

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Student Theses

Baruch College

1-1-1990

Donald Maria O'Callaghan, O.Carm. : politician and pastor

Steven D. Kennedy
Baruch College

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/bb_etds/30

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).
Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

Donald Maria O'Callaghan, O.Carm.: Politician and Pastor

**by
Steven D. Kennedy ©**

1990

Submitted to the Committee on Undergraduate Honors of Baruch College of the City University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History with Honors.

[I. Preface](#)
[II. Introduction](#)
[III. The Politician](#)
[IV. The Pastor](#)
[V. Conclusion](#)
[Footnotes](#)
[Bibliography](#)

I. Preface

While the contributions of the New York Irish Carmelites in the struggle for Irish independence during the early years of this century is a well-documented historical fact, the history of the order and its influential leaders during later decades is much less well-known.

I have attempted to tell at least part of this story in the following pages by chronicling the life and activities of one man -- Donald Maria O'Callaghan -- who, while perhaps not a household name, must be regarded as among the leading members of the Irish-American community in New York City in the post-WWII environment.

While he was a fascinating individual in and of himself, O'Callaghan, like many other figures of historical interest, serves a greater purpose -- for his story helps to illuminate the events in which he participated, and the community in which he worked. In a similar way, he symbolizes the efforts of countless Irish-American clergymen who helped to mold and shape a community of immigrants into a community of citizens, who fueled the upward mobility of an ethnic group so that today it is among the most successful in the country.

Even though it has been so successful, the history of that community seems to have been inadequately told thus far. This presents an interesting challenge to the researcher, for in a city whose Irish-American citizens played such an important role, there is an absolute paucity of material that has been commercially published and is available on the subject. At a time when "things ethnic" are celebrated and revered, the contributions and history of the Irish-American community in 20th century New York seem to have largely been forgotten, overlooked or ignored by the popular press.

That is not to say, however, that no such material exists. For it does, but to find it, one must know where to look. And in this regard, the author must acknowledge a stroke of good fortune (or perhaps more appropriately, some old-fashioned Irish luck).

At the American-Irish Historical Society, evidence of the community's strength is overwhelming (if arranged a bit haphazardly). The private papers of many Irish-American leaders are deposited there, and the information found in them is both fascinating and instructive.

A great deal of the information used in developing this paper comes from the Society; specifically, from the collection of Donald O'Callaghan's papers that his religious order donated upon his death. The papers were archived and catalogued by Professor Joseph Peden of Baruch College.

Another source heavily relied upon were the volumes chronicling the New York Carmelites' history that were written by Rev. Alfred Isaccson, O.Carm. Another invaluable source was the private autobiography of the Reverend Sean Reid, O.Carm., a close colleague of O'Callaghan's who was also of some stature in Irish-American circles. William Carr's work, which he was kind enough to send to me, also proved very helpful, as were the conversations I had with both Reid and him.

The Irish newspapers, principally the Gaelic-American, maintained by the American-Irish Historical Society were both an instructive and fascinating read. The New York Times, perhaps a less sympathetic publication to Irish causes, was also consulted.

My interest in the priest and his work is more than that of a student researcher. For a brief period of two years, I was fortunate enough to have attended St. Albert's Junior Preparatory Seminary, a Carmelite institution (now closed), in Middletown, New York. I did not ever meet Fr. O'Callaghan, as he passed away before my arrival. I did, however, have the good fortune to know Fr. Isaccson and others who continue Fr. O'Callaghan's tradition of good work. (More recently, I met his colleague Rev. Sean Reid).

While I am aware of the effects that time can sometimes have on the memory, those days at St. Albert's grow fonder and fonder for me. I learned many things there and think to this day the experience was a valuable one.

I did not, of course, continue on the road to priesthood. And while that was ostensibly the purpose of St. Albert's, I think for me -- and hopefully for the other boys who attended

the school but ultimately chose life outside the clergy -- that the true goal and meaning of that institution and the Carmelite Order was achieved. I trust the good priests agree.

II. Introduction

While the St. Patrick's Day parade is always a colorful and significant event for the city's Irish-American community, the 1990 version of the event was especially so, for two reasons.

The first had to do with the absence of Jack McCarthy from the broadcast booth, from which he covered the event for two generations of television viewers. McCarthy, perhaps the quintessential Irish-American, with his red face, "Irish white" hair and the slight lilt to his voice, decided to call it quits after 41 years as the parade's television host because of his belief that the original purpose of the parade was lost(1).

"...[w]ith all the politicking going on," he said, "the parade has lost its true meaning...last year there were 17 politicians interviewed during the course of the telecast, and only one representative from the clergy. That's not what the parade is all about." (2)

What the parade is all about, according to McCarthy, is celebrating the success of the Irish-American community in New York and recognizing the contributions that that community has made to American society. Politics and politicians have undisputedly been an important factor for and among Irish-Americans; what McCarthy was pointing out, however, was the equally undeniable influence and role that the clergy has had in helping the community to succeed.

The fact that the most visible Irish-American event in the United States has decidedly religious tones and roots is evidence enough of the clergy's influence (the divergence of the event from its roots notwithstanding). But while the parade may be the most visible event, the most enduring manifestation of the clergy's importance in Irish-American society is the network of parishes upon which the Catholic religion is structured in this country.

"The Irish made the parish the nucleus of Catholic religious life as well as of their own social identity in the United States," writes William Griffin, professor at St. John's University in New York. "The Irish clergy took an active role in ministering to the immigrants, and in helping them to adjust to their new country. A whole network of needs and services developed in the centers of Irish settlement...creating a strong bond between priest and people that found expression in strong parish units. The parish became a rallying place, a support unit, an educational and recreational center, and, of course, a spiritual reservoir."(3)

It was through the parishes that the Catholics were able to begin their climb to social and political influence. "Through the steadily growing parish structure, their bishops were

able for the first time to mobilize political pressure, build up the Church revenues...the parishes also provided the justification (and funds) for schools, hospitals, asylums and orphanages."(4)

The second reason for the 1990 parade's importance is further testament to the special role the clergy played in Irish-American life. For the parade was dedicated to the New York Province of the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites -- a religious order that enjoys a singular distinction for its contribution to Irish-American life in New York -- on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Carmelites from Ireland to this city.

Little known to the general public, the New York Irish Carmelites have been prominent in Irish-American society for almost 75 years. For example, since the parade's beginning, only four priests have been named to the distinguished position of Grand Marshal. Two of those four have been Carmelites.(5)

One of the Carmelite priests so named was Rev. Sean Reid, who served in 1964. Fr. Reid was for many years pastor of the Carmelites' first parish in New York, at East 28th street. There, he continued the fine tradition of parish work for which, as noted above, the Irish were famous.(6)

The other was Donald Maria O'Callaghan, who was awarded the honor in 1951, and who was later responsible for his colleague Sean Reid being named to the post 13 years later(7). Unlike Fr. Reid, however, Donald O'Callaghan never served as a "pastor" in the traditional meaning of the word. He never was in charge of a parish, and never had the responsibilities associated with such a position.

