the wine and water were the chief ornaments of this abode of the “God of glory.”

1799

January 21st

On the 21st of the same month (January) our dear Sisters opened their small and inconvenient schools: into which were pressed a number of children, amounting to nearly 500, and these were truly poor, abandoned, ignorant little ones. They also commenced the instruction of adults – all of whom they found stupid and ignorant, and many amongst them, who were unfortunately the victims of crime, were speedily reformed by the prayers and admonitions of their sainted instructresses.

Painful as it was to know, the wants of these beloved Sisters and former companions, it was far more depressing for us to feel, that our own deep and unmitigated endurance of poverty, has deprived us of the consolation of administering to their various necessities. How sad for us to know, that their poor condition at last has been such as to oblige them to convert some old and worn sheets into inside garments: and the parlour chair covers, which had already done their duty well, into neck-kerchiefs to exclude the cold, during a severe winter frost. Still was their courage undaunted – they always trusted to Providence. At one time, their rent being unpaid, and by singular circumstance they were preserved from trouble and disgrace. –“A poor woman, when passing by a certain Street, heard the Sheriff exultantly tell a friend, that in his pocket he had a writ, which authorised him to eject the Nuns on the following day. She went to the Bishop, Doctor Moylan, and told what she had heard. This good Prelate adopted such measures that evening, as averted the impending calamity.”

1800

April 22nd

On this day Miss Catharine Sullivan and Miss Mary Kirwan received the Holy Habit of our Congregation: the former having taken the name of her adopted patron, the glorious Saint Joseph: and the latter, that of the Apostle whom the Redeemer so much loved, Saint John the Evangelist.

1800

August 15th

Under the protection of the Holy Mother of God, Miss Shea entered our Noviciate this morning.*

April:

This month was one of consolation and pleasure to our dear Sisters of George's Hill, Dublin. It saw them, or, rather they saw themselves permanently clothed with the Holy Habit of our Congregation. On Holy Thursday, memorable day, the tenth of the month, they ventured on their long ambitioned enterprise, of casting off their plain, but half-worldly black costume, and clothing themselves in the livery of our divine Lord.

June 29th

Under the protection of the great Apostles Saints Peter and Paul, our Sisters in the Waterford Convent, courageously appeared in the Holy Habit and Veil; determined that no tyranny exercised over religion, or themselves, shall ever influence them to resume the worldly garb, which, thro' compliance to the persecutors of the Faith, they had so long been wearing.

The Nuns in Kilkenny, much to their credit, shook off their secular dress from the moment they first took possession of their new Convent. On the festival of the Assumption 1800, our dear Sisters in the Killarney Convent, taking example from the other houses, put on their cherished Habit and Veil; trusting that, under the protection of the Mother of God, and concealed beneath Her secure Mantle, they may be shielded from the approach of future persecution.

October 16th

Miss Shea, after a sojourn of two months, left the Convent, perfectly in accordance with her own wishes. May the Holy Spirit ever guide her.

October 7th

On this day, Mrs McLaughlan, a pious young widow, aged 22 years, arrived from her native place, Waterford, to serve her Noviciate, previous to her joining our Missionaries, preparing for the Waterford Convent.

Footnote:- She unfortunately did not persevere and left the Convent

1800

June 25th

Sisters Mary Joseph McLaughlan and Mary de Sales Meighan both pronounced their Vows on this day, in the presence of our Right Rev. Father, Doctor Moylan, the venerated Bishop of this Diocese: and a day of joy and gladness, was it to them! As affectionate Sisters, exact Religious, pious, laborious, zealous disciples of Him, who came upon earth to promote His Father's glory and man's salvation, never did two more exemplary Missionaries leave a Noviciate, to engage in duties, in themselves painful and fraught with much care, and many difficulties. Sister M. Joseph McLaughlan, now in the 23rd year of her age, has been a particularly favoured child of Heaven, and well suited for the meritorious Mission in which she is to be engaged. Possessed of more than ordinary talents and a highly improved mind; together with those personal attractions, which usually please an undiscerning world, (undiscerning in the discovery of the better gifts sent us from above) she is likely to infuse into the hearts and minds of others, those virtues and acquirements which now so much adorn herself. Her companion, the dear little Sister de Sales Meighan, may well be sent out, to conciliate all hearts, and to gain souls to God. So great are her piety, gentleness, and amiable ladylike dispositions and manner. Her Noviciate has been passed with more edification and has afforded consolation and pleasure to others.

