

AMDG: CLONASLEE: FEBRUARY 1873

Saturday, 8th February, Fr Fortescue and I took the 1 p.m. train from Dublin to Tullamore. There we hired a car to Clonaslee. We called to see the good Fr Marcus Dowling PP, Killeigh, and afterwards on our way his curate Fr Edward Brennan. Fr Philip O'Connell from Limerick, arrived at Clonaslee simultaneously with ourselves and we were joined by Fr Thomas McEnroe from near Portarlinton Sunday evening.

We found the PP of Clonaslee everything we could wish for. His name Fr Michael Kenny. He has a curate, Fr James Connelly. He and Fr Brennan, CC, Killeigh, and Fr Thomas Moloney CC Rosenallis all three worked nobly together for the entire first week in the confessional.

The people of the parish, as a class, are exceedingly innocent and full of faith, piety and simplicity. I can compare them only to good Fr McFadden's flock in Co. Donegal.

16th February. The weather since the 8th February, the day we came into the parish, has been though cold, fine and dry, a great blessing for the people after the long continued heavy rains and storms.

We are billeted through the little town, each in a separate house. I am comfortable and respectably lodged with a family named Troy. Husband and wife delicate but able to work. Their principal means of support is an excellent quarry about a mile and a half from the town off the road leading to what is called "The Gap", a cleft in the mountain four miles off. The Troys have a small shop besides. The stone of his quarry resembles Portland stone in appearance, is easily wrought, and hardens on exposure to the atmosphere. The PP has a beautiful Memorial Cross of the Mission made by Troy of this material. On the front of the Cross is the inscription, "Mission of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, February 1873". On the right "Most Rev James Walsh, Bishop" and on the left, "Rev Michael Kenny, PP".

The PP is on very friendly terms with General Dunne (of the Militia), a liberal Protestant. He is ready to oblige and assist Fr Kenny on all occasions. During "the fuel famine" he has allowed him to cut down ash in his woods and plantation "ad libitem" to supply himself and his parishioners, a great boon certainly for which the people feel most grateful both to the PP and the General.

The second Monday we accepted the invitation of good Fr Marcus Dowling to dine with him in Killeigh. The following Monday we drove to see Fr Murphy, the PP of Mount Mellick. He was in bed laid up with a very bad cold - he is excessively delicate, but has a great reputation for learning. We lunched at his house, (Fr Kenny, our own PP doing the honours) and we dined at home at 6 o'clock.

28th February. We have been highly favoured by the weather all through and the poor people gave all the credit for the happy change in the atmosphere to "the Holy Fathers".

The charges for admission are moderate - on Sundays 6d for the gallery, 3d for the reserved seats, and 1d for the body of the chapel. On weekdays admission is free except to the evening devotions, when the charges are 1d, 2d, and 3d.

The PP has not had many of the clergy to assist us in hearing confessions but the few who came exceptionally well, principally Fr Edward Brennan, Killeigh, and Fr Moloney, CC of Rosenallis, where my old friend Fr Mooney, formerly CC in Clara is PP - now over 100 years of age. As the people came in gallantly from the start I believe that all who sought confession will have had it.

The PP had kept a good plain substantial table all along, both eatables and drinkables, and plenty of everything and all of a wholesome quality. His potatoes, (a rarity this year) are magnificent both in size and quality. He has his parochial house and garden in first rate order, everything neat and tidy.

The only wet day we had was last Saturday, and the following day was splendidly fine for the completion of our work.

We all left on Monday, Fr Fortescue to make his retreat in Tullabeg, Fr Thomas McEnroe to Galway, Fr O'Connell to Limerick, and Fr Haly to Lagore to attend poor Mr Michael Thunder supposed to be dying. The PP handed us £10 each and paid for our car, hired by him to the train at Tullamore.