

By Father Peter Rookey, O.S.M.  
Ste. Marie du Lac Parish  
Ironton

(This is an account of a trip Father Peter Rookey of the Servite Order of Ironton took to Europe this year — June 12—July 4, 1974.)

MY PLANE LEFT from Detroit and then New York on the 12th of June, a TWA flight to Shannon and then Dublin (6½ hours). Ireland came on the scene beautifully green as always, the Emerald Isle, because as one Irishman said, "When it's not raining in Ireland, it's going to." And that keeps the land beautifully fresh always. The shops in the Shannon airport were very enticing, but I passed them by, knowing that I would have to carry the things around if I bought them now, so I saved that until we returned some weeks later.

On arriving in the Dublin airport in the early morning hours, I was met by a very fine Dublin family called Farraly. They took me to their home and we had a wonderful day together looking around Dublin. We went to the wharf—the Quays, they call them—in the evening when the husband returned, to see the big catch of fish. I bought some fish for them and we went to a pub and had some of the famous Guinness Stout which is a kind of a bitter type of beer that tastes of much yeast.

The next morning I celebrated Mass at a large church, the parish of the Farralys, little Ste. Kine Church. We could put our ton, into it at least five times. It was June 13, the feast of Corpus Christi, so the church was full, but this was only one of

## Traveler's Report

# A Fine Tour Indeed

nine Masses. I almost lost my missionary spirit for dear Missouri when I saw the huge masses of people there to be served; we have so few to serve in our own community. But that is for another time.

### With Servites at Bomb Sites

On the 14th of June some Servite priests from Dublin drove me up over the border to Benburb, which is outside the ancient city of Armagh, where St. Patrick founded the Irish Church way back in the 6th century. Before leaving Dublin, we looked at the bombed sites. There were several bombs that went off right in the downtown area of Dublin, near Parnell Street, and did considerable damage, injuring quite a few people. So even the Republic of the South is not safe. In fact, roadblocks are set up every so often and all the cars are checked by the police. And this happened to us too.

We went through the border without a hitch into the six Northern counties, where their actual civil war is going on. The customs officials and guards waved us on, I suppose because they saw we were all priests. In any case, the country is small enough, they get to know you fairly easily, probably because there are only 3½ or 4 million people in the whole of Ireland, so those who go over the border frequently are well known.

We stopped at a place called Keady to visit a priest, Canon Peter Moore, who bought the estate which is Benburb. Father Moore has been a very dear friend of the Servite Order ever since. In 1946 he bought the historic castle and manor house of Benburb on behalf of the parish of Clonfeecal, or Moy, and since Father James Mary Keane was in Ireland at this very moment seeking to establish the first Irish foundation of the Servites, he was welcomed by Cardinal John Dalton, who directed him to Father Moore. Thus the place became the Irish home of the Servites. Benburb means "Proud Peak."

It is the scene of the famous battle of Benburb, where Owen Roe O'Neil, after whom County Tyrone—land of Roe—is named, Tyrone, land of Owen Roe O'Neil fought a very decisive battle against the Scotch and the English on June 5, 1646. And it was in that very centenary year that Father Moore had a grand opening of the Priory. It was an Orange stronghold for at least several hundred years. Now it came back into Catholic hands.

The Priory at Benburb was dedicated on June 5, 1949. The first small community came from Chicago. Father Keane was the first Prior and yours truly took over the following year after Father Keane left. Since the foundation in 1949, the Servites of Ireland have gone to work and study in the United States, Germany, Belgium, Italy, England, Australia and South Africa. The Order of Friars, Servants of Mary, as the Servite order's full title sounds, was founded in Florence in the year 1233, over 700 years ago. It is a community of men gathered together in the name of Jesus and under the patronage and example of our Blessed Lady, Mary. Servites commit themselves to witness the Gospel, living together in community to be at the service of the Church and all mankind.

