



# **GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE**

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GLENSTAL ABBEY MURROE, CO. LIMERICK

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# *Garden Cemetery*

The Garden Cemetery provides for the interment of cremated remains only. Each space can accommodate one or two urns. The internal plot dimensions for both the single and double plots are 7½ inches in diameter. Each space is marked with a plaque of local grey granite for engraving individuals' names and dates.

Selecting a cemetery and purchasing your memorial space is an important decision. Arranging the details in advance gives you peace of mind and shows thoughtfulness and caring concern for your family. With pre-planning the final arrangements become less of a burden.

*Please contact the Bursar's Office at*

**061 621045**

*or email us at*

[gardencemetery@glenstal.com](mailto:gardencemetery@glenstal.com)

*with questions or to arrange a personal tour.*



# *Return of the Woodpecker*

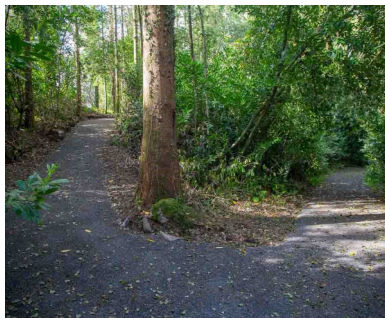
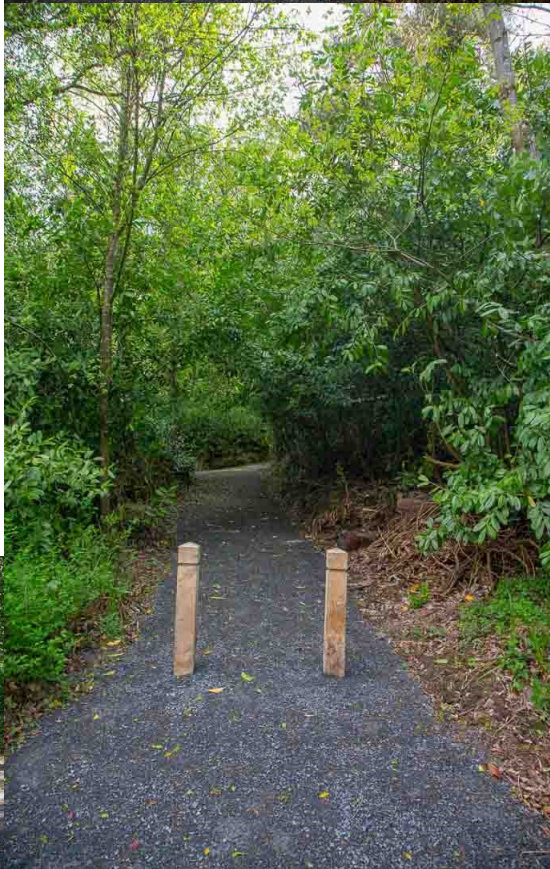
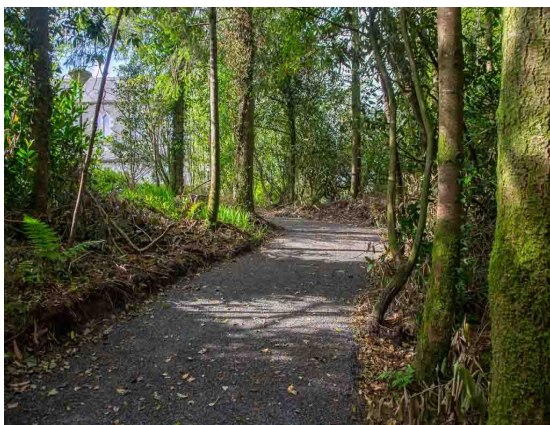
In recent years the woodpecker has returned to this part of Ireland. There have been sightings of this colourful little bird in the Murroe area. Even if you haven't been fortunate enough to see one, you have probably heard them, as they certainly know how to make noise!



