

WHITEFRIARS
FAVERSHAM
KENT

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THE TRIALS OF A MISSIONARY

A small Mission is a baby. Eventually it grows up to be a parish. When the men who have served it are dead.

I have lived for thirty years in Faversham. When I came here it was a Mission. At that time our English and Welsh Missions were a department of the missionary activities of the Irish Province. I was sent to Faversham to be out of the way. The elders of the Irish Province thought that I was a little too brash; inventive or otherwise. I didn't conform to their ideas of a long tailed parish priest who nodded his head gravely, or wagged it in disagreement with any solution of the problem in hand. Faversham, thirty years ago, was the dead end of everything in the Irish Province, and in the Southwark Diocese as well. It was starvation creek.

I well remember the first day I walked up Stone Street. I saw twin towers opposite a chapel, and for a moment I was deluded, I said to myself, "This cannot be true!" They were the twin towers of the Anglican chapel in the Almshouses, and when I read the notice board outside I knew that I was off my beam. I asked a passer by, "Where is the Catholic church around here?" He said to me, "You will find it just up there behind a wall". I went in search of it: I found a little place like a minor garage, a garden and a big rambling house, and little else. There was no bath, and little furniture, but to make up for this there were four different ground entrances to the place. Downstairs you never knew when someone would rap upon the French windows

and demand to be let in. A previous occupant had left two club chairs, one of which I claimed as my own, and in that ground floor room we had a coal fire and there I warmed my feet.

My first Sunday in the Faversham Mission yielded 17/8d. in the collection—two Masses, catechism and evening devotions—at a time when the Provincial of the Irish Province couldn't afford to give me anything better than half crown Mass stipends. We had to pay rates, insurance, electricity and coal. I had a lay brother to look after me. He was a devoted character, but no cook. A few devoted women helped out; we had hot steak and kidney pie on Sundays which lasted until Wednesday and Brother Franco cooked enough vegetables to last until then. Frankly, I do not now know how I came through. I walked around the town and came to the conclusion that the place would never allow me to buy more than shoe leather. I determined I would stay in Faversham only six months, and no longer. I have now been here thirty-one years.

What is the explanation of that? I had made up my mind. I said "If these people have not the heart to support me, if they do not give me enough to feed me, I will become a beggar". That is how I first began to use the post.

That early church in which I began has now been pulled down by speculative builders and we are here at Whitefriars. To-day, Faversham is the financial fulcrum that supports the development and scholastic activities of the Anglo-Welsh Province. The

Anglo-Welsh houses are independent to-day, but before they became independent Faversham was one of the main financial pillars of the Irish Province. It just goes to show how nothing can come to something. It goes to show how a despised Mission can grow to be indispensable. I am old now, and I am ill, and my days are few, but I have started something that is of great importance to the Carmelite Order and I hope that someone will follow on to keep it up.

All this is a preamble. I have ceased for many years to be a parish priest, and in the last few years I am no longer a Superior. But I saw what is usually described as "the Christmas offering" and when I looked around the congregation on Christmas morning, having heard of the teeming congregation at Midnight Mass, I wondered at the result. It is my conclusion that the Church lives on smoke and grime and the clergy live on fresh air.

There is ONE sin in the calendar of the Church that the clergy are shy of mentioning, failure to subscribe to the support of our pastors. They face up to preaching the obligation of Sunday Mass; they make some defence of the Friday abstinence, but they shy away from talking too strongly on that precept of the Church that directs us to "subscribe to the support of our Pastors".

It is a GRAVE PRECEPT, it settles but not equally on all who earn a wage, both rich and poor. The church is a visible organisation. It can be seen down the street. The slates or the tiles blow off the roof; paint peels off; clergy grow old, they are killed off equally with the rest and have no better chance of survival against the perils of life.

The average parish priest gets a wage that would be turned down by the branch manager of a chain store; the curate gets even less. He is the sort of man who is ordained under God to administer the Sacraments to the Faithful. We all treat him very nicely; most people are his friends, but most people also believe that he exists on fresh air, or that somehow God will provide.

In a canonically erected parish, the parish priest has a certain salary; the curate has no salary, but an allowance. He has his board and lodging, laundry, heat, light and so forth, a safe roof as far as that goes, and no trouble as he travels, but little else.

The parish priest will not buy him a new suit of clothes, or a new bicycle. He will not provide him with expenses of a holiday. If he is unfortunate enough to become ill, the National Health must look after him because the Parish cannot afford to carry a passenger. It makes me wonder when I see these men walking round a parish like insurance agents against eternity, trying to keep people faithful to their Catholic obligations, and then to see what little return they get when their work is over. They are supposed to be at the beck and call of all who are in trouble; those who want to get married; those who need to be buried, and God knows what.

If any young man joins the Church for the money that is in it, he had better give up the idea before long because he is due for lasting disappointment. Many are Called, but few are chosen. The few who survive, do so in full knowledge of what they are in for. Their life will demand of them intense dedication. They know when they begin, that no fortune awaits them. They begin poorly; they will die poorly, but not miserably. They will have given to the world a life long service; they will have received from the world the reward that the world gives—a pittance.

I have said that the young man serving in a Parish has a safe roof and a moderate table with moderate living conditions, but he, like everybody else, needs a summer holiday. He needs a new suit of clothes. His work may demand that he must run a small car in widely spread parishes. He may even need a new set of teeth to chew the steak that is presented by the ordinary parochial cook. That needs teeth as well as determination—not always, I admit.

