



Vox Clamantis

Bulletin of the Society of Saint Pius X in Scotland

Winter 2024

"The will to do, the soul to dare"

Dear Faithful,

October being an exceptionally busy month this year, I am once again making this a 'double issue' for the remaining time left in this year. Hopefully, if God spares us, January of next year should then come out on time. Historically, in the Celtic lands, Samhain marks the end of Summer (in Wales Gorffennaf – July, literally means the end of Summer). There then began 'the dark months', going right through until Beltane in May. By the end of the 9th century, however, the Church had established the feast of All Saints on the first of November and, later, in the West, the commemoration of All Souls the following day. It is routinely claimed this was a Christianisation of pagan beliefs though St. Odilo of Cluny, who brought about this standardisation of when the faithful departed are particularly prayed for, was no Celt. What this in practice meant was that in Scotland the Catholic cult of the dead was enthusiastically embraced.

With the advent of the 'reformers', a vacuum was created and, where they held sway, a large-scale return to pagan practices arose, often connived at by the dourest of Calvinists since, due to the erroneous beliefs surrounding predestination, once saved, no amount of pagan



'Guisers'

ritual and particularly celebration, often in the middle of the night, could alter God's inexorable Will. This was described in John Buchan's novel 'Witch Wood', which, though fictional is based on actual events of the 16th/17th centuries.

A few of these (largely harmless) practices continued through into living memory (Dookin' for apples, Guising and bonfires). Of course, the wholesale abandoning of religious belief in the last half century has meant that the enthusiasm for what are basically pagan rituals is now well established, though guising has become trick or treat and hollowed out neeps have been replaced by pumpkins.



As far as our congregations are concerned, it is suitable to remind the faithful of the indulgences which may be gained from the 1st until the 8th (by visiting a cemetery) and particularly on the 2nd (by visiting a church). Similarly, the two patrons of our Edinburgh church celebrate their patronal feasts on the 6th and 16th (St. Margaret celebrated throughout Scotland) and Glasgow, along with the rest of Scotland will celebrate St. Andrew on the 30th. Fr. Holden is keen to maintain the celebration of this latter in grand style after the 11am Mass in Glasgow and Edinburgh will not let itself be held back from an enthusiastic celebration in the café after Mass at the same time.

December brings with it the start of Advent and the Immaculate Conception suppresses the 2nd Sunday (despite what appears in the District calendar). Rorate Masses will be celebrated in Edinburgh on each Monday at 7am. Fasting is traditionally part of Advent. Some penitential practices should certainly be performed and perhaps more rigorous fasting on the two Ember days (St. Thomas suppresses the third one). I wish you all a prayerful Advent and a very Happy Christmas!

With every good wish and blessing,

Rev. Sebastian Wall (Prior)



THE END OF THE CLEARANCES



As often stated in these pages, I have resisted the temptation to discuss that terrible period of Scottish history, called 'the Clearances' both Highland and Lowland, because it is not, strictly speaking, a specifically Catholic issue. It is true that many of those forcefully removed from their ancestral homes *were* Catholic, but it is not the case that they were removed *because* they were Catholic. After many weeks of excessive travelling and resultant illness, I have, however, decided to look at the end of this iniquitous practice because of the involvement of several priests in the activism that provoked the Government to form the Napier commission and the resultant Scottish Crofters Act which was passed in 1886. It also ties in nicely with Catholic activity after the Restoration of the hierarchy in 1878, the Crofters Act being one of the first fruits.



When Bishop Angus MacDonal took over the new diocese at the age of 34, there was already doubt as to its financial viability. Indeed, there had been mooted the idea that it should be made part of the larger and more populous diocese of Glasgow. The reason for this not happening are historical. The Highlands and particularly the Western Isles had never been part of the Southern Vicariate and even after the creation of the Western Vicariate, Bishop Scott was very careful not to take money from Glasgow to fund his building projects in Badenoch, Bornish, Fort Augustus, Morar and Glencoe. After Emancipation in 1829, Leo XII had made the Highlands and Isles a separate Vicariate since it contained, at that time, the largest number of Catholics. Over the ensuing half century, however, the numbers in the Highlands decreased, mainly due to the Clearances, but the population explosion in the Southern cities had resulted in far more Catholics being found there due to Catholic immigration.

For these reasons, it was decided to maintain the historic independent character of this region and Bishop MacDonal took up his See in Oban. The Vicariate had always been sparsely served by the already small number of clergy. A larger number had been sent to the Lowland districts partly because of difficulties of

language (the Highlands was, at that time, still largely Gaelic speaking) and the desire of recuperating the lost numbers in the large cities. Apart from Lewis and Harris, the Western Isles had remained largely Catholic despite severe persecution. They were, however, small, isolated communities over a large area.

Financial difficulties were thus evident — much of the population were poor. But isolation, though a protective factor, was also the cause of a general neglect of liturgical 'niceties'. Bishop MacDonal managed to hold four diocesan synods where he brought in such 'novelties' as sanctuary lamps (the real presence, if it was maintained at all was then, as today, principally demonstrated by the tabernacle veil), wax candles at Mass (bees were in poor supply in the Islands and so beeswax was extremely expensive), and the scarcity of clergy had meant that catechetical instruction was largely absent.

Similarly, the state of the clergy itself was not exemplary. When the diocese was founded there were sixteen priests. But though that number is already woefully small, of them four were involved in one scandal or another (indeed, two of these would have to be dismissed; one had abandoned his post; two were over seventy; two are described as being 'beyond their best'; only seven were fit and able. By the time the Bishop was transferred to the Primatial See of St. Andrews in 1892, there were twenty three priests, all of whom are described as being 'fit and able'.