# *New Woodland Path*

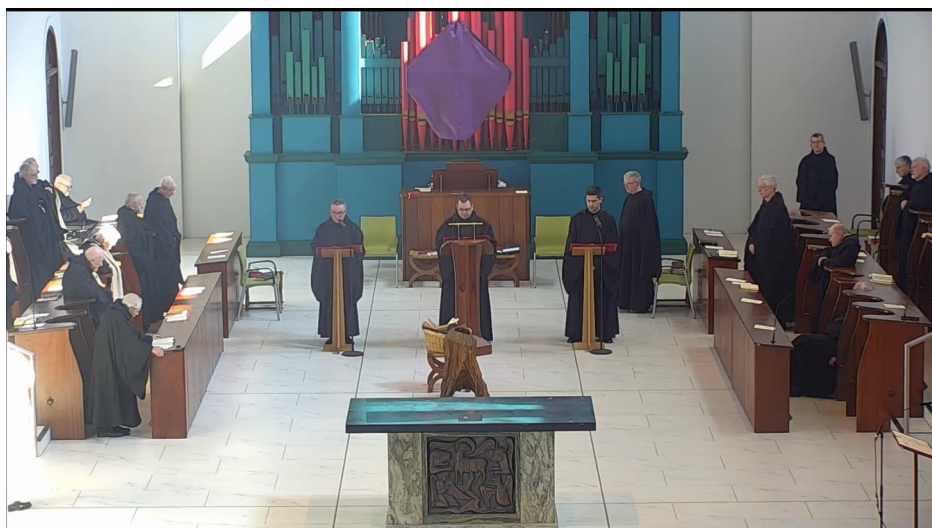
A woodland path has been created which links the new carpark outside the public entrance to the Abbey Church to the Monastery and Garden Cemeteries, which replaces the former path by the school kitchens and cinema gym. The woodland path has a gentler incline, especially for the return journey to the carpark, while also providing a more reflective means of access to the cemeteries. The woods and laurels provide a natural canopy, sheltering walkers from the excesses of sun or rain. Heartfelt thanks to the Class of 1978 who sponsored this path.

*Fr Luke OSB*



# *Holy Week 2021*

The monastic community celebrated Holy Week once again this year under lockdown. We were determined to celebrate this central mystery of our Christian faith with all its customary beauty and dignity. It was a special joy for all of us that so many of you were able to join with us from all over the world to celebrate these mysteries. We want to share these few images of these days to give you a flavour of the celebration.





## *Easter Vigil*





***This is our premium product. The chocolates in the de-luxe gold foil rigid box contain fondants flavoured with some of the oldest and finest liqueurs from the monasteries of Europe: Chartreuse, Benédictine, Lérins, Nocino de Valserena, and in addition there are four alcohol-free dessert chocolates. 16 hand crafted pieces totalling 260g. It can be purchased from our on-line shop.***

