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# How Cashel and Emly were united

by Cristóir Ó Laoí

Cardinal Gibbons, brought as a young boy from Mayo to the U.S.A., became Archbishop of Baltimore and first United States Cardinal. Seated one day at a public function beside a rather bigoted anti-catholic lady, he had to endure quite an amount of criticism of the Church. When she complained that she could not possibly agree that the Pope - Leo XIII - was infallible, he retorted that he was inclined to be of the same opinion himself. "You know", he said, "the Holy Father persists in calling me Cardinal Gibbons". Most likely his Eminence had a twinkle in his eye as he spoke!

Be that as it may, the *Annuario Pontificio*, issued each year from the Vatican Press and containing the names of the dioceses of the Catholic world and their Ordinaries, has for many years (even in 1989) assigned a wrong date to the permanent entrusting of the administration of the diocese of Emly to the Archbishop of Cashel. The *Annuario* names 1567 as the year, whereas the permanent arrangement was not made until 151 years later, in 1718.

In 1567 Queen Elizabeth I of England (and unfortunately of Ireland too) appointed James McCaughwell (or MacCarwell) as the first Protestant Archbishop of Cashel<sup>1</sup>. She did this in October of that year, in her capacity as Supreme Governor of the Protestant Church.

Both Cashel and Emly had been vacant for some time; Emly from July 1562, on the death of Bishop de Burgo (Burke), whom Pope Julius III (1550-1555) had appointed in October 1550 or January 1551. Cashel had been vacant since the death of Archbishop Roland Baron (alias Fitzgerald) in 1561 or 1562. Nominated by the Catholic Queen Mary without reference to the Holy See in 1553, Archbishop Roland had ruled Cashel as Archbishop-elect without having ever received episcopal ordination.

Taking advantage of the vacancy in Emly, and with a view to providing her new Archbishop of Cashel with extra revenue, the Queen had a special Act passed by the Dublin Parliament of 1568 uniting the diocese of Emly to Cashel, while allowing Emly to keep its own Cathedral and Capitular Body<sup>2</sup>. The Act of 1568 stated that, among other reasons, the amalgamation of Emly with Cashel was being made to provide the Archbishop with more adequate revenue.

The Holy See ignored this Protestant arrangement. Already on 24 January, in that same year (1567), Pope St. Pius V<sup>3</sup> had appointed Maurice O'Brien (or MacBrian) Bishop of Emly, and on 4 June Maurice Fitzgibbon, Abbot of the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary of Mayo, Catholic Archbishop of Cashel<sup>4</sup>.

The Holy See continued to appoint Archbishops to Cashel and Bishops to Emly as distinct dioceses although, because of the unsettled and troubled times, there were considerable intervals between appointments, especially in the case of Emly because of its lesser importance. During vacancies Cashel and Emly were administered by their respective Vicars, generally referred to as Vicars Apostolic.

Archbishop Fitzgibbon died in exile from persecution on 15 July 1578 in Oporto, Portugal, where he is buried. Cashel remained vacant until Pope Gregory XIII<sup>5</sup> appointed the illustrious Dermot O'Hurley Archbishop on 11 September, 1581. Imprisoned and cruelly tortured in *odium fidei*, he was hanged in Hoggin Green in Dublin on 20th June, 1584<sup>6</sup>. Dermot's name is on the short list of the Irish martyrs soon, it is hoped, to be canonised.



Bishop Maurice O'Brien of Emly died in prison in Dublin Castle in 1586, a victim of Elizabeth's persecution. Emly remained vacant until June 1620, when Pope Paul V<sup>7</sup> appointed Maurice O'Hurley Bishop, but for some reason Maurice did not receive episcopal ordination until 1623.

He lived on into ripe old age and, in 1646, Archbishop Rinnuccine, who had come as Papal Nuncio in 1645 to the Confederation at Kilkenny, recommended to Pope Innocent X<sup>8</sup> Dr. William Burgatt, Vicar in Emly, for appointment as Coadjutor to the ailing Bishop. Dr. Burgatt was not appointed, however. Father Terence Albert O'Brien, a Dominican and a native of Cappamore, who had been Prior of Limerick twice and once of Lorrha, was appointed Coadjutor instead.

Nominated on 11 March 1647, Terence Albert O'Brien was ordained Bishop by Archbishop Rinnuccine in Waterford on the following 2 April. He succeeded to Emly at once, as Bishop O'Hurley had died in September 1646. Terence Albert was fated to be the last Bishop of Emly as a separate diocese<sup>9</sup>.

When Limerick surrendered to Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law, at the end of a prolonged siege in October 1651, Ireton excluded him from pardon, along with some twenty others, including the principal army officers. He was hanged on 30 October 1651. That last Bishop of Emly joins Archbishop Dermot O'Hurley of Cashel on the short list of the Irish martyrs proposed for canonisation.

After Bishop Terence Albert's execution, Dr. William Burgatt<sup>10</sup> became Vicar in charge of Emly, and for a time of Limerick too. We shall hear more of him later. From then on for a number of years Vicars administered Emly.