Yet while this may be true, O'Callaghan can very much be said to have had, and to have fulfilled, his "pastoral mission." In a sense, his largesse was not restricted to those within a predetermined boundary, but was extended instead to individuals throughout the U.S. and in Ireland.

O'Callaghan was a spiritual minister, an employment counselor, an immigration advisor, a power broker, a social activist and a politician of the highest order. His interests reflected the needs of his "parishioners." Their concerns, it can be said, were his concerns.

A study of his life, then, yields more than just a portrait of a man, albeit a complex and fascinating one. It is, rather, a window into a society and community about which few chronicles have been written. It provides insights into the outstanding issues and the major problems facing Irish-Americans over a span of three decades. In a sense, the story of Donald O'Callaghan is the story of New York's Irish-American community in the middle and latter decades of this century.

The Carmelites in New York

The story of Donald O'Callaghan's rise to prominence in Irish-American politics and society actually begins in 1889, some 30 years before his birth. In that year, four Carmelite priests sailed from Ireland to establish their first foundation in New York City.(8)

The Carmelites established their first parish, Our Lady of the Scapular of Mount Carmel, at 28th Street and First Avenue. As there was an existing parish (St. Stephen's) only a few blocks to the north, the location of the Carmelite parish was a bit unusual. It is also rather ironic, and at the same time perhaps most appropriate, for the establishment at that location of the first Carmelite parish, which was to later play a significant and highly controversial role in the struggle for Irish independence, is itself the result of a political and religious controversy that plagued the archdiocese in the late 1880's.

The controversy involved Archbishop Michael Corrigan, ecclesiastical head of the church in the archdiocese of New York, and Father Edward McGlynn, the popular pastor of St. Stephen's. McGlynn was a supporter of Henry George, a socialist politician who ran for mayor of the city. McGlynn espoused George's political philosophy, much to the Archbishop's disliking, and he was eventually removed from his post and excommunicated. (In later years he was returned to a status of good standing.)(9)

McGlynn's parishioners, however, remained steadfast in their support of him despite the archbishop's denunciations. Many refused to attend services at the new church under the newly appointed pastor. Corrigan hoped to blunt the anger of the parishioners by dividing St. Stephen's boundaries and creating a new parish. It was to this new parish that the Irish Carmelites came.(10)

The Carmelites and Irish Independence

From this rather modest beginning, the Irish Carmelite presence grew to assume a role of increasing importance in the political and social fabric of New York City. It was also to play a significant part in the centuries-long struggle of the Irish for independence from their English rulers.

History is, of course, filled with ironies great and small, and the Carmelite participation in the fight for Irish independence is perhaps one of the latter. For the Carmelites, who were founded and for many years centered around Mt. Carmel in the Holy Land, went to England in 1251 to escape the invading Saracens. There they were reorganized and rejuvenated by Simon Stock, an Englishman who figures prominently in Carmelite tradition. It was to Simon Stock that the Blessed Virgin appeared, giving him a scapular, and saying "whosoever dies clothed in this Habit shall not suffer the eternal fire and if wearing it they die, they shall be saved." For these reasons, the Carmelites are noted for their devotion to Mary as well as to the scapular.(11) [See footnote for an explanation of scapular.]

The Carmelites do, however, trace their roots in Ireland back to 1278, making them one of the oldest orders in that country.(12) And while Catholicism withered in England, it flourished in Ireland and so did the Carmelite order.

By the early 1900's, it was also flourishing in New York. Several new parishes and houses were added, and they were manned mostly by Irish immigrants.

Among the more notable of these was Lawrence Flanagan, who had studied at Blackrock College with Eamon De Valera, a lifelong friend who later would become Prime Minister and then President of Ireland; Elias Magennis, an Irish priest who stayed in New York during WWI, until he was elected General of the Carmelite Order and went to Rome, and who was later discovered to be a secret member of *Clan Na Gael*; and Dennis O'Connor, who served as pastor of 28th street.(13)

During the second decade of the 20th century, as Irish nationalism again gained force, Carmelite priests were said to have carried confidential communiques between the *Clan Na Gael* in the US and the republicans in Ireland. The priests' activities on behalf of Ireland attracted the attention of the authorities; the telephone wires at 28th street were tapped, and federal agents would often attend pro-Irish rallies hosted by the priests.(14)

Throughout the struggle for Irish freedom, the Carmelites remained steadfast supporters of Eamon De Valera. When the future Taoiseach (Prime Minister) refused to accept the creation of the Irish Free State -- an arrangement under which the Irish would still swear allegiance to the British Monarch -- the Carmelites backed him. When he fled a British prison in 1919, it was to the Carmelites' East 28th street parish that he went.(15)

When De Valera broke with Judge Daniel Cohalan, an influential Irish-American, over the best way to elicit American support for Irish independence, the Carmelites continued to cast their sway with De Valera. And when Cohalan and his supporters gained control of the Friends of Irish Freedom, an organization designed to rally Irish-Americans on behalf of Ireland, the Carmelites helped to form another organization that would be more sympathetic to De Valera.(16)

As Fr. Alfred Isacson recalls, "Carmelite involvement...with the Irish Freedom movement was almost always on the side of liberalism. When Ireland was totally under the crown, the Carmelites were anti-royalist; in the treaty era, the Carmelites were antitreaty; later, they were not for simply a representative government but a republic."(17)

Irish leaders during this time have recognized the role of the New York Carmelites. Liam Mellows, who was executed in the Black and Tan War, "remained closely associated with the Carmelites in their activities and taught in the school (at East 29th street) until his return to Ireland in 1920. A republican always, he did not support the treaty...His last words were *Du Problacht Abu!* (The republic forever)."(18)

While Mellows went to an early grave, others, such as Sean O'Kelly would survive and assume top positions in the Irish government. O'Kelly, who would later be president of the Irish Republic, recalled this about the Carmelites: "I went to the USA in September 1924 to represent the Republican party. I had heard much about the Carmelites in New York and the active help they had at all times given in the fight for freedom. In particular, I heard how they had assisted De Valera in 1919/20. Also how they had permitted their hall in 29th street to be used as a republican HQ and how it had been used a storehouse for arms, even tho' such activity was sometimes frowned on by higher ecclesiastical authority. 'All this I had learned from people like Joseph Boyle R.I.P., Liam Pedler, Jim McGee of the Clan, Sean Nunan, Dan Doran of San Francisco and many others. I presented myself to the Carmelites and was at once warmly received..."(19).