***Enquiries welcome at [chocolates@glenstal.com](mailto:chocolates@glenstal.com)***





# ONLINE SHOPPING

**Simply Glenstal Range**

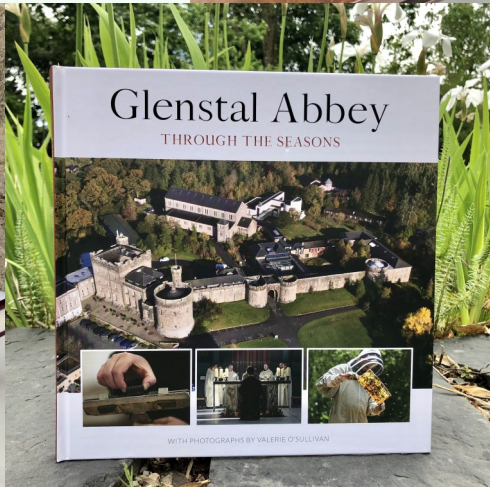
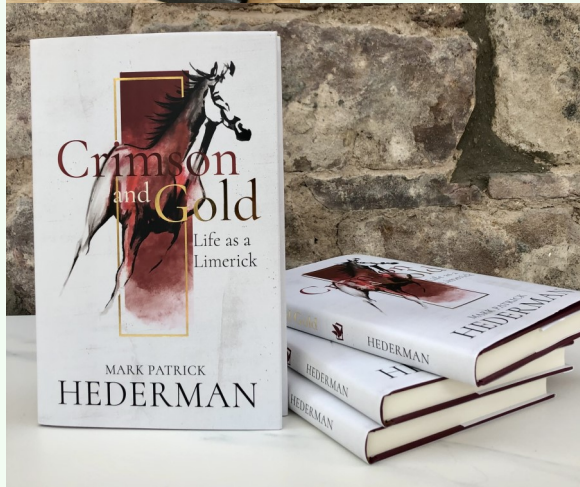
**Glenstal Abbey Chocolates**

**Books by Glenstal Authors**

**Glenstal Missal**

**Glenstal through the Seasons**

**Glenstal Altar Cross**



The Glenstal Abbey shop is now online, offering a range of monastic products and gifts. [www.glenstal.org](http://www.glenstal.org)

# *Ordination of Br Jarek as Deacon*

On April 10th, the Saturday after Easter, Br Jarek was ordained deacon in the Abbey Church here in Glenstal. We were still in a period of lockdown and so the church was empty except for the community of monks. Br Jarek's family joined in the celebration on the webcam from

Poland. The Archbishop, who travelled from Thurles for the ordination, remarked that this was his first official in-person engagement in almost a year in our diocese. This was a sober reminder of the impact COVID has had on our daily lives. This liturgy was a joyful expression of our hope for a better future. We wish Br Jarek well in his ministry as a deacon.





# Centenary of an Assassination

by Patrick J. Ryan, S.J.



Like me, my father was named Patrick Joseph Ryan. He died at the age of forty-five when I was four and my sister was ten. I always envied her the greater familiarity she had with him. For me he was a charcoal sketch made after his death that hung on a wall in our living room; a copy of it now hangs in my office. Prayer to Jesus as a Brother was always easier for me as a young Jesuit than prayer to God as a Father, so little imagination did I have for such a figure. With the coming of age,

however, I have come to know something like fatherhood from the decades I spent as a priest and teacher in Africa, especially when younger African friends died. I can never forget the first time I read the concluding words of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead." I read them now differently than I did in my twenties. I am no longer young Icarus, who flew too near the sun, but Daedalus, the father who knew the tragedy of loss.

Lately I have engaged in some family history, and especially the history of my father before he came from Ireland to New York at the age of thirty. The Roman poet Horace describes in *Ars Poetica* how the great authors of epic poetry, such as Homer, did not begin their tales of gods and heroes "from the egg" (*ab ovo*), starting with first things first. Instead, they plunged their listeners and readers "into the middle of things" (*in medias res*), eventually explaining what had come before by means of flashback or other literary devices. Let me do the same with the story of my father.

There was an assassination in Ireland a hundred years ago, on May 14, 1921. It took place at a bend in a country road in County Tipperary called Coolboreen, not far from the town of Newport. The intended victim was a twenty-six-year-old, English-born district inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary named Harry Biggs. The principal protagonist in this event, at least for me, was my father—a twenty-two-year-old militant active in the Irish struggle for independence from the United Kingdom. He was better known at the time as Paddy Ryan “Lacken” (“Lacken”—from the Irish *leaca*, “flagstones”—is a sobriquet meant to distinguish our Ryan family from thousands of others with that surname in southwestern Ireland). He had what he believed good reason to seek the elimination of Biggs.

