



Vox Clamantis

Bulletin of the Society of Saint Pius X in Scotland

May 2019

"The will to do, the soul to dare"

Dear Faithful,

May is traditionally Our Lady's month. In the Litany of the Saints of Scotland we see the title Our Lady of Aberdeen.

The story of this small wooden statue is a fascinating tale of survival. The statue was made from oak in Aberdeen sometime in the early 1500s, and was placed in St. Machar's Cathedral in Aberdeen, where it was known as Our Lady of Pity. It is four feet three inches high.

Bishop Gavin Dunbar was the Bishop of Aberdeen from 1518 to 1532. He was keen to build a bridge over the river Dee, but uncertain of where exactly to put it. Being a devout man, he prayed to Our Lady for inspiration. In a vision She showed him the exact location of where to build the bridge, and that is where it was built, and where it is today.

Eventually, in 1527, the bridge was completed. In honour of Our Lady and her help in choosing its location, a chapel was built on the south side of the bridge, the 'country' end. With great ceremony, the statue of Our Lady was carried shoulder high from the cathedral of St. Machar to the chapel and installed there.

As we see in our main article this month, the Reformation was rudely imposed on Scotland in 1560 and by 1593 a decree had been passed that Catholics must either give up their faith or emigrate.

Moreover, knowing the iconoclast tendencies of the proponents of the new 'faith', the Catholics of Dundee hid the statue of Our Lady before the complete destruction of the bridge chapel. It was piously hidden for three generations in Scotland but then finally sent for safe-keeping to Brussels where it ended up in the care of the Augustinians and, as its arrival coincided with a great victory against the protestant Dutch, was given the title 'Our Lady of Good Success'.



A hundred and fifty years later and the statue was in danger again, this time at the hands of the invading French revolutionaries but she was saved by an Englishman dwelling in Brussels. He kept the statue in his house and it was almost twenty years later before the statue was placed in the chapel where it remains today.

The Hymn to Our Lady of Aberdeen pleads in its final verse: "Come back, come back to Scotland" but, awaiting that day, copies have been made and our picture shows the one presently in our chapel in Glasgow, surrounded by her Easter flowers.

Many thanks to Fr. O'Hart for his help in the Holy Week ceremonies last month and to you all for your fervour during the latter part of Lent.

With every good wish and blessing,

Rev. Sebastian Wall (Prior)



THE HEATHER PRIESTS OF SCALAN



The Reformation began officially in Scotland in 1560. This is the same year Mary Queen of Scots' husband died and she returned to Scotland to take up government. Her reign and how Presbyterianism took hold will be the subject of a separate edition of *Vox Clamantis*. Suffice to say for now, that the imposition of Protestantism and the suppression of Catholicism had led, by 1700, to the near extinction of the Faith in most of Scotland with the exception of remote areas of the Western Highlands and Islands and, in the North East, in parts of the lands of the Duke of Gordon. The Highland people had clung fiercely to the faith and in 1677 a Fr. Alexander Leslie, reporting to the Vatican, said that "in spite of their natural ferocity (the Highlanders) were as lambs in the presence of a priest, and as firm in their faith as rocks". There may have been just 50 Catholics in Glasgow around that time, but there were over 1000 in Banffshire and the people were hungry for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Priests returning to Scotland were trained in the Scots colleges in Madrid, Paris, Rome and Douai, France. But none answered directly to the Scottish hierarchy and many were ill-prepared for life as an illegal missionary in Scotland. Many, having tasted the comforts of the South, found life in the North difficult and some died young, broken by the vast distances they had to travel. It was for this reason that the Scottish bishops sought a domestic training ground, which would allow them control over the selection process for candidates and in turn give the seminarians experience of the conditions in which they would serve. Distance, and wild weather, and the mountains 'horrid and rude', made the Highlands seem like a foreign

country to the Lowlander, the more so because its people spoke a different language, Gaelic – and most of them knew no other. Few city dwellers ventured beyond the Highland Line, therefore; one who did so said he felt like Columbus discovering the New World.



The house at Scalan as it is today



John Geddes

Trent had given the lead for the training of priests with the formation of seminaries but the first beginnings were more like pre-Tridentine days with a few boys living in a house with a priest teaching them. There was such a

place in Glenlivet in 1699 but when the priest was moved it had to be closed. Then, James Gordon was made a bishop in 1706 and he set about looking for a suitable venue for his project. The place he chose was far in the West, on an island on Loch Morar. It was well chosen – remote, in a Catholic stronghold, "situated in the heart of our best and surest friends, where, by boat, all necessities could be brought, and all unnecessary distractions could be kept off". It would not have been much to look at – just two small huts made of turf: one served as a chapel, and in the other the boys studied, slept, and ate. In charge was a young priest, George Innes. He had just six pupils. But the standard of learning was high. The school seemed to be just what was needed.

And then, less than two years after it began, it was over. In 1715, the Jacobites rose. The rebellion failed, and the Catholic clans who had supported it found themselves under bitter attack from the forces of the Government. The seminary which had seemed so safe beyond the mountains, now proved all too easy to get at from the sea. In the spring of 1716 the master decided that he could no longer safely keep it open. He sent the boys home, but kept in touch, waiting for the chance to start again. And, the following year, his chance came. But not on Loch Morar, and not in the West. It was in the Braes of Glenlivet in the East that the seminary was re-opened, and this time it would last for over eighty years.

