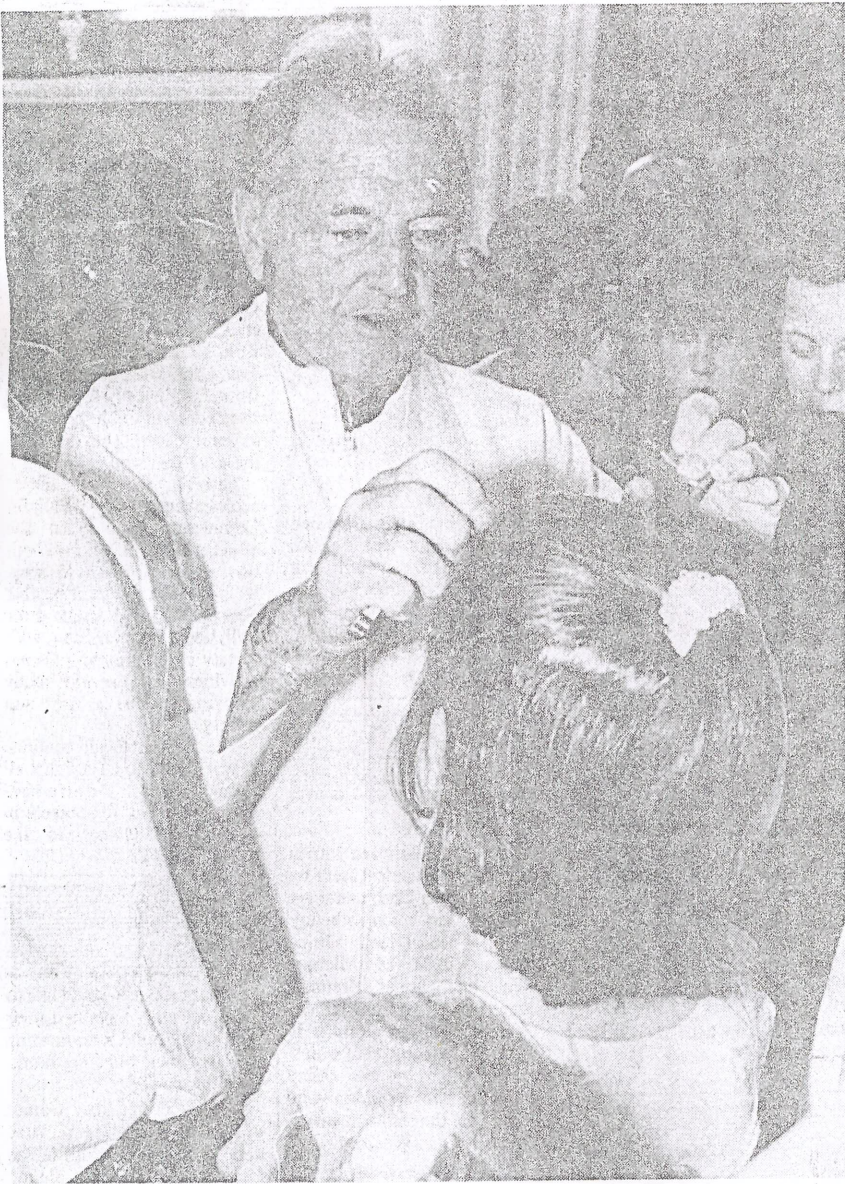


'Miracle' Priest in Monasterevin



The healing priest Fr. Peter Rookey, from America blesses one of the children who attended the special mass which was celebrated in SS Peter & Paul's Church, Monasterevin.



Thousands of people attended the healing mass in S.S. Peter & Paul's Church, Monasterevin, many in wheelchairs like this young girl who is being attended by friends.



Fr. Peter Rookey, blesses one of the children during the healing mass he celebrated in SS Peter & Paul's Church, Monasterevin which attracted a capacity congregation.

JOHN WHELAN, describes the scenes in Monasterevin last week when healing priest Father Peter Mary Rookey visited the town

CARS AND BUSES congested all the approaching streets. Crowds crammed SS Peter and Pauls Church to overflowing. Access through the sacristy offered the only, if remote, chance of getting inside as hundreds of people packed inside for last Wednesday's Healing Mass by Father Peter Mary Rookey.

The church was full an hour before the 10.30am service and at 2 o'clock the healing priest was still laying hands on the throngs of sick people.

Many of them were children clutching to their parents, who in turn were clutching to their faith in the 76 year old Servite's powers of healing.

They had come from all over the midlands, and others had travelled from as far away as Thurles and Cork.

"Isn't it sad to see so much suffering and pain in just this one small corner

people were reverent in anticipation and belief.

Hailed as a miracle worker by believers who have thronged his healing Masses, Father Rookey says that he has cured cripples, the deaf and the blind on his present trip to Ireland.