But De Valera himself best summed up the contribution of the Carmelites to the cause of Irish freedom when he called the 28th street parish, "the cradle of Irish independence in America.v20)

The Early Years

Amidst a backdrop of growing Irish agitation for freedom, Donald Maria O'Callaghan was born in 1916 in the German-Irish community of Yorkville. He was the oldest of three children of Michael O'Callaghan, an Irish-born New York City police officer who rose to the position of lieutenant, and his American-born wife, Anna (nee) Cassidy, whose other children included a son, James, and a daughter, Joan.(21)

O'Callaghan attended grammar school at St. Monica's in Yorkville, and went to high school at St. Francis Xavier on West 16th street, from which he graduated in 1933. He attended Fordham University for one year, but dropped out, and then entered the Carmelite Order in 1935, beginning his novitiate at St. Albert's Monastery in Middletown, New York in that same year. From 1936 to 1943, he attended Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He was ordained on May 29, 1943, and celebrated his first Mass at his neighborhood parish, St. Monica's, on June 6, 1943.(22)

O'Callaghan was, as described by one of his Contemporaries, "a born politician, rightly endowed with the gift of gab."(23) This trait was to become evident at an early age. In April 1929, the boy of 13 won an oratory contest sponsored by the Irish Echo, a weekly newspaper. The winner received a round trip to Ireland. Mayor James J. Walker ("Beau Jim") was on hand to present the prize, and congratulated the young man on his speaking skills.(24) While still in high school, O'Callaghan "could be found making campaign speeches at Yorkville street corners for Tammany Hall candidates."(25)

During his years as a student at Catholic U., O'Callaghan displayed his considerable organizational and promotional talents, as he organized the school's St. Patrick's Day Parade. With the help of Father Emmanuel Hourihan, O.Carm., O'Callaghan also organized a mass at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the American Friends of Irish Neutrality. The first mass said on behalf of the movement had taken place earlier at the Carmelite parish on East 28th street in

New York. The mass in Washington was evidently successful; the rector of Catholic University preached and a retired Bishop presided. Many congressmen and clergymen were said to have attended.(26)

After Ordination

After his ordination and the conclusion of his studies at Catholic University, O'Callaghan served at the Carmelite Priory at 28th street in Manhattan. His immediate mission was to head up the Scapular Bureau, an organization founded by the Carmelites in 1941 whose purpose was to distribute scapulars free to servicemen and missionaries.(27) O'Callaghan took over this task in 1944, working with John Haffert, a one-time applicant to the order who had not been promoted to solemn vows.(28) The priest was assigned to the task "to keep John Haffert in line and the whole movement within the confines of Catholic theology and philosophy."(29)

O'Callaghan was a natural selection for this job, as he had, while studying at Catholic U., authored an article on scapulars in the religious publication, "The Sword." In the article he proposed the establishment in each country of a bureau that would collect Scapular miracles and publish them as a means of fostering devotion. The second recommendation was that on a weekly basis each parish should put out a list of the indulgences that could be obtained by Scapular wearers on various feasts.(30)

Another of O'Callaghan's activities in the mid-1940's was assisting in recruiting and vocational work. This caused him to travel a great deal and to speak at a variety of school and church functions throughout the province. It also gave him the opportunity to exercise the considerable talent he had for public speaking. In 1945 he writes "I have been talking every day in the schools of the archdiocese for vocations."(31) According to the student publication of Manhattan College, Fr. O'Callaghan was well known on that campus, which "he visits every first Friday of the month for the recruiting of new members for the Third Order of Carmelites."(32)

In 1947, the Carmelite Order held its general election in Rome. O'Callaghan was one of the two New York province delegates to the meeting, whose function was to select the prior general of the order. With the support of the two New York representatives, Killian Lynch, an Irishman, was elected general.(33)

Two years later, O'Callaghan was elected prior of the East 28th street Carmelite House. In 1955, he became the first American-born priest to be elected Provincial of the Carmelite Province of St. Elias. In 1958, he was elected for a second term.(34)

Much of O'Callaghan's energies as provincial were devoted to raising funds for the order and in dealing with issues of administration and personnel. He attempted to expand the province during his term in office, and became interested in acquiring property in Rhode Island to be used for a seminary. However, the province was unable to raise the funds necessary for the construction of buildings. O'Callaghan was able to arrange for a loan

from the Teamsters' Union; the possibility of appearances of impropriety arising from this financial backer led the Carmelites not to accept the offer.(35)

The area of foreign missionary work -- in which O'Callaghan had long been interested -- may have been his most successful undertaking while he was provincial. In 1946, O'Callaghan was appointed honorary chairman of the Father Galvin Committee, which promoted the African missionary work of this Irish priest. During his term of office, two clergymen sailed from Brooklyn to join their Irish Carmelite brothers working in Umtali, Southern Rhodesia; two others also left in the following two years.(36)

After his two terms as provincial, O'Callaghan returned to foreign missionary work. For 12 years, from 1961 until his death in 1973, O'Callaghan served as director of foreign missions --one of his principal responsibilities was speaking about them and taking up collections for their support throughout the Eastern States.(37)

III. The Politician

Family Connections

The Carmelites' widely recognized role in the movement for Irish independence was no doubt one of the reasons that O'Callaghan was to become a leader in Irish-American circles some thirty years after that independence was won. In a sense, he inherited the tradition of Carmelite activity in support of Ireland, and sought to renew and strengthen the order's connections between Irish politicians on the one hand, and influential Irish-Americans on the other.

Tradition alone, however, would have been insufficient to make O'Callaghan the passionate and influential supporter of Ireland that he was. Many people are born into positions of authority only to discover that titles notwithstanding, they know and enjoy little about power except perhaps its memory.

Donald O'Callaghan did not assume authority simply because he was a Carmelite, nor was he content to merely live in an environment that enjoyed a glorious past. Rather, a combination of his own family's history and his passionate personal interests propelled him to make the most of his position, to use it as a springboard to accomplishing his ends.

Above all, says Father Sean Reid, a close colleague, O'Callaghan was "intensely Irish with a profound knowledge of the heroes who had fought and died for Ireland."(38) This interest in the history of the Irish conflict was a personal one, for some of those heroes may very well have been his relatives.

Cornelius Neenan, the former head of the Irish Republican Army in the United States(39), met O'Callaghan while the priest was visiting Ireland in 1944. The priest expressed to Neenan his interest in learning about his family's history and the

involvement of his relatives in the Irish conflict. A short while after the meeting, Neenan wrote to him.

According to Neenan, the priest's uncle, Dan, "was evidently in the Irish Republican Brotherhood" (a precursor to the IRA). Neenan believed that the uncle, an athlete, must have been a close associate of men like Harry Boland and Sean McDermott and others who used the G.A.A. (Gaelic Athletic Association) as the fertile recruiting ground for the IRB"(40).

In the same vein, Neenan would later write to O'Callaghan about the impending visit of Tom Barry, an IRA general in the 1916 violence: "Tom Barry, an old time Gael...was an associate of your Father's and your uncle Dan being with the latter in the sacred sanctums of the Republic movement"(41).