Devine, in his authoritative history of the clearances, describes the political situation at this time. The cultural force of *dùthchas* [heritage] was pervasive in Gaeldom and was central to the social cohesion of the clan because it articulated the expectations of the masses that the ruling family had the responsibility to act as their protectors and guarantee secure possession of land in return for allegiance, military service, tribute and rental. This applied equally to the Catholic clans as well as those who had apostatised after 1560. It was a powerful and enduring belief which lived on long after the military rationale of clanship itself had disappeared and tribal chiefs had shed their ancient responsibilities and become commercial landlords. After the ignominious events of 1688, there had been a concerted effort to effectively destroy any authority of clan chiefs and with the increase in industrialisation, much of Scotland was 'bought up' by absentee landlords who had no more sense of *dùthchas* than



The last of the Scottish tyrants: Lady Emily Gordon Cathcart

the sheep with whom the historic population was replaced. The worst of these for Catholics was Colonel John Gordon who bought Uist, Barra and Benbecula where most of the Catholics lived. They were systematically shipped to Canada, a process continued by his daughter-in-law, Lady Gordon Cathcart.

This was an iniquitous situation but it had been continuing since around 1750. The crofters had no voice. The Home Rule movement in Ireland emboldened the crofters to protest, withholding rents and occupying arable land reserved for sheep. That was why the Napier commission was set up. But it was not to have any real effect unless the poor and indigent had a voice to speak for them. This was provided by the small number of Catholic priests, supported by their young bishop.

The priests at the time were: Donald MacKintosh (Bornish 1861-67; Ardkenneth 1867-1877; Benbecula 1877-1900), a native of Glenfinnan who had studied at Regensburg; Donald MacColl (Eochar 1862-1867; Bornish 1867-1874; Eochar 1877-1887) who came from Ardgour and was born in 1835; Alasdair Campbell (who after serving for twenty three years in Badenoch, was in Bornish from 1870-1883) a native of South Uist; Alasdair MacDougall (Benbecula 1890-1903); John MacKintosh ('Sagart Mor nan Each' Bornish 1882-1900), a

native of Roy Bridge who had studied in Spain, and who died in Campbeltown in 1903 at forty four years of age; Sandy MacKintosh (Daliburgh 1880-1884) who was born in Arisaig, was a first cousin of Allan MacDonald, and was parish priest of Fort William from 1884-1922; Allan MacDonald (Daliburgh 1884-1894; Eriskay 1894-1905), a native of Fort William and an eminent poet and folklorist; George Rigg (Daliburgh 1894-97) born in Stornoway and died, after contracting typhus fever, in 1897 at thirty seven years of age. All these priests gave testimony at the Napier Commission, with some of the older ones remembering the evictions from Uist.

The Bishop himself wrote to the Commission, emphasising the main grievances. "Besides this specific grievance (Protestant teachers for schools largely attended by Catholic children) I believe a statement of this case will tend to show the existence of a widespread evil, in the dependent and degrading position in which tenants are apt to be placed – with no security of tenure, no guarantee of removal at will, and with the fear constantly hanging over them, that if they venture to assert their rights they may be made to suffer for it, without having power to obtain redress. Nothing could be conceived more certain than this position to foster a low and cringing disposition, or more opposed to the formation of a manly, independent, enterprising spirit".

Indeed, the priests who had stood up for the crofters were persecuted by the landowners. Donald MacColl at Ardkenneth was threatened with eviction from the farm, with the consequent loss of church and house, while Sandy MacKintosh was accused by the proprietrix, Lady Gordon Cathcart, of deliberately fostering religious division amongst the people – a common and predictable 'accusation' against the most effective priests!

The Crofters Act, three years later, finally put an end to the tyranny of the landowners. Although rather modest in its achievements, the Act paved the way for the ownership of the islands to be finally returned to the inhabitants just under a century and a quarter later.



Fr. Sandy MacKintosh

Mass Schedule

	Carlisle	Glasgow	Edinburgh
Sunday 1 st December — 1 st Sunday of Advent		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 2 nd December			7am (Rorate)
Tuesday 3 rd December	7.15am		
Wednesday 4 th December	7.15am		
Thursday 5 th December	11am		
Friday 6 th December (<i>First Friday</i>)		6.30pm	6.30pm
Saturday 7 th December (<i>First Saturday</i>)		11am	11am
Sunday 8 th December — Immaculate Conception		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 9 th December			7am (Rorate)
Tuesday 10 th December	7.15am		
Wednesday 11 th December	7.15am		
Thursday 12 th December	11am		
Friday 13 th December	7.15am		
Saturday 14 th December		11am	11am
Sunday 15 th December — 3 rd Sunday of Advent		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 16 th December			7am (Rorate)
Tuesday 17 th December	7.15am		
Wednesday 18 th December	7.15am		
Thursday 19 th December	11am		
Friday 20 th December	7.15am		
Saturday 21 st December		11am	11am
Sunday 22 nd December — 4 th Sunday of Advent		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 23 rd December			7am (Rorate)
Tuesday 24 th December	7.15am		
Wednesday 25 th December — Nativity of Our Lord		Midnight & 11am	Midnight & 11am
Thursday 26 th December	11am		
Friday 27 th December	11am		
Saturday 28 th December		11am	11am
Sunday 29 th December — In Christmas Octave		8.30am & 10am	9am & 11am
Monday 30 th December			7am
Tuesday 31 st December	7.15am		

Contact details:

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Resident priests:

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Wall (Prior)

Rev. Fr. Gary Holden

Rev. Fr. Francis Ockerse

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**Saint Andrew's
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GLASGOW

G3 6TX

**Saints Margaret and Leonard's
Church**

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EDINBURGH

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If you require any further information concerning one of these places, or need to talk to a priest e.g. in case of emergency for the Sacraments, please ring the phone number mentioned in contact details.