After the martyrdom of Archbishop O'Hurley in 1584, Cashel was left without a Catholic Archbishop until early in the next century and after the death of Queen Elizabeth in March 1603. Later that year Pope Leo XI<sup>11</sup> appointed Dr. David Kearney, a native of Cashel, whose family had for centuries custody of the famous *Bachall Phádraig* (believed to be St. Patrick's crozier), which led to their being called *Kearney Crux*<sup>12</sup>.

Archbishop Kearney was appointed on 21 May 1603 and received the Pallium on 13 August. After a short period of tolerance for Catholics in the early years of the reign of James I, persecution was renewed, whereupon Dr. Kearney went into exile. He died in Bordeaux in France on 14 August 1624 and is buried in that city.

Two years later Thomas Walsh, a native of Waterford, was appointed to Cashel, receiving episcopal ordination on 7 June 1626 in Rome. As Archbishop of Cashel he took part in the deliberations of the Confederation of Kilkenny from 1642 onwards.

Escaping the massacre on the Rock of Cashel by Murrough O'Brien 'of the Burnings', in September 1647, he was one of 25 Irish prelates, Bishops and Abbots — among them Bishop Terence Albert of Emly and Fr. John Cantwell, Abbot of Holy Cross — who assembled in Clonmacnoise in December 1649, while Cromwell and his army wintered in Youghal. They issued a declaration on the 13th of that month urging an united stand against Cromwell for the sake of faith and fatherland.

Archbishop Walsh was in Limerick during the siege of 1651, escaping at the end, only to be captured and, after spending nine months in prison, be deported to Spain, where he died in the Jesuit house on 5 May 1654 in Compostella. He is buried in the great pilgrimage Basilica of St. James the Apostle there.

From the Archbishop's death until 1669 a Vicar administered the archdiocese. Then in that year Dr. William Burgatt, who had been passed over in 1646 for appointment as Coadjutor in Emly and had been administering Emly and Limerick after the execution of Bishop Terence Albert, was appointed by Pope Clement IX<sup>13</sup> to Cashel.

Appointed on 11 January, he was ordained to the episcopate in September in France. He received the Pallium on 28 July 1670, the same day that it was given to St. Oliver Plunkett. Dr. Burgatt died



in 1674. One may surmise that he was allowed to continue to administer Emly after he had come as Archbishop of Cashel.

Archbishop John Brennan, a classmate of St. Oliver in Rome and already Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, succeeded Dr. Burgatt in Cashel in 1677. He asked to be allowed to continue to rule Waterford and Lismore; he would need the revenue of both sees because of the poverty of Cashel at the time. Blessed Pope Innocent XI<sup>14</sup> who translated him to Cashel, agreed.

Archbishop Brennan visited St. Oliver in South Armagh, both of them sharing very primitive conditions while they hid from persecution. St. Oliver returned the visit. Reporting on it to Propaganda in Rome, he wrote that he and his host were unable to stay in Cashel City, as there was “no Catholic of sufficient substance there to give them a night’s lodgings”.

Brighter times came for Archbishop Brennan during the reign of the Catholic James II. However, the Battle of the Boyne, Aughrim and Limerick brought an end all too soon to that relaxed period. Archbishop Brennan went back into hiding again. Dying in 1693, he is buried beside Dr. Geoffrey Keating in the ruined church at Tubrid near Cahir. Tubrid should be a place of pilgrimage for Cashel diocesans, since, in his own way, Dr. Brennan was a Penal Days martyr too.

Although he had lost his throne and was living in exile at St. Germain in France, King James II claimed the right to nominate to Irish sees. He nominated to Cashel Dr. Edward Comerford, who had been educated in Paris and was parish priest of Thurles. Pope Innocent XII<sup>15</sup> appointed him to Cashel on 14 November 1695. At times he too had to go into hiding because of persecution. He spent some time in prison also.

Then in 1704 a government regulation allowed parish priests to live openly, provided they registered with the authorities. As Archbishop Comerford registered at Nenagh as parish priest of Thurles, he was able to live on there. He died in 1710, the date of his death being given as 21 February. There is no record of where he died or where he is buried — possibly in Thurles<sup>16</sup>.

The next Archbishop was Dr. Christopher Butler, a native of Garryricken, Co. Kilkenny, a priest of the diocese of Ossory, who had degrees in Theology and Canon Law from the Sorbonne in Paris. He was ordained bishop on 18 October 1712, and lived on until 1757, dying on 4 September. He is buried in Kilcash. Archbishop James Butler I was given to him as Coadjutor in May 1750.

Archbishop Christopher Butler was able to inaugurate a small seminary in Cashel because persecution had been relaxed. He and Dr. Saul, the parish priest, gave lectures and arranged pious exercises for students who lodged with people in the town.

The permanent administration of the diocese of Emly was given to Archbishop Christopher Butler on 10 May 1718. Since the Archbishop of Cashel was asked to take on the ruling of Emly permanently in that year, he must have been administering Emly for some time previously. As suggested above, one may surmise that the administration of Emly by Cashel may have come about, with the appointment of Dr. Burgatt, as a matter of convenience, and have continued as such until made permanent by Pope Clement XI<sup>17</sup> in 1718.