September 22nd

Mr. James Murphy of Dublin, having contributed most liberally to the erection of the Kilkenny Convent, having seen it fully arranged for the reception of the Missionaries, and bestowed several considerable benefactions upon it, as a religious establishment, much wanted in that City, Sister Joseph McLaughlan and Sister de Sales Meighan were noticed to enter there, upon their new and arduous functions – they have, accordingly, left us, on this morning, to open their Mission under the Patronage of the Right Rev. Doctor Lanagan, the respected Bishop of the Diocese of Ossory.

November

During this month* we began to wear the Habit and Veil daily; and, to observe, what we so long, and so much desired, our “sweet enclosure”. Hitherto, the Habit was only used by us, on Solemn festivals, and on occasions of Reception and Profession ceremonies: penal restraints having been so great, as to render it hazardous for Religious to wear a peculiar dress. Not even now, when we do put on what is distinctive, is the rage of bigotry a bit calmed down, or inclined to bend beneath the charitable, gentle spirit of toleration and peace. Still the existence of religious establishments in Ireland, if not permitted by our hated Government, is, at least, connived at. A circumstance, which occurred a short time ago, when related, will serve to demonstrate what has been stated – nor will the perusal of it, be uninteresting to such, as may be led, to glance over these Annals – it will show them how perilous was the attempt, and how great the

Footnote: *It was to honour the festival of “All Saints”, that the Sisters of this Community, and those in the North Convent, put on the Habit; resolved upon trying the experiment of making it in future their daily dress, as it ought to be . . . A. M. D. G.

risqué incurred by our Venerable Mother and her early associates, to establish in this City, an “Institution for the gratuitous instruction of the poor,” on a basis, so firm and enduring, as to secure it from falling, when it pleased Almighty God, to translate to a happier home, its sustaining principle, the holy, the wise, the good Mother, Nano Nagle – and, this grand object, could only be effected, by means of a religious Community well established – The circumstance is as follows...

“It happened, upon one of those gladsome days on which the Habit was usually worn, that an unsuspecting Religious, appeared in the parlour, clad in this garment, dearest to her heart, the one of her selection! Apparently, no notice had been taken by her visitor, of the strange alteration of her costume – The interview past, the friends parted, and soon was to be discovered, the feelings of prejudice which lurked within the bosom of him, who was a friend, in exterior shew; but a deadly enemy within. He lost no time in representing to the penal public authorities, the crime he had discovered – no less a one, than that of a poor unknown Religious having put on, the coarse dress of her Order. “To punish the delinquent”, all necessary and unnecessary preparations were made to enforce the law, which, in any case would have told against her. But, a watchful Providence, ever kind, averted the stroke, which seemed to threaten the degradation of the Nuns, and the suppression of their embryo Order. O, these were days of anticipated revengeful triumphs and the numerous enemies of God, and of his holy Faith – how exultingly did they look forward to the speedy and total annihilation of a few unpretending, little known, seldom heard of, Religious; whilst, the latter, in their helplessness, were withering away in anguish, and in terror; expecting soon to see, bursting around them, the darksome clouds, the storm of persecution, which the rage of bigots and of tyrants, had so long been preparing for them.