Biggs fought as a British soldier in World War I, during which he had been censured by military authorities for erratic behavior, and came to Ireland in 1920. He promptly established a particularly hateful reputation for himself in the Newport area, humiliating local Irish people by, among other things, forcing them at gunpoint after Mass on a Sunday to sing “God Save the King.” In the winter of 1921, Biggs also burned down my family’s home in two parts—the new house built a few years earlier, and then the old house, once a hunting lodge—in retaliation for the guerrilla activities of my father and his brother, Martin. My two aunts, Julia (sixteen at the time) and Nonie (thirteen), were twice driven out of their beds, along with their parents, and witnessed the conflagrations from a farm shed. Biggs also took my grandfather, then fifty-eight, hostage against my father, imprisoning him in the police barracks at Newport. Sometimes, Biggs forced my grandfather to ride around tied-up in the front seat of police vehicles travelling through the countryside, where the ditches that hemmed in narrow rural roads made them suitable sites for ambushes.

On that May afternoon in 1921, an IRA unit hiding near Newport, including my father, noted that Biggs and some British loyalist

companions had driven by in an open car, though without my grandfather as their hostage. When the group was returning in the gathering dusk of the same day, the IRA ambushed them. Two of the loyalist riders in that car were wounded. Biggs abandoned the car, but my father caught up with him. He shot Biggs dead at pointblank range.

At first, the IRA men thought they had also killed another man. But on closer inspection, they realized it was a young woman whom they had fatally shot: Winifred Barrington, twenty-three, the only daughter of Sir Charles Barrington and his wife, Lady Mary Rose, members of the local British settler gentry. Wearing a riding habit and outfitted in Biggs's trench coat and military cap, Miss Barrington was easily mistaken for a man. The IRA men regretted that Miss Barrington had been shot, and said as much to another young woman in the travelling party, who roundly abused them. My father responded that Miss Barrington had been travelling in bad company. That is the polite translation of what he actually said. Representatives of the IRA subsequently sent their condolences to Miss Barrington's parents—condolences graciously accepted.

Some years later, the nineteenth-century pseudo-Norman castle country residence of the Barringtons in Murroe, County Limerick—a few miles from Newport—was sold to a prosperous Catholic priest. He gave the castle to the Belgian Benedictine abbey of Maredsous. The gift was made in the hope that the Belgian Benedictines would establish Glenstal Abbey and a boarding secondary school there. In 1969, a year after my ordination, I celebrated a sort of “first Mass” at Glenstal for my three Irish aunts and my twenty-one Irish first cousins. While making arrangements for that Mass, I fell into conversation with a loquacious Benedictine brother who served as porter at Glenstal. He told me, not knowing who I was, that the aristocratic Barringtons lost their only daughter in 1921 when “some blackguard shot her dead.” I knew my father had shot Biggs, and only learned later that someone else in his

group had shot Miss Barrington. When I preached about forgiveness and reconciliation at the monks' conventual Mass the following Sunday, I could see the light of new knowledge gradually dawning on that brother's face.

My father was born into a nationalist family. His father was committed to Charles Stewart Parnell's Irish Parliamentary Party, advocates for Irish home rule within the United Kingdom. My father had learned the Irish language from a local private tutor and as a teenager followed the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin with great interest, hanging the Irish tricolour from a tree on the roadside of the family home until the local police ordered its removal. Moving beyond the long-frustrated Irish Parliamentary Party's quest for Irish autonomy, Irish advocates of complete independence from the United Kingdom had proclaimed the Irish Republic at the General Post Office in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916. Most of the leaders faced the firing squad within a month. The suddenness and brutality of the British response galvanized more sentiment for Irish independence than had previously existed. Slowly working through constitutional means, a party pledged to the full independence of the Irish Republic—Sinn Féin—won a majority of the Irish seats in the British parliament, to the disadvantage of the Irish Parliamentary Party, in a general election held throughout the United Kingdom in December 1918. Following the example of the Hungarian delegates who had boycotted the imperial parliament in Vienna in 1867, these delegates convoked the first Dáil Éireann (Assembly of Ireland) in Dublin on January 21, 1919. The reputed first military skirmish of the war of independence can be dated to the same day, when a small group of Irish Republicans belonging to the Third Tipperary Brigade of the Irish Volunteers, soon to be the IRA, attacked and killed two policemen who had been riding shotgun on a cart filled with gelignite at Soloheadbeg in County Tipperary.