As a consequence of this permanent arrangement of 1718, it became the practice of the Holy See to state, in the Bulls of appointment of Archbishops to Cashel, that the appointment was being made to a Cashel “to which is attached the permanent administration / ruling of Emly”. A formula of this kind was employed when Dr. Thomas Morris was appointed in December 1959, and ordained bishop on 18 February 1960. He was given the perpetual ruling (*regimen*) of Emly.

When Dr. John Harty was appointed on 14 December 1913, the Bull for him stated that he was being given the perpetual administration (*administratio*) of the Church of Emly. This formula was not needed, however, when in 1901 Dr. Thomas Fennelly was appointed as Coadjutor to Archbishop Croke, nor in 1942, when Dr. Jeremiah Kinane was translated from Waterford and Lismore as Coadjutor to Archbishop Harty.



Under the Canon Law prevailing in those years, Coadjutors were appointed to the reigning Ordinaries rather than to the diocese. Coadjutors could be appointed with or without the right of succession in those days also. Recent Canon Law brought a change in the formula in the Bull appointing Dr. Clifford. Being appointed Coadjutor to the archdiocese, and not (as hitherto) to the reigning Ordinary (Archbishop Morris), he had from the Canon Law the right of automatic succession, which all Coadjutors (as distinct from Auxiliary Bishops) now have.

In Dr. Clifford's case there was a second rather significant change in the formula also. There was no mention of his being appointed to a Cashel to which was attached permanent responsibility for Emly. He was appointed to Cashel and Emly, as if to one ecclesiastical unit. It would seem that the Holy See has adopted what custom there has sanctioned for a great many years, treating the Archbishops as Archbishop of Cashel and Emly and the Archdiocese as Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly — on a par with Waterford and Lismore and Down and Connor, to mention two other examples of united Irish dioceses<sup>18</sup>.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. McCaughwell for whom Elizabeth had Emly joined to Cashel, must have returned to Catholic allegiance. He is said to have died in Spain in 1570. In 1571 the Queen appointed the notorious but colourful Miler McGrath to succeed him. Miler, styled in Irish as *Rógaire Easpaig*, lived on until 1622. His tomb, with its enigmatic epitaph, is in the roofless cathedral on the Rock of Cashel.
2. The last Protestant Cathedral in Emly, opened in 1827, was demolished in 1877; the Chapter had been amalgamated with that of Cashel some years beforehand. In May 1976 Emly diocese was divided and shared between Cashel and Limerick, though officially united to Limerick.
3. 1566-1572.
4. The Abbey in question is most likely that then at Manister, Co. Limerick, dedicated to Our Lady, (as were all Cistercian Abbeys), and known as 'de Magio or de Maio', rather than Mayo Abbey near Claremorris in Co. Mayo. Holycross was founded from Manister in 1181.
5. 1572-1585.
6. Hoggan Green was near the modern College Green. In a lane off Camden Street, a tiny old cemetery, now 'converted' into a small public park, contains a monument, believed to mark the grave of Dr. O'Hurley. It was erected some years ago at the suggestion of Fr. F. X. Martin, O.S.A., Professor of History at U.C.D.
7. 1605-1621.
8. 1644-1655.
9. Under the date 3 August, 1695, a James Stritch, S.T.D. was selected to be Bishop of Emly. There is however, no record of his being ordained bishop or having taken possession of Emly. A Fr. James Stritch was P.P., of Rathkeale and V.G. of Limerick from 1702 to 1730; see Skehan Papers (Thurles): No. 45, pp 94/95.
10. In the Skehan Papers a Dermotus O'Brien is said to have been Vicar Apostolic of Emly in 1651 and a Nicholas O'Hea Vicar Apostolic in 1656. (Proby, Episcopal Succession 11, p.39 is quoted as source of this information). Skehan states that Dr. Burgatt was still Vicar Apostolic of Limerick when appointed Archbishop of Cashel in 1669. Doubt must, however, be cast on this information from Proby, as Denis Harty, Vicar Apostolic of Killaloe, in a letter of October 1660 to Propaganda in Rome, mentions Dr. John de Burgo as Vicar Apostolic of Cashel and Dr. William Burgatt as Vicar Apostolic of Emly; see quotation from the Archives of Propaganda by Dr. Ignatius Murphy in his article on Denis Harty in the 1989 *Tipperary Historical Journal*.
11. 1592-1605.
12. Part of the Kearney family town house is incorporated into an hotel in Main Street, Cashel.
13. 1667-1670.
14. 1676-1689.
15. 1691-1700.
16. Skehan Papers, No. 119, p.59, quotes from a letter of Archbishop Comerford, written in *aedibus nostris* on 9 July 1699, applying for the administration of Emly, "in which see, as in Kilfenora, Ardferd and Aghadoc, there has been no bishop for forty years". He applies again for the administration of Emly in 1705.
17. 1700-21.
18. Pope John Paul's Bull appointing Archbishop Clifford as Coadjutor, and read at his episcopal ordination on 9 March, 1986, contained the telling Latin phrase: *'Te Episcopum Coadjutorem Casheliensem et Emliensem nominamus.'*