To the cynics he says, "Seeing is believing and as the Lord preached, if you don't believe my words, believe my works. I'm as critical as anyone, but I see this everyday. I can't deny it."

Highlighting the cures is part of giving honour to God says the Chicago based priest who heads up the International Compassion Ministry for Our Lady of Sorrows, and he is quick to claim no credit for himself.

"I'm from Superior Wisconsin, that's the only way I'm superior. The Lord does the healing," says the Catholic priest whose ministry is to be the feature of a new book by Heather Parsons due for publication here in October.

Ever since he was reported to have cured a young boy, confined to a wheelchair in Shannon two weeks ago, Father Rookey has filled churches to capacity in Tralee, Waterford, Dublin, Wexford and Killinacrott, Co Cavan where the service had to be held outdoors to accommodate the estimated 10,000 crowd.

Mother of ten, Betty Malone says she will never forget Father Rookey's visit to Monasterevin last Wednesday.

"If I live to be a hundred, it's the one day I'll always remember. I never cried so much. They walked, they walked. He took them up and kicked away their wheelchairs," said Mrs Malone describing her experiences.

Father Rookey went back to the United States on Tuesday and indicated his intention to return to Ireland again next July.



Fr. Peter Rookey, who celebrated a healing mass in SS Peter & Paul's Church, Monasterevin shows his gentle touch to a mother and child after the service.



One of the thousands who attended the healing mass in SS Peter & Paul's Church, Monasterevin is deep in prayer during the service.

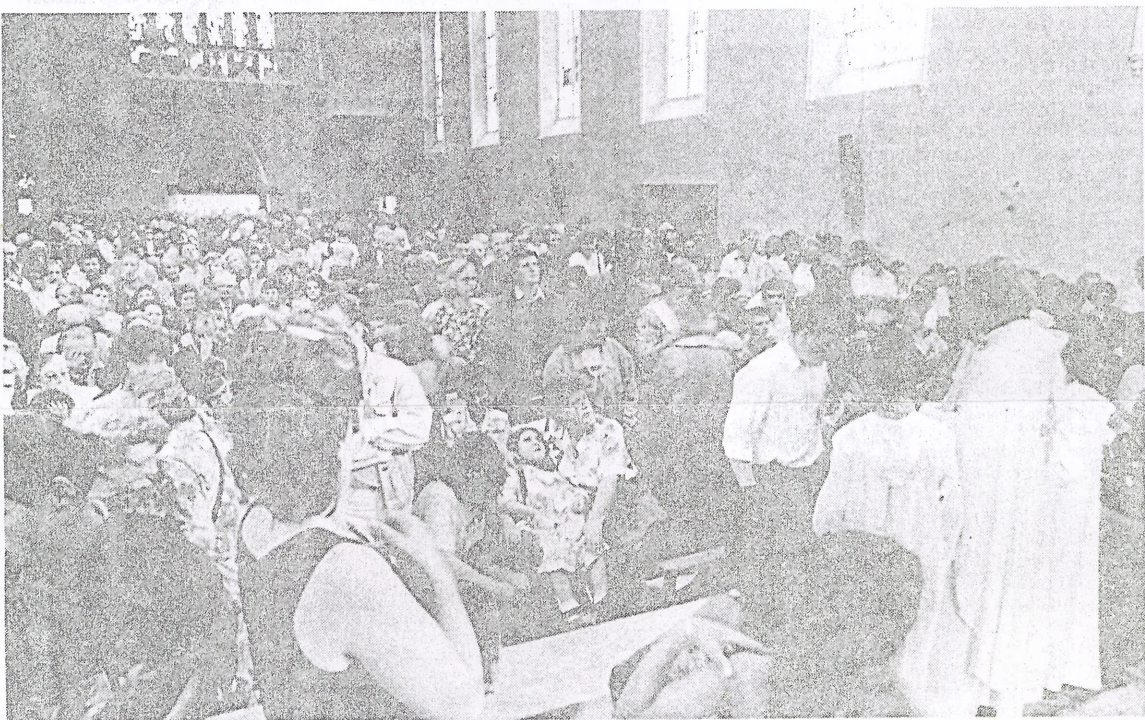
of the world," said Sister Kathleen, seeking out two parents anxious that the Chicago born priest would see their child who is suffering from leukaemia.

But even the cynics hanging over the church yard wall saying -- "I just dropped up the Missus" -- were moved by the emotional scenes as the sick with every conceivable ailment queued and waited patiently in the exhaustive heat of the packed out church.

Photos by: JAMES YORKE

"If there was more of this, there'd be less trouble in the world," said one bus driver, a veteran of countless pilgrimages.

There were of course the curious and the inevitable makeshift stalls selling rosary beads, scapulars, medals and other religious paraphernalia, but mostly



The capacity congregation at the healing mass which was celebrated by Fr. Peter Rookey in SS Peter & Paul's Church, Monasterevin last Wednesday.