The liturgy began at the Priory at 4:30 p.m. on the 14th of June, and the Archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal Conway, presided at the liturgy attended by many Servites from all over the world. In fact, they came from Germany, America, England, Belgium, Canada, Zululand, South Africa, and there were four black Sisters from Swaziland, South Africa. Also included were Ms. Joan Bartlett, the foundress of the Servite Secular Institute in England, and the Rev. James Reed, Third Order of the Servites, who was the prior of the Third Order in Belfast, the first Irish married lay deacon, and a Servite representative from Venice, Italy.

### Open-Hearted Open House

The Order then feted the visitors with a fine testimonial dinner, at which the Cardinal and other dignitaries spoke about the founding of the Order in Ireland 25 years previously and what it is now. The Priory must become a household word signifying charity of the highest kind: unquestioning, open-hearted, open-handed, open house to all visitors, even those who may be taking advantage of it, because it will be founded on Our Lord's admonition of love. What we have is from the faithful anyhow, and doesn't belong to us, therefore all the faithful should have free access to it. Many things were recalled about that opening day by Father Keane, that Mr. Eamon DeValera, the President of Ireland, crossed the border 25 years ago, the first time since he had brought into being the Republic of Ireland.

There were many other dignitaries as well, "Am Toaiseach," the Chancellor of Ireland, and these dignitaries sent messages for the Silver Jubilee. The Priory has become the center of life for Ireland. It has the beautiful castle of Shane O'Neil on the grounds and the beautiful Blackwater River flowing through it. Catholics and Protestants, the old and the young, come on retreat, to lectures; some come with problems, others in thanksgiving; some come to relax and enjoy the beauty of God's creation around us: the gardens, the music, the paintings. An average of 35,000 people visit the Priory each year and about 3,500 of these spend a few days with the community in prayer and study. The Servite ideal as a community of the faith is to continue to bring people closer to God and to each other. The door is open.

The Prior of Benburb, Father Dermot McNeese, a native of the local scene, is doing a very fine job. On Saturday morning, June 15, after our first celebration, we had an incident which was rather tragic. A 23-year-old, John Patrick Cunningham, came on the grounds to help them set up for the great celebration we would be having on the 16th. At 11:00 a.m., as he was leaving the grounds, the soldiers called out to him to halt. He, being retarded, became very frightened and "ran scared." The soldiers shot him down. A doctor and the Prior of Benburb were called, but he was already dead.

While I was there a pub was blown up by the Orangemen in Moy and left two

families homeless, besides destroying the pub. The IRA destroy public buildings in Ireland, and the Orangemen very often retaliate by destroying the pubs because the pubs are usually conducted by Catholics and the IRA uses the pubs for their rendezvous for laying plans. The soldiers are in evidence everywhere, armed with tommyguns and tanks. The situation is quite tense.

### High Security

The police barracks in every town are well sand-bagged and fenced with barbed wire for fear of bombings and the centers of the cities in the North are made more secure by various devices. Authorities make the roads wavy so that cars cannot travel fast through city centers, and barricades are set up all along the sides of the streets so that cars cannot be parked close to buildings. Many of the streets in the cities are barricaded off.

The airport is also a place of high security, guarded well; cars are inspected as you are going to park at the airport in Belfast; each person is frisked and each piece of baggage is gone through very carefully. The city of Armagh is one-half to one-third levelled with bombings, the city hall is a parking lot, and Belfast itself has suffered severely. Londonderry, Portadown and Dungannon are also sadly mutilated.

The thing that impressed me most in Ireland is the terrific faith of the people. June 16—Benburb Day, as it is called—was a time of celebration. The great Carnival with 23,000 people attending had all the usual things that a carnival has, including an aerialist from Strassbourg who performed on tightwires. They raffled off a car.

The man at the loudspeaker announced that blessings were to be given and I stood in the chapel from 5:00 p.m. until 9:00, blessing people. The faith of the people in Ireland is strong. God rewards their faith by curing many through the laying on of hands and the blessing of St. Philip, one of the great Servite saints who, incidentally, was a doctor before he became a Servite. Every day that I was there, people came from morning until night asking to be blessed for all their various troubles and ailments, and many of them went home cured. This impresses an American very much, as you may well imagine. This went on during the five years I was in Ireland, from 1948 to 1953.