My father's paternal uncle was Canon Michael Kennedy Ryan, the

administrator of the cathedral in Thurles of the Catholic Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly. The canon had not approved of the war of independence and the guerrilla violence it entailed. He had said so more than once from the cathedral pulpit, especially when a Catholic RIC officer was shot dead in Thurles. Needless to say, my father was not terribly close to his clerical Uncle Michael, especially during those years of revolution. When my father's mother invited Canon Michael to the family home to give some solemn advice to her two revolutionary sons, they escaped out the back door as he entered the front.

My father and many of his fellow IRA comrades were unhappy with the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiated in London and signed on December 6, 1921. The Irish Free State was officially created a year later. My father was one of those who turned against the Irish signatories of that treaty; civil war ensued even before the Free State was formally inaugurated. My father was not involved in the shooting of Michael Collins, head of the provisional Irish government and commander-in-chief of its army, in August 1922. But one of the IRA men suspected of carrying out that deed, Denis "Sonny" O'Neill, seems to have taken refuge in our family home. He was later the godfather of one of my first cousins.

In October of that year, the Catholic bishops of Ireland, led by Cardinal Michael Logue, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, issued a pastoral letter condemning those who refused to accept the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the resultant Free State. They maintained that the IRA's struggle for a unified Irish Republic was an unjust war. "No one," they wrote, "is justified in rebelling against the legitimate Government, whatever it is, set up by the nation and acting within its rights." The letter continues: "All those who, in contravention of this teaching, participate in such crimes are guilty of the gravest sins, and may not be absolved in Confession, nor admitted to Holy Communion, if they purpose to persevere in such evil courses." As a result, my father found himself cut off from the sacraments. (The excommunication held force

only in Ireland, but my father did not return to the sacraments until 1932, more than three years after his arrival in New York. At the urging of my mother, Nancy Kennedy, who threatened to leave him after two months of civil marriage, he wrote back to Ireland to obtain his baptismal certificate so that he could marry my mother sacramentally in the rectory parlour of Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Queens on December 31, 1932. I found this out only when, under the 1917 Code of Canon Law, I was required to produce the Catholic marriage record of my parents to prove my legitimacy for entry into the Society of Jesus in 1957. Happily, the 1983 Code of Canon Law did away with the categories of legitimate and illegitimate birth.)

Then, during the 1922-23 civil war, my father—while recuperating from illness—was captured with a revolver, a capital offence. Destined for jail and execution in nearby Limerick, he was mistakenly sent to a much larger internment camp, Harepark in the Curragh of County Kildare. Peadar O'Donnell, a radical socialist within the IRA, also detained there, narrates in his civil war recollections (*The Gates Flew Open*, 1932, reprinted 2012) how my father managed to escape his fate in 1923.

*Paddy Ryan (Lacken) had been transferred here by accident from Limerick. The mistake was discovered in Limerick when the sentence of execution against him came to be carried out. An order was sent to Harepark to hand him over to an escort, but he could not be located, for he had been by now thoroughly disguised and three thousand men there refused to answer names or receive letters or do anything that might assist in the search. Ryan was thus on the run in jail and kept on the run until danger of execution was past.*

My father shaved off his hair and grew a moustache, using actor's makeup to disguise himself. I am happy, needless to say, that he did escape.