“Informations were lodged: and the day of the trial having arrived, the worthy, zealous informant, assisted by his equally heartless, zealous friends, appeared in all the might of their self confidence, and religious frenzy, to draw down upon the Nuns (no matter how unjust the cause) the utmost rigour of the penal code – and, of course (and not the least important consideration to be looked to) they must have hoped to obtain honours for themselves, by securing the applause and commendation of the great ones of their party – The Religious had neither hope, nor resource, nor defence, but in prayer – all powerful prayer. “And who is there that ever trusted in the Lord, and was confounded.” They hoped, not in vain – their sighs and their supplications were listened to. He, whom no power can resist, came to their assistance; and very curiously, and unexpectedly, a termination was put to the affair, which left them at liberty, to use their wardrobe with more freedom and more pleasure: whilst, it spared the very attentive citizens, the unnecessary trouble of interfering in the toilet of the Nuns. The presiding magistrate on this occasion was, if not a religious, at least a peaceful and sensible man: Mr. Carleton, of Woodside, not far from Cork. He patiently listened to the long, and it may truthfully be added, silly discussion, on the modest (but to the Protestants, offensive) dress of the Nuns. He heard them reviled and fears expressed, that their existence in Cork was mischievous, and

would be in time, destructive, probably both to church and state. What absurdity! ! ! No such apprehension could in reality be entertained - and were only set forth as a pretext, to procure the condemnation of so Catholic an establishment in Cork – When all was said, maliciously, which could be said, all waited in silence, to hear the expected judgement passed – but, what must have been the disappointment and indignation, both of the accusers and the expectants, when Mr. Carleton quietly said: “I have listened attentively, Gentlemen, to all which has been said in condemnation of the Nuns and their uniform – I have heard all the arguments adduced, for drawing upon them the severity of the law – and still, I must confess, it seems to me unreasonable for us to meddle, in so unimportant a matter, as is that, of the ugly costume in which these ladies choose to dress – and what evil can possibly ever be the result, of a set of helpless, friendless women assembling together, to say their beads, and drink their cup of tea.” Thus the matter ended – and the Nuns were afterwards allowed to dress in whatever way pleased them most - “Thou hast not forsaken us, O God! And we will never forsake Thee – we will always love Thee. My God, both in this life, and in the next.”

A word now, about our newly adopted observance of “Enclosure” - It is a most desirable change made in our old regime – it is one which does not please all; but, what are the judgements of men, when compared to a view taken of our acts, by an all-seeing, all wise, all merciful God? His glance alone, who judgeth according to the truth; because, He alone, knoweth and judgeth, according to His own perfect inspiration of grace in our souls. “In all thy ways think on Him, and He will direct thy steps”. (Prov.iii.5) “ I set the Lord always in my sight, for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved.” (Ps.xv.8)

We form, at present, but merely a religious society, making annual vows – one, which may, in time, under existing circumstances, fall to the ground – In it there is so little security for those who join, or who would join us, that it has long been considered absolutely necessary, to establish it on a more steady foundation, and this, can alone be done, by forming it into a regular Confirmed Order, and, consequently, by our strict observance of enclosure. Until now, we have been following exactly the example of our holy Foundress, by a close attendance on the exterior duties of visiting the sick, and which she practised for the purpose of supplying the moral and religious wants of the people – now, that an appeal is about to be made to the Court of Rome, to obtain, that our “Congregation of Charitable Instruction” should be raised to the dignity of a “Religious Order”; as an essential preliminary, we have been advised by some learned and pious ecclesiastical friends, to confine ourselves to the education of the poor, within our own enclosure. Among these advisers, may be named, the Very Rev. Laurence Callanan, Provincial of the Franciscan Order in Ireland, and Superior of his Convent in Cork; likewise, our Superior and Confessor – a man filled with the spirit of God, and labouring only to promote His greater glory; also, the wise and Saintly Father Michael Joseph Collins; another ornament to the Sons of Saint Francis; a member, and one of the heads, of the Franciscan Community in this

City: and the respected brother of our Sisters, Angela and Monica Collins. Under such spiritual authorities, what fears can we have, that in making the material change, which we have done, we are not accomplishing the most holy and adorable Will of God?