O'Callaghan's father was active in Irish-American organizations, especially the County Cork Men's Benevolent, Patriotic and Protective Association of New York(42). In the mid-1940's, the young priest also joined. Perhaps through the organization, O'Callaghan father and son were acquainted with Sean Keating, an influential figure in New York Irish political circles who was an intimate of the O'Dwyer brothers.

In 1946, Father O'Callaghan was appointed chaplain of the association. Keating, the group's chairman, wrote in the organization's newsletter, which was called, appropriately enough, *The Rebel*: "I have been further blessed by having Father Donald O'Callaghan appointed as our Chaplain. His personality, his priestliness, and his political fervor have made him one of the most popular figures in Irish circles and he is indeed a true representative of a grand order - the Irish Carmelites"(43).

O'Callaghan's relationship with other influential Irish-Americans also blossomed during this period. He was in contact with such figures as John Sheahan (for many years the St. Patrick's Day Parade chairman), Connie Neenan, Charles Rice, a prominent Irish-American attorney, William O'Dwyer, the Irish immigrants who would be elected Mayor in 1945, his brother Paul, who was later elected City Council President, and others.

The Coercion Issue

As World War II came to a close, Irish agitation against the partition of their country began to increase. This resulted in renewed support for Irish Republican Army activities in Ireland, and placed the Irish Prime Minister, Eamon De Valera, in a difficult situation.

De Valera, perhaps the staunchest supporter of an Irish republic, was now in the position of suppressing activities designed to accomplish that goal. He was cracking down on Irish Republicans seeking, at times through violent means, to end the partition of the nation.

Compounding his political problem was the fact that not all Irish -- and Irish-Americans - - were supportive of De Valera, who in the early 1920's formed and headed a political party, *Fianna Fail*, and who would alternately assume the position of *Taioseach* (Prime

Minister) and President. In addition to alienating some because of his ardent pro-republican beliefs, De Valera had caused considerable resentment among a faction of Irish-Americans, headed by Judge Daniel Cohalan and Gaelic-American newspaper publisher John Devoy, for what they viewed as his unwarranted intrusions into American politics in an effort to gain sympathy for the Irish cause.

At the close of WWII, the rift had not healed. Because of the New York Carmelites' ties to De Valera, O'Callaghan and his colleagues acted as conduits to him. O'Callaghan was frequently approached by pro-Cohalan and anti-partition forces to intercede with De Valera so that the Irish Prime Minister would stop his coercion of the anti-partition movement in Ireland.

In March of 1946, Connie Neenan, described by Paul O'Dwyer as the head of the IRA in the United States, wrote to O'Callaghan from Ireland: "Dev's continued persecution of Irish Republicans, not disputing the merits or demerits of the case, is giving the Northern Orangemen the excuse why he will not come into the fold...In your influential and charitable manner you might be able to convert the people responsible on the futility of coercion and the harm it is doing here from shaping a united front on the Boundary."[\(44\)](#)

Over the next several months, the problem apparently worsened, as Neenan describes to O'Callaghan: "Dev is gone 'coercion' crazy. Letters from home contain a very bitter note and I wonder if Dev is cognizant of the intense hatred the people are building toward him...There is a strong movement to release the prisoners and this should be a good platform for us before anything else is tried or accomplished."[\(45\)](#)

The Irish Race Convention

While support for a united Ireland was growing in that country, the movement was also picking up steam in the United States, spearheaded by the United Irish Counties Association, an umbrella group consisting of many of the Gaelic-American organizations in New York. Despite the fact that political problems like the coercion issue divided many in the Irish-American community, the issue of partition was the one on which all could put aside their differences.

On March 29, 1946, the UICA founded the Anti-Partition Committee, a meeting at which O'Callaghan was present as the County Cork delegate. His influence is apparent; the minutes of the meeting give special mention to the fact the religious groups should be enlisted in the effort to get American public opinion to pressure the British.[\(46\)](#)

Plans were soon put in place to hold a series of meetings to elicit the support of the public. One, held in June of 1947, attracted some 2,500 people to the Manhattan Center. Mayor William O'Dwyer was the keynote speaker, and he called the Irish situation "a disgrace to our civilization." Two resolutions were adopted at the assembly: one denied that the religious issue (of a Catholic majority in the south and a Protestant one in the north) in any way affected the reunion of the country; the other asked British Prime Minister Atlee to remove British troops from Northern Ireland.[\(47\)](#)

Later that year, an event took place at New York's Hotel Commodore that may well have represented the apogee of the movement, at least in terms of its ability to mobilize its forces and public awareness. It was the "Irish Race Convention," the first such gathering since the early 1920's, and whose purpose was to kick off "an intensified campaign to end partition."[\(48\)](#)

As Father Sean Reid said, "Fr. O'Callaghan and I were part of the first convention..." He goes on to state that "the leading figures were Dick Dalton and Charlie Rice who had been on the Cohalan side in the (DeValera-Cohalan) split. It was expertly organized and the speakers were well chosen. I had never seen anything like it"[\(49\)](#).

While on the surface it seemed that the two factions were working together, there was also considerable jockeying by the participants. A note handwritten by O'Callaghan attests to this fact (as well as to O'Callaghan's involvement):

Plans for Irish Race Convention well under way. Committees appointed, date set, quarters secured. Immediate object --an intensified campaign for ending partition. Groups and individuals of many conflicting political and personal beliefs being united on the anti-partition platform. Many of the old Cohalan crowd active in the movement and in order to prevent their getting control several of Dev supporters have taken over key spots. S[ean] Keating and M[ike] McGlynn (old IRA) are chairman and vice chairman of the executive council. K[eating] also national vice chairman which is controlling spot, as the titular head, former congressman Donahue (Phila), is too old to take an active spot. Expect to spend \$15,000 on campaign and hope to raise this amount by subscription here. Would establish information bureau if we could secure direct and speedy reports from Eire. Keating has discussed plan with Minister S. Nunan.[\(50\)](#)

Many times in the following years O'Callaghan was to contact the Irish Consul General in New York, Garth Healy, asking him to forward documents from Ireland that could be used in the information campaign. (His friendship with Healy apparently grew deep; O'Callaghan said the funeral Mass and rosary for Healy when the diplomat died in 1954.)

The Irish Race Convention was apparently successful. While the Irish weeklies naturally devoted entire issues to coverage of it, the event was of such stature that the New York Times, not noted for its sympathy to or interest in Irish affairs, featured it prominently.

The Times story begins: "Laying aside his official robes temporarily and speaking as an Irishman, Mayor O'Dwyer wholeheartedly espoused yesterday the cause of the newly formed American League for an Undivided Ireland. He addressed 1,200 delegates from 38 states attending a 2 day convention at the Hotel Commodore and joined in their effort to arouse sympathy in the US to remove the present day British partition as "the last barrier to a unified and happy Ireland."[\(51\)](#)

The event was so successful that it spawned several others like it. The Carmelites continued to be involved in them; in fact, Sean Reid was a keynote speaker at a convention held in San Francisco in the following year.[\(52\)](#)

The Fogarty Resolution

With the United States clearly the leader of the North Atlantic alliance, a consensus among Irish-American organizations began to emerge that the U.S. should exert its influence on Great Britain to eliminate the border that divided the six northern counties from the Free State.