While he was interned in Harepark, my father participated in a hunger strike that lasted thirty-nine days, living only on sugared water. Angry as he was with the bishops of Ireland and his clerical uncle, he had not lost his

faith. In the late 1950s, I came upon a letter he wrote from Harepark in 1923. It was addressed to a young girl, a first cousin. The heading of the letter gives his name in the Irish language and his prison number: “Padraig ORiain 2396, Hut 59.” He describes his condition and that of his fellow hunger-strikers very simply. “Of course you know how we are situated here (this being our 24th day on strike) so there is no need to explain. I need only remark that we are very happy & only await the approaching crisis when we shall be freed in this or a better world, so I only want you & all at home to pray for us.” At the conclusion of the brief letter, he asks the girl to send him a particular prayer book in the Irish language. He bids her and her family farewell, praying that “if it is God’s will, I may see you all in the near future.”

Following the end of the civil war, my father was elected to Dáil Éireann for Tipperary on the Sinn Féin ticket. He had not campaigned for the seat and, along with his fellow Republicans, refused to take the oath of allegiance to the king and all that it symbolized in the Irish Free State. These uncompromising revolutionaries eventually broke as well with their erstwhile leader, Éamon de Valera, when he changed political course, founding the Fianna Fáil Party in 1926, and entering Dáil Éireann in opposition the following year. My father resigned the Sinn Féin seat he had never occupied. His brother, Martin, served as a Fianna Fáil member of Dáil Éireann from 1933 until his death in 1943, and his widow held the seat until 1961. After years of police surveillance, my father left Ireland forever in 1929, arriving in New York in time for Saint Patrick’s Day.

Following his marriage in New York and the birth of my sister, my father grew more philosophical about Ireland. His devout wife and a cousin of his, an Irish-American priest named Jim Coffey, had helped to reconcile him to the Church and get him back to the sacraments, although he never quite forsook a strong but healthy anti-clericalism, some of it centered on his clerical uncle, as well as the Irish bishops. I have found that having

had an anti-clerical father, whose opinions deeply affected those of his widow as well, prepared me for my own vocation as a Jesuit.

I do not think my father ever regretted the violence of May 14, 1921, so great was his hatred of District Inspector Biggs and the abominable treatment Biggs had meted out to his father. My father did, however, come to question some of the values of nationalism, especially as he witnessed the rise of Nazism in Germany. In his last years he took a turn to the left and said that he intended joining the Irish Labour Party, when and if he returned to Ireland—with my mother, my sister, and me—after World War II. That was not to happen. The harm done to his heart by two bouts of rheumatic fever—one as a teenager and a second as a young man on the run—took its toll. He died on January 21, 1944, aged forty-five, and is buried beneath a beautiful granite Celtic cross in Saint John's Cemetery in the New York Borough of Queens.

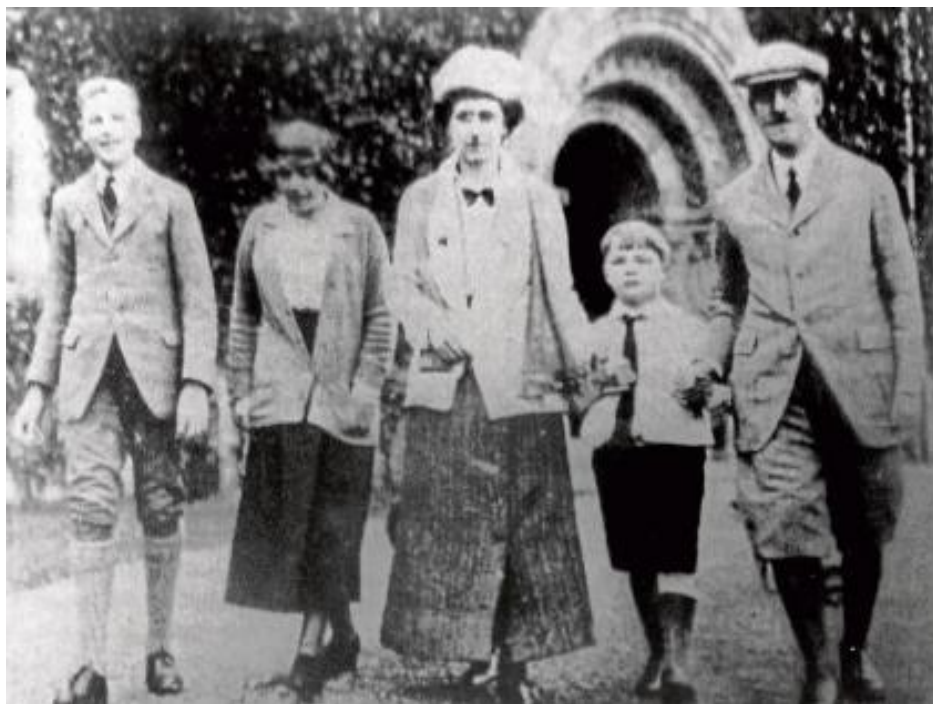
On this centenary of the assassination at Coolboreen, I think of all concerned—my father, District Inspector Biggs, Miss Barrington—with deep melancholy. Ireland today is not Ireland of 1921. A local historian based in Newport, also named Patrick Ryan (no relative), has researched how the assassination of Biggs affected his family back in England. Biggs's little sister, eight years old in 1921, died in a British nursing home just within the past decade. Even villains have innocent little sisters. Miss Barrington's gravesite in Murroe bears a simple, thought-provoking inscription: "Here lies all that could die of Winifred Frances Barrington."