It was not, until after the expiration of nine years (that is since the approval of our Holy Rules in 1791) spent in consideration and prayers, that we came to the determination to act as we have done – we trusted, not to ourselves for a decision, which all important as it was, we knew, was to work upon the minds and feelings, and perfection of others, when we, weak instruments of God in working out His designs of mercy on those who follow us, are laid low in our last, earthly, cold, abode, but we trusted to Him, in whom is all our hope, that He would guide and direct us, to accomplish His holy Will, which alone is ours: and, to obtain this favour, fervent and continuous has been our prayer: frequent and rigid have been our fasting and penance – and the result of all has been, a fixed determination, to adhere to the advices given to us; and to be guided by the light we have received: and for the greater glory of God in the more sure, and prompt, attainment of our perfection, to observe, henceforth, “enclosure.” – Much to our pain of mind, excitement and trouble, we have found much opposition to our views and wishes, from our truly revered friend and Prelate, Right Rev. Doctor Moylan. After having for some time approved of our intentions, and thus encouraged us to hope for the future success of our projected enterprise, we found his sentiments to change: not only was there in him, this unexpected revolution of the mind, but also, an evident, even practical intention, of using the full extent of his authority, to force us to a continuance of our extern duties; and to oblige us to yield our Will (which, we hope, is the Will of God) to his wishes. To effect this, he had recourse to severe means. Having given us some days to consider well, the momentous move we were about to make, and having threatened us with his displeasure did we depart from his views, he assembled our well tried Community, six in number:– the Superioress, Mother M. Angela Collins; Assistant M. Monica Collins; Sister M. Clare Callaghan; Sister Francis Tobin; Sister M. John Donegan – and he asked them in a peremptory manner, had they resolved upon relinquishing the project of turning their “Congregation” into a “Religious Order” – in other words, “would they continue to exercise themselves in external functions, and give up the idea of observing enclosure”. Mother Angela Collins answered that “they had maturely weighed the proposal made them – that they had consulted God by constant prayer; that they had only one desire, and that was, to accomplish the Holy Will of God, which they hoped would be that also of his Lordship – and that still, they felt, each day, strengthened in the feeling, that God required of them, for their own benefit and that of others, to “observe enclosure.” – He became much displeased; poured forth on them many reproaches; and after uttering, in as charitable a manner as could be done, the severe threatening of his wrath as Superior (the Nuns on their knees all the while) he forbade them to approach the Holy Communion, until they yielded to his authority and to his wishes. The Sisters bowed submission under this grievance – they neither complained, nor faulted the dreadful

restriction laid upon them. They wept in secret, and told the tale of their misery to God, to Him, who was their only solace, and their only resource – how could they exist, if thus separated from their Treasure? Father Jeremiah Collins, our Confessor, being moved one day, by the tears of Mother Angela, when telling him her grief, said to her: “Grieve not, dear Mother, but rejoice, that you have all been found worthy to suffer for your divine Master – He sees the affliction you are in; and, knowing that you are prohibited an approach to Him, in the Sacrament of His love: doubt not, but, be assured that he will come to you – He will indemnify you for all that you are losing, for His sake, and to procure Him future glory.” These words, coming from him, (their guide) filled all their hearts with consolation and joy, and stimulated them to renewed patience and prayer.

Three weeks having elapsed (a long spiritual fast was this time to us), the Bishop again assembled the Sisters, and enquired if there had been any change wrought in their feelings or sentiments, since the last interview he had with them. – Being answered in the “negative”, without relenting his former severity, and after some jealous reproaches, he withdrew the rigorous command by which he had bound them.* He said he would no longer oppose them; but would, as it seemed to them they were doing God’s Will in their regard, use his influence to promote their wishes by writing to the Court of Rome. This he has done; and each day renews to us the hope that we, and those who shall follow us, will yet be securely united, as Sisters of the “Presentation Order.”

The members of the Convents of Killarney, George’s Hill, North Gate, Waterford and Kilkenny, the only ones of our Institute now in existence, have strenuously co-operated in the movement we proposed, and which they, with us, have made.

Footnote:-

*This unexpected clemency on the Bishop’s part, was obtained us by the interference and mild expostulation of our best friend and Reverend Father, “Doctor Jeremiah Collins”.

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