This thought had been central to the Irish-American political agenda following the end of WWII. At the Irish Race Convention in 1947, Thomas Buckley, a Massachusetts politician, "expressed a belief that England should receive no American loans until money now wasted in the six county government of partitioned Ireland was ended."[\(53\)](#)

It was not until the following year, however, that Congress began to formally consider the question of whether it should appeal to England to end the partition. In 1948, John Fogarty, a congressman from Rhode Island, introduced a resolution in the House calling for the official policy of the U.S. to ask for a united Ireland. The resolution was attached to the Marshall Plan bill.

Fogarty came to New York to speak on behalf of the bill, and addressed the United Irish Counties meeting. Afterward, O'Callaghan wrote to him: "It was, to say the least, a courageous and hard-hitting attack on the forces that are preventing the unity of the ancient Irish nation. In particular, am I grateful for our [sic] kind references to myself."[\(54\)](#)

Despite, or perhaps because of, Congress' delays in considering it, interest in the Fogarty resolution alternately ebbed and flowed, but never disappeared from the Irish agenda. While in Ireland in 1951 for one of his yearly visits, O'Callaghan learned from Judge James Comerford that support for the resolution was once again picking up:

Better news. The Fogarty resolution is catching on again. Last week we mailed from the Bureau a copy of "Ireland's Right to Freedom" to every Congressman and Senator...Since then Sean has the girls working at 40 Wall Street...mailing to clergy and other friends in the states. They are being asked to push their Congressmen. If things work out, it may come up for a vote on September 25.[\(55\)](#)

The resolution did finally come up for a vote in the House, but was defeated by 206 to 139, with 83 members not voting. Comerford's letter, however, is insightful in that it demonstrates the workings of the Irish-American community in support of such activities, and in chronicling O'Callaghan's and the Carmelites' connections and involvement on behalf of Ireland. The "Bureau" referred to in the letter is most likely the Scapular Bureau, which O'Callaghan headed. "Sean" is most probably Sean Keating, and the offices at 40 Wall Street in which he was working no doubt were those maintained for many years by Paul O'Dwyer.

The Anti-Partition Movement

Throughout the late 1940's and 1950's, O'Callaghan was to play an active and visible role in support of the anti-partition movement. He spoke in places like Boston and Cleveland and Rhode Island, and generally his talks were well-received and got attention in the media. In 1952, for example, he spoke out against discrimination in Northern Ireland at a meeting in Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Eagle recorded the proceedings under the headline, "Priest calls Northern Ireland 'British Police State.'"(56)

One interesting story related to O'Callaghan's speaking activities is revealed through his correspondence with a Boston Globe reporter, Bernadine Truden. She apparently attended one of his speeches at a rally, and sent the following letter:

Enclosed find the report on your speech...You will note the excellent company in which you find yourself...By devious means I found out where [Sen. Joe] McCarthy was staying, called him, asked him what he was saying about Ireland, to which he replied nothing, said surely he'd mention the Dirksen resolution (to which he said he would if I thought he should. I then typed out the quote, took it to him for his o.k.(57)

(The Dirksen resolution was a Senate resolution sponsored by Sen. Dirksen similar in nature to the Fogarty resolution).

In addition to his public activities, O'Callaghan worked behind the scenes to gain support for the anti-partition movement. He suggested at one point to Irish Foreign Affairs Minister Sean MacBride that an anti-partition letter be sent to Catholic Bishops in Northern Ireland, and thought they should be encouraged to attack the evils of partition. He believed this would help the propaganda Campaign in the U.S.(58)

O'Callaghan was also part of the Irish-American effort to discredit the visit to the U.S. of Sir Basil Brooke, Prime Minister of the Northern Ireland statelet. The British apparently felt the need to engage in their own propaganda activities to counter those of the Irish, and Brooke was being sent to drum up support for the status quo. During this time the Irish-American organizations arranged for Tom Barry (previously mentioned as an old-time IRA general) and two compatriots to also visit the U.S. Among the stunts planned was Barry's challenge to Brooke that the two should debate the partition issue in a public forum.

O'Callaghan was involved with many Irish-American groups. During the early and mid-1950's he headed the New York State Anti-Partition committee of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (he also served as chaplain of three AOH divisions). To promote the Fogarty resolution, and a similar one introduced in the Senate by Everett Dirksen, the group began a letter-writing campaign to each AOH state unit, urging them to form committees to check each congressional candidate's views on Ireland (the partition issue), and to publicize these views as much as possible. He also attended an Anti-Partition Committee meeting in Chicago in 1954, after which Judge Jim Comerford wrote: "In the exchange of views as well as the presentation of facts...you were most helpful."(59)

During the late 1950's and 1960's, the anti-partition movement lost steam, as its supporters came to realize that its success was unlikely. O'Callaghan and others were to turn their attention and energies to other issues, such as Civil rights in Northern Ireland and immigration to the US. O'Callaghan was a leading proponent of a campaign to change U.S. immigration laws that restricted the number of Irish who could come to this country. In addition, he was the chief concelebrant and homilist for the "Derry Martyrs" Mass in 1971, a much-publicized event.(60)

De Valera and O'Callaghan

As noted previously, the New York Carmelites enjoyed a special relationship with Irish political leader Eamon De Valera. And while O'Callaghan was only about one month old at the time of the Easter Rebellion in which De Valera participated, the priest continued and rejuvenated the connection which seemed to profit both parties so well.

There are several instances that attest to the ties that bound the two men together. In 1963, for example, O'Callaghan accompanied De Valera, who was then president of the Irish Republic, to President Kennedy's funeral to serve at his request as his personal chaplain.(61)

Another example occurred two years later, with the publication in America of Dorothy's MacArdle's book, *Irish Republic 1916-1923*. De Valera was keenly interested in seeing that this book was promoted in the U.S., as it was favorable to him, and because another book, which was pro-Cohalan (and hence anti-De Valera), was also being published. De Valera sought to promote the former to help blunt the negativity of the latter. He asked O'Callaghan to help out on this task, by seeing if MacArdle's book could be distributed through the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a request to which the priest replied affirmatively.(62)

In 1966, another interesting situation involving De Valera and O'Callaghan developed. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the 1916 Easter proclamation, the event organizers at Ireland's National University tried to arrange for a family representative of each of the seven signers to receive an honorary degree from the school. De Valera wrote to O'Callaghan asking him to help locate a relative of Sean MacDermott, one of the seven, as his closest living relative, a sister, refused to participate. Evidently she felt she could not in good conscience take part in such an event, as her brother had died fighting for a completely free Ireland. O'Callaghan was able to locate a relative and comply with the request, but the National University rejected the idea, saying it could not accept a replacement if the sister declined.(63)

As a final tribute to the Carmelites, De Valera asked to be buried in the religious habit of the Carmelite Order, a wish he made known to his friend Donald O'Callaghan.(64)

O'Callaghan & Irish Political Leaders

Although O'Callaghan and other Carmelites enjoyed a warm relationship with De Valera, they were also aligned with other powerful figures in Irish politics, including De Valera's political rivals.