When I spent some months in



England during my graduate studies—and later on, visiting friends made at that time—British people became more concretely human for me. I even introduced my mother to some of them, and these same Britons put her up as a houseguest. The 1998 Good Friday agreement between the British and Irish governments strikes me as one of the greatest achievements of the closing twentieth century. Had the peace-building sentiments expressed in the Good Friday agreement prevailed seven decades earlier, the history of modern Britain and Ireland might have followed a happier course. What might have been—alas—was not.

In my office today, I look at the portraits of my father and my mother and see both of them, long gone to God, with the eyes of greater understanding. Stand me now and ever in good stead.



# *From the Archives*

## **Father Vincent Ryan (1930-2005)**

Seamus Ryan was born in 1930. His siblings included a poet-painter, a film-actor of note, a nun who was an accomplished scholar of the Church Fathers, a potter and the owner of a literary pub in Dublin. He confessed once that he found this galaxy slightly alarming.



He attended Glenstal Abbey School, but the ill-health that dogged him for most of his life forced him to spend the final year at home. Despite his health problems, Seamus Ryan was active in the life of the school, even founding the School Jazz Society. At the time, jazz was considered by some as a rather louche musical idiom and it is a tribute to the spirit of the school that such interests were permitted. It is from this period that our first photograph is taken showing a drawing of Seamus Ryan aged 20, by the well-

known artist Seán O'Sullivan, RHA, a friend of his parents.

Seamus completed the first year of a B.A. course in philosophy in University College, Dublin (UCD) and then entered the novitiate at Glenstal in October, 1951, taking the name of Vincent. After his profession in 1952 he completed his course in UCD. He made solemn profession in January 1956. Following graduation at UCD, he studied theology at Glenstal. One of his teachers during this period was the late Austin Flannery O.P. Ordained priest in 1957, he was sent by the recently -elected first Abbot of Glenstal, Abbot Joseph Dowdall, to study liturgy at the Institut Supérieur de Liturgie in Paris and subsequently at the Liturgisches Institut in Trier in Germany.

