

And Still another Church

On April 13th, 1858, Dr. O'Connell laid the first stone. On May 2nd following, he held a Public meeting in the School room, Ringsend, in which he unfolded his project of erecting a church to be dedicated to the Apostle of Ireland, and which would place the consolations of religion within the reach of the crowded population of the locality. A subscription list was opened, and met with such ready response that the new church, costing £800, was opened on July 14th, 1859, by His Grace, Archbishop Cullen, and the sermon being preached by Very Rev. Dr. Anderson, MA.

Writing in the first quarter of this century, Bishop Donnelly remarked that Ringsend "parochially" had yet to make history, as it had only just achieved parochial autonomy. Ringsend and Irishtown were usually spoken of in company, and their interpenetration made it difficult to know where one began and the other ended; but formerly they were quite distinct, and of the two, Irishtown was the more ancient.

In the Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin, edited by Gilbert, there are given particulars of the Corporation of Dublin ordering all manner of men and women of Irish blood, whether nuns, cleric, journeymen apprentices servants, beggars etc., to quit the city within four weeks, and anyone found within the city gates would forfeit goods, chattels, etc., be cast into prison and suffer other penalties. This was 1454.

It does not require very lively imagination, to follow the track of the exodus, and fleeing with the poorer folk to pass out in a southerly direction, when coming in the welcome view of the sea, they rested a while on the beach, and finding themselves unmolested elected to remain there, near enough to the city to be useful as hewers of wool and drawers of water, and remote enough not to offend the nostrils of the predominant partner: This settlement became known as Irishtown .

Ringsend is of much more recent origin and did not come into prominence until the commencement of the 17th century. Be that as it may. Ringsend, which in 1660 had a population of 59 persons of English and 21 Irish and presumably Catholic descent,

is shown in 1901 when combined with Sandymount as having 8,922 Catholics, against 3,851 of all other denominations.

As the twentieth century advanced the Church built by Dr. O'Connell became totally inadequate to meet the needs of the parish. It devolved upon the late Canon Mooney to provide a new and suitable Church. The present handsome and stately edifice is the result of his efforts and the generosity of a fervent Catholic Laity. His Grace, the late Archbishop Walsh, was fully alive to the difficulties which confronted Canon Mooney and his opinion is worth reproducing.

“I have had a very considerable experience in the matter of Church building in and around the city, and throughout all parts of the Diocese. It is not my practice to approve, of works of the kind being undertaken when they are not really necessary. But in all my experience, extensive as it has been, I have met with no case in which the need for the building of a church was more painfully obvious than it is in Ringsend. Nor have I met with any case in which the local resources fell more painfully short of what is needed for the building of a Church even, of the simplest and most unpretending character.

You need all the help that can come to you from your friends outside the Parish as well as from your own good people. The £1,000 which I promised to the people of Ringsend as my contribution towards the building of their church will be forthcoming whenever you are in a position to inform me that you have a sufficient sum in hand to justify us in starting the work of building. The sooner you are able to give me the good news the better I shall be pleased.

In this connection it is apropos to remark that many people who remember the “Help, help, help” appeals of Canon Mooney were surprised when by his will he left a considerable sum of money to Maynooth College. The explanation is simple and is vouched by unimpeachable sources. It appears that a brother of Canon Mooney's was at one time in low water and the then President of Maynooth, by his financial and other assistance put him on his feet.

From that on, he began to prosper, and when he died he left a considerable sum of money to Canon Mooney in trust for Maynooth College. Whether Canon Mooney was entitled to use the interest of the money or not, he did not do so, and the original sum left by the Canon's brother had attained considerable proportions at the latter's death.