In 1948, for example, the new *Taioseach*, John Costello, headed a coalition government, with Sean MacBride his Minister of External Affairs. They had toppled De Valera's party, *Fianna Fail*, from power in that year's election, owing in part to Dev's suppression of Irish Republican activities.

Costello would come to the U.S. in 1948, for meetings in Washington and to drum up support for his country. While in New York, he was invited by the Carmelites to lunch. As the New York Times reported, "At noon he will lunch with members of the Carmelite Order at the Church of Our Lady of the Scapular of Mt. Carmel"[\(65\)](#).

The meeting at East 28th street was not without controversy. The Carmelites had been supporters of De Valera for some 40 years, and apparently the thought of breaking bread with his political opponent was too much for some to swallow. Fr. Reid wrote that "Killian Lynch who was then provincial came but Fr. Larry Flanagan and Fr. Tim Shanley, faithful to De Valera, refused to come..." Still, he said, the very pleasant function did much to cement relations among the factions in Irish politics that had been divided for over thirty years.[\(66\)](#)

The following year, during his annual visit to Ireland, O'Callaghan also arranged a meeting with Costello, McBride, and Sean T. O'Kelly, president of the Republic (which had been proclaimed during Costello's term as Prime Minister). [\(67\)](#)

New York Politics

Fr. O'Callaghan's (and others of his colleagues, most notably Sean Reid's) efforts on behalf of Ireland brought him into contact with Irish-Americans who were influential in the New York political scene. Chief among these was Paul O'Dwyer (as well as his illustrious brother Bill, the former Mayor).

O'Callaghan's friendship with O'Dwyer extended beyond mutual support for Ireland, however. He and Sean Reid also became involved in elections in New York if they thought it would further the cause. In 1948, Paul O'Dwyer was running for Congress against Jacob Javits. As O'Dwyer relates:

Two other good friends, Fathers Sean Reid and Donal O'Callaghan, who had worked with me on problems of discrimination in Northern Ireland, sent me a donation with a note of explanation:

When capitalists have such great difficulty in getting suckers to contribute to their campaign funds, how much greater is the difficulty when a member of the proletariat finds himself launched, not too gently, upon a political career? Realizing this we started a campaign among such intimate friends of yours

as Peg Lynch, Mrs. O'Brien and some others of the inner circle of the Christian front. Using the argument that New York would be a safer place without your pernicious influence and that a little bit more confusion cannot matter in Washington, we managed to extract a few Wall Street dollars to speed you on your way. When you get to Washington we will use our influence to see that you are put on the Thomas Committee. Included in the check, but not dated, are a few prayers from Fr. Graham and Fr. Bradley. If you don't need them, give them to Oscar, but keep them away from Jayits.(68)

(Author's note -- The tone, of this letter is "tongue-in-cheek." The Christian Front was a right-wing organization that opposed the liberal O'Dwyer. Oscar is O'Dwyer's law firm partner and mentor, Oscar Bernstein.)

Although they are not central to the story here, Fr. Reid's political connections should also be noted, as they attest to the prominence the Carmelites enjoyed in the post-WWII Irish-American community. First, when Bill O'Dwyer was tainted with charges of being a communist prior to his election as Mayor, Reid, at a social function, attacked the issue head on and called the charges erroneous. One of the New York daily newspapers picked up the story, and ran with it, the results of which brought a rebuke from the Archdiocesan offices, but also some much needed support for O'Dwyer. Also, at the suggestion of his brother Paul and their friend Sean Keating, Fr. Reid was asked to give the invocation at Mayor O'Dwyer's inaugural ceremony. After giving the usual blessing, Reid launched into a speech asking the new Mayor to be especially cognizant of the problems facing blacks in New York City. The speech was a surprise to the Mayor, but it did help gain attention to the growing plight of blacks in the city. Finally, Fr. Reid said the funeral mass when the Mayor's first wife died after a long illness.(69)

O'Callaghan's involvement in local political affairs continued into the 1960's. Bill Carr, in his works on the New York Irish Carmelites, has recounted the story of how the Carmelite priest backed the waspish Jonathan Bingham over Bronx Democratic leader Pat Cunningham in the 1968 congressional election. The issue of Irish immigration apparently figured prominently in the race, and O'Callaghan, who let his name be used in Bingham's campaign literature, must have thought Bingham a better candidate on that issue. It should also be noted, however, that Bingham was a reform movement candidate, and probably had the backing of Paul O'Dwyer, who as previously mentioned was a friend of O'Callaghan's.(70)

O'Callaghan's popularity and connections in the Irish-American community led to his being named Grand Marshal of the St. Patrick's Day Parade in 1951. His selection, wrote John Ridge, was a tribute not only to himself but to the Irish Carmelites of East 28th Street, who had long labored to foster the spiritual and cultural welfare of the Irish in the city.(71) In later years, O'Callaghan was, according to Sean Reid, to use his influence with Harry Hynes (John Sheahan's handpicked successor as Parade chairman) to have Reid chosen as Grand Marshall in 1964.(72)

IV. The Pastor

While the sport (or profession, depending upon one's point of view) of politics has always seemed to figure so prominently on the Irish-American agenda, it by no means represents an all-consuming passion. If Donald O'Callaghan was passionate about the subject, that is no doubt due to the fact that the issue of Irish freedom and unity was so dear to those whom O'Callaghan was serving.

The community over which O'Callaghan served as "pastor," although it was largely Irish-American, had far broader and simpler needs and interests than just politics. It was, by and large, a community of immigrants, unschooled in either the American political and cultural system or in the sometimes treacherous milieu of modern urban life.

While Donald O'Callaghan never had a parish, he had many parishioners. While he was actively involved in Irish and Irish-American politics, he devoted much of this time, efforts and talent looking out for the spiritual and material welfare of his fellow Irish-Americans.

O'Callaghan's papers reveal many instances of his helping acquaintances (and in some instances, people who didn't know him, but knew of him). This assistance ran the gamut, from helping a couple to adopt a baby, to petitioning the court for clemency for a son of a friend who had gotten into trouble with the law, to helping Irish immigrants get a visa, to soothing the conscience of a young man jailed in a Belfast prison for his IRA activities.