Returned to Glenstal, Father Vincent devoted the rest of his life to the

study and promotion of his greatest love, the sacred liturgy. As a writer, he was one of the editors of and contributors to the second volume of *Studies in Pastoral Liturgy*, Dublin, 1963, which was essentially a collection of papers read at the then flourishing annual Glenstal Liturgical Congress. A gifted translator from the French, he was among the editors and translators of two works by the French liturgist, A.G.Martimort, *The Church at Prayer: Introduction to the Liturgy*, and *The Church at Prayer: The Eucharist*, both published by the Irish University Press, Shannon, in 1968 and 1973, respectively. From 1976 he published his own books, all with Veritas Publications, Dublin. *Lent and Holy Week* appeared in 1976 to be followed by *Eastertime and the Feasts of the Lord* in 1977. In 1980 he published *Welcome to Sunday, the Lord's Day: History, Spirituality, Celebration* and in 1983, *Advent to Epiphany*. Underlying these four books was a realisation that busy pastors and non-specialist readers needed books that, while not academic treatises, offered a theologically well-grounded and well-rounded practical explanation as well as a pastorally useful presentation of the sacred liturgy. Father Vincent had the pleasure of being asked to allow these books to be translated into several European languages. They remain one of his most lasting legacies. Father Vincent not only taught liturgy to novices and junior members at Glenstal and some neighbouring religious houses, but was a lecturer in the Irish Institute of Pastoral Liturgy, a member of the (professional) Society of Irish Liturgists and a long-term Member of the Irish Episcopal Commission for Liturgy. Colleagues from these years remember with appreciation his quiet, competent, concise and practical contributions to discussions. He contributed articles and book-reviews to such journals as *The Furrow* and *Doctrine and Life*. In the community, he was a much sought-after confessor.

In addition to the liturgy, Father Vincent loved books and for years was monastic librarian. He had the joy, some years before his death, of seeing a life-time's desire fulfilled with the building of the new library, which

opened in 2001. Our second photograph from the archives shows Father Vincent in the overflow storage area of the last-but-one refuge of the library in the former Arts School.



The final few months of Father Vincent's life revealed a blossoming of what some might have misinterpreted as rather low-key and pedestrian life in the monastery. His reaction to the diagnosis of the disease that took his life was a model of unsentimental, realistic and prayerful acceptance without a trace of self-pity. A simple notice on the community notice-board informed the community of the diagnosis, the prognosis, his decision not to accept anything except palliative care and a request for the prayers and patience of

the confreres. Many of the community have abiding memories of the expressions during the months remaining to him of an hitherto unsuspected wicked sense of humour and hilarious sense of the ridiculous.

Father Vincent died on 29th June, 2005.

*Fr Henry OSB*

## *Next Year in Jerusalem*

Last September Br Justin was supposed to begin his theological studies in Jerusalem. He had planned to stay with the Monastic Community in Abu Ghosh and study at the *Studium Theologicum Salesianum*. COVID-19 intervened and international travel was all but impossible for most the the academic year. Br Justin became an expert on attending his university on Zoom and now, finally, after nearly a year he has managed to get to the Holy Land.

Founded in 1976, the Benedictine monastery of Abu Ghosh aims to rediscover and listen to the Jewish roots of Christianity by its presence and witness in the State of Israel. Located in an Arab village outside Jerusalem, the monks and nuns speak and pray in French, Hebrew and Arabic, welcoming guests and providing a space for dialogue, encounter and fraternity among the pilgrims and peoples of the Holy Land.







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**For further information see:**

**<http://info.glenstal.com/live-in-2021>**

# *Kenya Project 2021*

Every summer, typically, Glenstal Abbey School waves goodbye for a few weeks to some of its Fifth Year students who have teamed up with a remote school in the Olkirimatian Arid Zone of southern Kenya. The project involves firstly raising some funds for the Kenyan school and then joining the Maasai youths for a few weeks. Because of Covid it has not been possible this year but fortunately resources were



found to at least supply one classroom for the Kenyan school - 'Olibortoto Secondary School'. It has three year groups for teenagers, namely Forms One to Three but it has only two classrooms! The young people alternate in their use of the rooms throughout the day with at all times one group finding itself pushed into a nearby field. This has to



change and we thank those who have supported this endeavour! Please see the photos below of our Kenyan friends as they stake out the space for the new classroom.

*Fr John OSB*