Bishop Gordon had his eye on a new-built house by the Crombie burn which would exactly suit the needs of a small seminary. This was Gordon country, and as safe as anywhere could be. It was – he hoped – too far from the soldiers' barracks or the manse to be noticed. It could hardly have been further from the sea. The land down the glen was open enough to see

the coming of enemies, who could anyway only approach slowly for their one narrow path led through a morass. Yet the land would yield oats and barley, and peat nearby for fuel. There were trout in the Crombie, and the burn itself offered a washing place and, if dammed, a pool for bathing. All in all, it was just the place to begin again. The house had been built by a priest of his just the previous year, so, in the summer of 1717, it was a simple matter to move out the Glenlivet priest and make the house free for the new college of Scalán.

A boy usually joined the seminary at about the age of twelve. Some left in their teens to complete their studies abroad; others took their whole course of training at Scalán, and left as ordained priests in their twenties – these are the true “Heather Priests” since they did all their training in Scotland. Parents were not required to pay for their sons’ lessons or board, but were asked to provide their clothes, shoes and blankets.



Aquhorties House

One of the original scholars, who completed his training at Scalán and turned out to be one of its most famous pupils, was Hugh MacDonald. Like most of the early pupils he was a gentleman’s son, for his father was the Laird of Morar. He had been one of Fr. Innes’ first pupils at Loch Morar, just a mile or two from his own home, and when that house closed and he came across to Scalán, he was already about eighteen. At twenty-six he was ordained priest, the first since the Reformation. At the young age of thirty-two he was made a bishop and put in charge of the Highland Catholics, leaving Bishop Gordon to concentrate on the Lowlands.

In the 1770s, Lachlan MacIntosh arrived as a student. He finished his studies in Valladolid, Spain and was ordained, and returned to the Mission. He was at once sent to be the priest of Glengairn. It was his first parish, and it was to be his only one – he stayed there for sixty-four years! Glengairn was one of the wildest parishes in Scotland and the outlying farms were away over the hills. Fr. Lachlan had to reach them in all weathers, but he could be seen

making the journey on his trusty Shetland pony until well into his nineties. He well earned his name of ‘The Apostle of Glengairn’. He was one of that heroic breed of men who devoted their whole lives to serving a poor, remote, unheard-of people.



Bishop Hay

In 1728, the Duke of Gordon died, and after his death his children were raised in the Protestant faith. It was greatly feared that this would leave the Catholics in the Gordon lands without support, and put the seminary at risk, but in fact his successors remained helpful and sympathetic. Scalán thrived and grew, and in time the master was even able to replace the old turf house with a new one built of stone and lime.

But then came Culloden and the failure of the rebellion in 1745. In the eyes of the Hanoverian overlords Catholicism became equated with rebellion to the crown and, therefore, treason. A new persecution began. The seminary was burnt down, soldiers were billeted nearby (they stayed until the onset of the 7 years’ war in 1756) and the number of students fell. Priests could not risk staying in people’s houses and so very often became ‘heather priests’ in the sense that that was where they slept. Mass was said on the Mass stones, large flat rocks in the hills. Scalán was “reduced to be a habitation proper only for owles and wild beasts”.

When things had calmed down somewhat, a new stone house was raised in 1767. This was substantially larger and with the arrival of Bishop Hay in 1787, the seminary began to flourish once more. So much so, that in 1799, after the Catholic relief act of 1793, the seminary could move to larger premises in Aquhorties, moving thence to Blair College in 1829.

“The time by the goodness of God will come, when the Catholic religion will again flourish in Scotland; and then, when posterity shall enquire, with a laudable curiosity, by what means any sparks of the true faith were preserved in these dismal times of darkness and error, Scalán and the other colleges will be mentioned with veneration, and all that can be recorded concerning them will be recorded with care...” May this article be some fulfilment of these words of John Geddes and in turn may his hope of a Catholic Scotland come soon.



Mass Schedule



| | CARLUKE | GLASGOW | EDINBURGH |
|---|---------|---------|-----------|
| Wednesday 1 st May — Saint Joseph the Worker | | 6.30pm | 12.30pm |
| Thursday 2 nd May | 11am | | |
| Friday 3 rd May (<i>First Friday</i>) | | 6.30pm | |
| Saturday 4 th May (<i>First Saturday</i>) | | 11am | 11am |
| Sunday 5 th May — 2 nd Sunday after Easter | | 10.30am | 11am |
| Monday 6 th May | 11am | | |
| Tuesday 7 th May | | | 6.30pm |
| Wednesday 8 th May | | | 7am |
| Thursday 9 th May | 11am | | |
| Friday 10 th May | | 6.30pm | |
| Saturday 11 th May | | 11am | 11am |
| Sunday 12 th May — 3 rd Sunday after Easter | | 10.30am | 11am |
| Monday 13 th May | 11am | | |
| Tuesday 14 th May | | | 6.30pm |
| Wednesday 15 th May | 11am | | |
| Thursday 16 th May | 11am | | |
| Friday 17 th May | | 6.30pm | |
| Saturday 18 th May | | 11am | 11am |
| Sunday 19 th May — 4 th Sunday after Easter | | 10.30am | 11am |
| Monday 20 th May | 11am | | |
| Tuesday 21 st May | | | 6.30pm |
| Wednesday 22 nd May | | | 7am |
| Thursday 23 rd May | 11am | | |
| Friday 24 th May | | 6.30pm | |
| Saturday 25 th May | | 11am | 11am |
| Sunday 26 th May — 5 th Sunday after Easter | | 10.30am | 11am |
| Monday 27 th May | 11am | | |
| Tuesday 28 th May | 11am | | |
| Wednesday 29 th May | 11am | | |
| Thursday 30 th May — Ascension of Our Lord | | 6.30pm | 12.30pm |
| Friday 31 st May | 11am | | |

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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.