For example, one young man wrote to O'Callaghan with a special problem. The man had a visa to leave Ireland for the U.S., but the visa was expiring and he was told it couldn't be renewed. While the man wished to come to the U.S., he wanted to wait until after the school year had ended, so his son's education wouldn't be disrupted. Through O'Callaghan's efforts, the visa was renewed. As the man wrote, "if it wasn't for you interceding on my behalf, I never would have gotten that extension"[\(73\)](#).

A Chicago couple wrote asking for his help in adopting a child; O'Callaghan suggested the name of an Irish agency that might be able to help. Parents wrote asking for his help in making sure their child got into a favored Catholic school. One elderly couple solicited his assistance in receiving a pension the husband should have been getting from the Irish government, even though the couple lived in the Bronx. "You were kind enough to help us regarding our little pension from the Irish government. Everything is O.K." the grateful couple wrote him.[\(74\)](#)

More often than not, the issue before O'Callaghan was jobs. An Irish immigrant sought a better position with his employer. A friend of a friend in Ireland inquired about job prospects if he came over. O'Callaghan's typical response would be to find the right person among his vast network of contacts.

For example, one man wrote about his problems as a transit worker. Although he was senior in experience to others, it seems that he was below them when it came time for choosing his vacation time. This meant, apparently, that the man got the less desirable vacation times. O'Callaghan intervened in his behalf, to which the transit worker responded with thanks. "I want to thank you for writing to Mr. Quill about my problem concerning seniority rights in the New York City Transit Division IRT system".(75) Apparently O'Callaghan's prominence gave him some influence even with the well-known militant head of the TA union, Mike Quill.

Another example of O'Callaghan tapping into his network is seen through a letter he wrote to Harry Hynes (who succeeded John Sheahan as head of the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee). "I know that your friend is the buyer at Patrick Reeves [a supermarket chain], consequently he would have a lot of influence with the White Rock Corp [a beverage manufacturer]. If he would therefore call [name omitted], I feel sure the young fellow would be placed in the sales department".(76)

For O'Callaghan the network worked both ways. Charles Rice (the lawyer active in Irish-American circles) once asked O'Callaghan for help in securing a job for a friend. The man, an Irish immigrant, apparently lacked some of the documents required for employment by some companies. Rice, however, identified companies not requiring the papers needed, and asked O'Callaghan if he had any friends at them.(77)

O'Callaghan's role as spiritual advisor is evident though his position as chaplain to many Irish-American organizations. But the role and importance of the clergy in Irish society at mid-century is most tellingly demonstrated through correspondence between the priest and a young fellow imprisoned in a Belfast jail for IRA activities.

The year was 1956, and the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland had condemned the sectarian violence. O'Callaghan had during one of his frequent visits to Ireland gone to Belfast prison and met Sean O'Callaghan (no relation). The prisoner wrote to the priest with a troubled conscience. In light of the hierarchy's condemnation, were his actions a sin?

"Is it a grievous sin to fight for the freedom of one's country? I'm sure you are surprised that I asked this question, for the answer seems obvious, but for the past few months, this problem has caused us much trouble. On the 29th January last, the Irish Hierarchy issued a statement which, in short, said that it was a mortal sin for any Catholic, either north or south of the border, to use force of arms against the invader, without permission from the lawful government. In trying to solve my predicament which resulted from this statement, I maintain that a man's conscience is the final arbiter in such a case. Though my conscience tells me that I am right in standing by my physical force involvement, I have abstained from the sacraments, because my action automatically incurs the sin of disobedience. Not being able to receive the sacraments each week, as we used to do, is a terrible blow to us, and for my own part, it makes jail life much more difficult".(78)

Unfortunately, O'Callaghan chose not to address the boy's dilemma in writing. He responded by saying that they would discuss the matter during the priest's next visit. It

nonetheless remains an excellent example of the relationship a clergyman had with his "flock."

Irish Culture -- The Feis

Because they were often immigrants, or the sons and daughters of immigrants, O'Callaghan's "parishioners," like their counterparts from countries all over the globe, often fervently adopted American customs and just as passionately dropped their own. In seeking to fit it to the society of their new country, they oftentimes chose to forget the culture and traditions of the one they left.

Even as late as 1947, there was evidence of the suspicions and barriers facing Irish immigrants. It was such that in a speech before an Irish-American political event, Mayor William O'Dwyer, as recorded in the November 23, 1947 issue of The New York Times, felt compelled to tell his listeners that "it was of primary importance for Irish-Americans, engaged in aiding the cause of freedom of all of Ireland, to maintain the confidence of the American people and their loyalty to the US. 'We must not leave this convention without reaffirming that we are intensely loyal to our Constitution,' he said."[\(79\)](#)

O'Callaghan understood the need for immigrants to assimilate into the society of their new country, but at the same time regretted the loss of culture and history that too often resulted from this assimilation. Among the areas for which he was well-known was his knowledge of Irish history. The number of events he spoke at on the subject during the 1940's, 50's and 60's was exceeded only by the number of speaking invitations he received, some of which he was forced to decline because of time restrictions and intermittent illnesses.

While O'Callaghan tried to keep alive Irish history, he was also involved in promoting Irish culture in the U.S. Every year, beginning in 1932, the United Irish Counties Association organized a feis, which is an Irish festival with competitions in step dancing, singing, music, literature, history, elocution and other Irish subjects. The feis was traditionally held in June at Fordham University in the Bronx.

The feis was a significant event in Irish-American society. The New York Times reported that Mayor William O'Dwyer would attend the 1947 event, and had attended the preceding 15 as well. The Times also noted that "more than 1,500 children and adults, dressed in Irish costumes, will dance to Irish music and sing folksongs. More than 25,000 persons are expected to attend. 'The purpose of the feis,' the Mayor said, 'is to encourage Irish cultural activity in the U.S.'"[\(80\)](#)

O'Callaghan participated in the *feis*, helping to prepare the syllabus for the writing and history competitions. He also helped out on the financial side of the event; in the 1950's the event had been postponed and rescheduled three times because of rain, causing the sponsoring organization (U.I.C.A.) to incur a deficit. O'Callaghan helped to raise funds to eliminate the deficit.

The Shrine at Knock

A combination of his love for Ireland and his religious calling resulted in O'Callaghan becoming involved in arranging an annual pilgrimage to the shrine at Knock in County Mayo.

The shrine at Knock was an important cultural and religious symbol for the Irish. "Of all the sacred spots on earth, and there are many, none is dearer to the Irish heart than the shrine at Knock. It is the place hallowed by St. Patrick on his way across country, where he stopped to pray and rest."[\(81\)](#)

The association with St. Patrick was perhaps significant enough to earn the location some distinction. Adding to its reputation was the fact that "the Irish people believe that the Mother of God appeared there because of Patrick, who loved her devotedly..."[\(82\)](#)

In 1948, the Carmelites in New York, led by O'Callaghan, joined in an effort to elevate the Irish shrine to a status held by others at Lourdes and Fatima. O'Callaghan became president of the American Society of our Lady of Knock, and organized annual pilgrimages to the Shrine.