### On to Germany and Italy

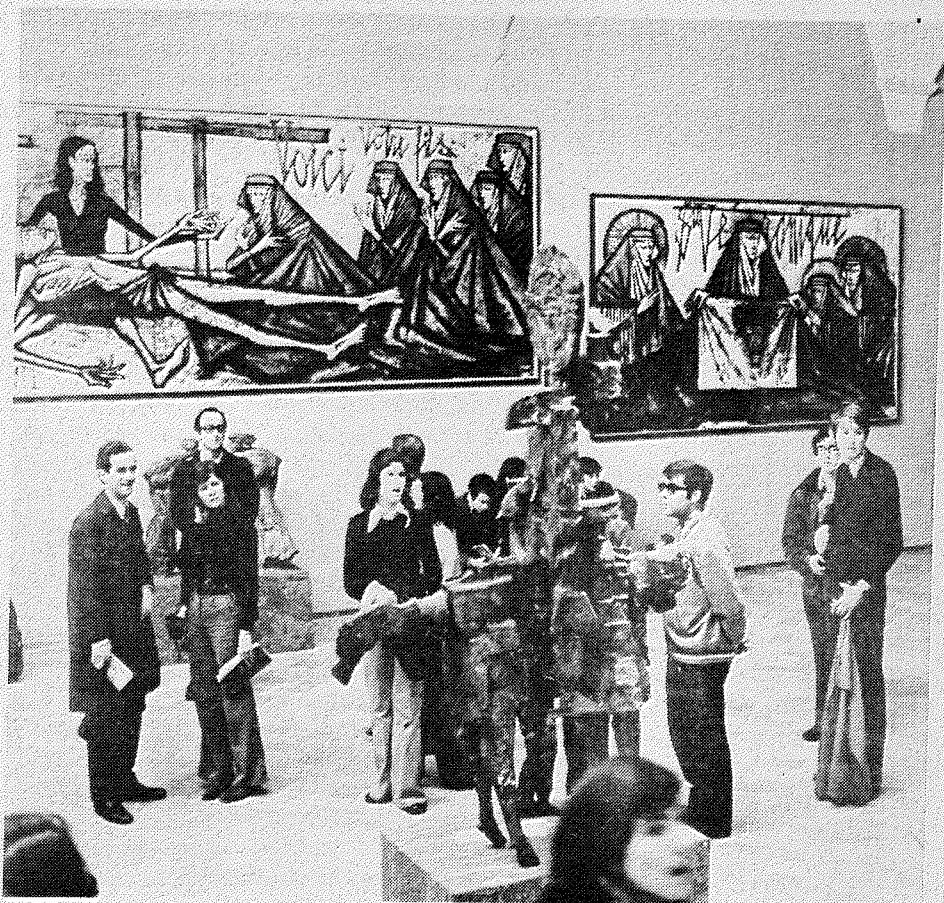
From Ireland I went to Germany, via London and Amsterdam, Holland. I stayed there a few days, at which time we were able to visit a young Servite priest who was ordained 25 years on the big day of the opening. I was also able to speak with the Cardinal of Cologne who was administering Confirmation at my friend Father Wicker's parish, Holy Cross Church in Dusseldorf.

I went from there to Turin, Italy, and visited some Servites with whom I had had many experiences in the Italian scene for six years; especially the great national shrine, La Superga, overlooking the city. Then on to Rome where I was able to celebrate Mass for all of you, my friends, at the tomb of St. Peter on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29. I was also able to see Pope Paul VI and hear a missionary talk given by him. On this occasion I was able to speak with Servites from all over the world.

I left Rome for London July 1, visited the headquarters of the Servite Secular Institute and Ms. Joan Bartlett and many other Servites. On July 2 I returned to Belfast and Benburb. I had promised to bless the people I might have missed before.

On July 4 I took off from Dublin at 10:45 for New York, Detroit—and Ironton.

I am glad to be back.



SUMMER ATTRACTION — Visitors view modern religious art including Bernard Buffet paintings (background) in the Vatican's newly opened museum. An average of 4,000 persons visited various Vatican museums and galleries each day during winter months, but the attendance has tripled for the summer. Until September 30, hours have been extended to accommodate more tourists over a longer span.