The average curate depends on Christmas offerings and Easter offerings, which can be described as a

Vote of confidence in the clergy on behalf of the people. These offerings are shared out amongst parish priests and clergy and it is a mean wage earner indeed who will refuse to put his hand deep down in his pocket to make it worth while.

The secular priest is entitled to a small salary, his Mass stipends and stole fees. The salary is modest by any standard. Mass stipends in a large parish are usually put into a pool and shared out amongst the clergy. Stole fees are private, but are very often either not offered at all or else given on a miserable scale. By stole fees we mean that when the priest puts on his stole to do something for you, or for others, that his services are claimed in a professional degree and he is entitled to some recompense for his trouble.

In mixed marriages, very often where the bride is not Catholic, the parents refuse to contribute anything at all to the priest, they say that it is enough to pay the registrar. I was once offered a shilling for doing a baptism and the baby squawked all the time. I took the shilling and put it in my pocket because I didn't know what else to do with it, but I thought out a few ways to dispose of it afterwards.

Very often a fashionable wedding means that the priest is invited to the reception and little else. The people that go to the expense of staging a fashionable wedding think that they are conferring a compliment on the church by bringing a certain glory to it for a half hour or so during a dull week.

Stole fees will never make a curate feel that he has earned anything. People will spend money on flowers, and candles. They will lend their stair carpets to line the centre aisle of the church so that the bride and groom can walk to the altar and back again on red. They will throw a champagne party; they will hire dress suits for the occasion. Women will buy new hats, new dresses, new coats, new shoes, and they will leave the clergyman standing in the Sacristy afterwards with a "thank you very much, Father, it is most kind of you". It is a great mercy that he isn't expected to kiss the bride.

You know, sometimes I see Catholic men who leave church on Sunday after putting threepence or sixpence in the plate. They go round to the local pub and spend five shillings before going home to the wifely lunch. Sometimes if there is a raffle or a draw they are lucky to get out without spending ten shillings. Yet, how seldom they realise that what they have subscribed to the support of the visible Church, which includes the clergy, is not more than the cost of a postage stamp. It is a horrible thought.

But what about the man, or woman, who through laxity, indifference, or laziness, doesn't come to church for years on end? Every priest knows the man or woman who has been away for ten years, fifteen years and twenty years, and sometimes even, God forbid, for thirty years, and who are caught upon their death bed at home, or in hospital, and then **they make their peace with God**. There is more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who does penance than over ten just men who do not need it—I am talking from memory and I may be mistaken. **I just want to mention the sin that is never confessed** and of which people die **unrepentant**. People who have not over the years subscribed one penny to the support of their pastors. Not even one penny, not even an egg, not even a dead chicken.

This letter will arrive coming towards Easter. Will you, for God's sake, remember the Easter offerings and do not put the clergy to the great personal embarrassment of saying, "Please be generous". Some young man may want to take a holiday abroad without having to scrounge on his family at home, and even if he does go home he ought to have enough money to spend without being a beggar in their midst. What sort of hearts do we have to those who are our servants in God? Is beer, betting and sport our whole delight?

If any parish priest or curate would like copies of this they can be had from The Carmelite Press, Faversham, Kent. The local preamble can be left out.

God bless thy Year

Giving you ~ ~ ~
Time for the Task ~
Peace for the Pathway
Wisdom for the Work
Friends for the Fireside
Love to the Last ~ ~

MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF MARY

An old man escorts his ageing wife
into Out-Patients.
Slowly they seat themselves most
comfortably.
"Jambo," I salute them.

"Jambo sana," they reply; and so
salutations continue.

The vital question is eventually asked:

"Who is sick?"

"She is sick."

"What's the matter?"

"She is mad."

"Since when?"

"Since Christmas."

At this stage the attentive wife has
her say: "You're wrong, my man,
I'm mad since Easter."

THANKS

Grateful thanks to Blessed Martin,
The Little Infant of Prague, Our
Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Jude,
for favour received. M.S.J.

Thanks to St. Jude. Mrs. McKerr.
Ayrshire.

Thanksgiving to St. Jude for favour
received. A believer in Prayer, Offaly.

Everlasting thanks to St. Jude for
answering me. K. Browne.

Grateful thanks to St. Jude for a
favour received. C. E. Quinn.

OUR COMING NOVENAS

OUR LADY OF LOURDES - - - Feb. 3rd—Feb. 11th
SAINT JOSEPH & SAINT PATRICK - March 9th—March 19th
OUR LADY OF SORROWS - - - March 15th—March 23rd
SAINT JUDE EASTER NOVENA - - April 21st—April 28th

OUR BURSES

	Already acknowledged			Increase		
The St. Jude Burse No. 2 ...	£1,516	18	6	now	£1,556	18 6
Holy Child of Prague Burse ...	89	5	0		489	16 6
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Burse ...	41	10	0		42	0 6
Our Lady of Lourdes Burse ...	32	0	0		32	10 0
Immaculate Conception B.V.M. Burse	90	10	0		91	0 6
Little Flower Burse ...	543	5	0		560	5 0
Sacred Heart Burse ...	30	0	0		30	10 6
St. Anthony Burse ...	33	0	0		33	12 6
St. Joseph Burse ...	793	0	0		1,044	2 6
St. Kilian's Burse ...	0	0	0		1	12 6

Our Lady keep you! Yours in Carmel

M. E. Lynch O.C.