

Father O'Shea's Diocesan Reflections

Spotlight Priest

Patrick Doyle:

Pat was born near St. Mark's Church at Burton in 1839, his parents having come to this Island from Wexford, Ireland. After local school Pat studied at St. Dunstan's College for six years, being one of the first students at that new college on the outskirts of Charlottetown. His theological studies were taken at the Seminary of Quebec leading to his ordination to the priesthood there in 1864. At that point he had also merited a doctorate in theology.

Back home, Father Doyle spent his first two years on the staff of St. Dunstan's College. He then served as pastor at Kelly's Cross - Emyvale until 1874, after which he became parish priest at Summerside, where he lived, along with Kinkora and Seven Mile Bay in which pastoral fields he remained for 16 years. In 1890 he was posted to Vernon River where he remained until his death in the rectory there on September 12, 1907.

That day of Father Doyle's death was as well the very day of the official opening of Charlottetown's immense and beautiful stone St. Dunstan's Cathedral, ten years under construction, in the presence of a great assembly of laity and clergy, including five bishops.

Father Doyle's funeral took place in Vernon River on September 14 with the newspaper saying that 2000 people were in attendance, including 250 who came by special train from Prince County. Archbishop McCarthy of Halifax was celebrant of the Requiem Mass, Bishop Ronald MacDonald, retired from Newfoundland, was preacher and our Bishop Charles MacDonald was present in the sanctuary along with a vast array of priests.

Doctor Doyle was a priest of sound common sense and immense good humor. His witty stories were well known around the Island and indeed as the newspaper that day said "We shall not look upon his like again."

Addendum

In 1907, the year of Dr. Doyle's death, the Diocese of Charlottetown had 48 priests, as follows: pastors 31, curates 3, St. Dunstan's College 5, Magdalen Islands 3, retired/sickly 6. That year as well there were six seminarians, two in Rome and four in Quebec.

Also in 1907 there were 43 Island-born priests serving elsewhere, including two Jesuits and three Redemptorists. The other 38 were incardinated in the following dioceses: Baltimore, Burlington, Chatham NB, Chicago, Fargo, Grand Rapids, Halifax, Hartford, Lincoln, Ottawa, Portland OR, San Francisco, Sault Ste. Marie, Seattle, St. Boniface, St. George's NF, St. Paul and Winona, both in Minnesota.

The bells of St. Dunstan's

On Sunday afternoon, March 18, 1928, the cathedral was filled to capacity for Bishop Louis O'Leary's blessing of 18 bells which were lined up across the front of the sanctuary for all to see. These bells, exactly familiar in number and tone to those in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, were manufactured by Paccard's Foundry in France. Weighing from 75 to 2100 pounds, they had a total weight of 9,765 pounds without the fixtures. The largest one was the only one that would swing and it was used for the thrice-daily Angelus, funerals and other liturgical celebrations. The bells were all donated, most by people from the cathedral parish, and the rector, Father Maurice McDonald, called them one of the finest sets of bells in North America.

Next day three men from Quebec began installing the bells, all but one to be operated electronically, sounded by a keyboard. Alas, these bells were not a ringing success. Exposure to the elements, difficulty in finding people to adequately play the keyboard and excessive weight in the north tower all did their part in silencing this impressive carillon after only a short time of usage, maybe 25 years?? But cheer up. Word is now out that these bells of St. Dunstan's will be sounding again. Keep listening.

- Returning from town with his snappy horse and wagon, Father Doyle gave a ride to a young man and they had an uplifting conversation. Turning into his Vernon River gate, the priest asked the passenger his name. The answer was Pat Murphy. Doyle was a bit puzzled and added that he didn't remember seeing the young man at Mass. He answered that no he was a Protestant Murphy. To that Father Doyle advised him: "When you come before St. Peter, just give him your name and say no more."
- Clergy quiz: The name of a Catholic PEI community (in the land of the rising sun) which combines a bit of water with a whole lot of holy oils.

Scripture passage for Lent:

***"I am standing at the door knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door,
I will come in to you and eat with you and you with me."***