The first year, a group of 31 American pilgrims joined some 8,000 others from Europe and throughout Ireland. The second year some 200 Americans participated. The trips continued through the 1950's but seemed to have ceased sometime later in the decade. O'Callaghan mentioned in a letter to DeValera that he wanted to start the annual pilgrimages up again, but it doesn't appear he was successful.[\(83\)](#)

The Carmelite devotion to the shrine grows out of the Blessed Virgin's appearance there. As mentioned previously, the Order holds a special and reserved place for Mary. While O'Callaghan was consequently active in promoting the pilgrimage out of his devotion to her, he was also active in promoting related events in the U.S. For example, in 1954 he organized a "Marian Year Rally" to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the appearance of Mary at the shrine. The rally included a march down 5th avenue and culminated in a mass at St. Patrick's.

Irish Economic Development

O'Callaghan's devotion to Ireland and his Irish-American constituency also led to his involvement in promoting the economic well-being of the country. The priest maintained throughout his correspondence his devotion to buying things Irish: "I have always firmly believed that the most practical way to help Ireland was to import from Ireland, hence I have tried to do what I could," he wrote Irish consul general John Conway in 1956. [\(84\)](#) In fact, O'Callaghan kept scrupulous records concerning his purchases of Irish goods; over roughly a 25-year period (1946-1970), he estimated that these purchases amounted to about \$70,000, a considerable sum for a priest who had taken the vow of poverty. O'Callaghan said frequently that if it was possible for a clergyman to spend that kind of money, others with more ample means could be doing much more.[\(85\)](#)

In his efforts to promote Irish exports, O'Callaghan would write to his friend, Foreign Minister Sean McBride, suggesting the Irish government give more thought to stimulating American imports of Irish goods.(86) He would also take an active interest in promoting Irish commerce in any way he could. He agreed to attend the inaugural flight ceremonies of K.L.M. Royal Dutch Airlines service from Idlewild (now Kennedy) airport to Ireland, blessing the flight.(87)

Several years later, he hosted a luncheon for an Irish bishop, Cornelius Lucey, at the Commodore Hotel. The event was ostensibly to interest American businessmen in doing more business with Ireland. Towards that end, he worked closely with the Irish Industrial Development Authority to secure the attendance of important Irish-American businessmen. "I have given your secretary the names of five additional prominent businessmen who might prove useful" wrote the agency's deputy director to O'Callaghan on that occasion.(88)

In 1964, O'Callaghan joined Jack Lynch, Irish Minister for Commerce and Industry at the New York World's Fair. At the Fair, he blessed the Irish Pavilion, which displayed a variety of Irish goods and crafts.(89)

Even while attending to spiritual matters and helping to pump the Irish economy, O'Callaghan conspired to promote an Irish political agenda. An example of this is demonstrated in a letter he received from an agent of the U.S. Lines, the steamship company that the American pilgrims to Knock were traveling on (and whose identity is unknown): "When your pilgrimage is landing (in Ireland), get as many of them as possible to change their 'Immigration Cards'...striking out the British Isles and writing in Republic of Ireland...After all, if they have 'severed the link' there is no reason...to keep on using the other fellow's stationary" (90).

V. Conclusion

With the death of Donald Maria O'Callaghan, at the age of 57, on May 9, 1973, another chapter in the notable history of the New York Irish Carmelites came to an end.

A chapter in Irish history also ended that day. Sitting at the funeral mass was Vivion De Valera, representing his father, the famous Irish leader, who had passed from the scene. Old Irish revolutionaries, what was left of the group were well into the twilight of their lives, were there as well, and they gave their final blessing -- after Cardinal Cooke had given his -- by singing, in Irish, "A Soldier's Song," their national anthem.(91)/p>

To extend the analogy even further, it can also be said that a chapter in the history of Irish-Americans in New York ended at that time, for by O'Callaghan's death, that community was fleeing urban life to live in the comfortable confines of suburbia. The old parishes were disintegrating, the Irish-dominated political system in New York was dissolving, the city was no longer seeming like the Irish town it used to be.

On one level, then, this was Donald O'Callaghan's legacy. His life was a timepiece that measured the coming and passing of the "old order" from the scene...it reflected the unrealized hopes and ambitions of Irish patriots...and signaled the rise and fall of an era in the city's life that was dominated by Irish-Americans.

There are those who view that era with nostalgia, and remember its passing with sorrow. And in similar way there are those who would argue that despite the best of intentions and no shortage of effort, the ultimate goals of O'Callaghan and his contemporaries remain unrealized. After all, Ireland remains a poor, divided nation. New York is not the city it used to be. Irish-Americans no longer control the wards and precincts and borough halls. The sense of community between priest and parishioners that existed thirty years ago is now but a memory in most urban neighborhoods.

But there is a deeper lesson to be learned, and a more profound legacy left behind for those of us who wish to study it. It is that the passing of the old generation of Irish leaders brings hope that the new one may yet be able to reconcile the differences that divide the island nation. And that it is the very success of men like O'Callaghan in inspiring and ministering to the needs of the immigrants and sons and daughters of immigrants, that has fueled their unprecedented mobility up the American social and economic ladders.

Even as late as mid-century, the society into which Irish immigrants had come was not completely free of barriers that impeded their progress. Men like O'Callaghan broke down those barriers. They tried relentlessly to secure a better place, a better position, for their constituents.

The Irish-American political community -- that network of government officials, union leaders, private businessmen and priests -- may have often worked at cross purposes on the larger political issues; on an individual level, though, it was amazingly effective. It was a tradition that evolved from a sense of community -- which was instilled in large part by the Irish priests -- and it is a lesson that other groups, facing similar challenges, today strive to learn and emulate.

Footnotes

Much of the information in this work comes from the Papers of Donald O'Callaghan that are presently at the American-Irish Historical Museum. Those papers contain letters, newspaper clips, memos, notes, pamphlets and brochures. Professor Joseph Peden, who catalogued the papers, has developed a list of the brochures and pamphlets.

In citing these sources, I attribute them as both "O'Callaghan papers" and then cite the specific material referred to by the footnote. For example, in citing a letter to O'Callaghan from Cornelius Neenan, the citation will read: O'Callaghan papers. Letter from C. Neenan, July 12, 1944."

Every effort is made to identify as accurately as possible the specific material being cited. Sometimes, however, this was impossible, as O'Callaghan's papers contained unsigned and undated notes and newspaper stories. Also, correspondence from or to those not in the public eye or of historical interest omits their names from the citations.

In addition, for simplicity's sake and to avoid confusion, I refer to the work of Father Alfred Isacson in an abbreviated fashion. His volumes of history of the Carmelite Order are referred to as, for example, "Carmel: 1927-47, pg. 92."

Finally, for the complete citation of a work referred to here, please consult the bibliography.

1 **The New York Daily News** , February 14, 1990, p. 68

2 Ibid, p. 68.

3 Griffin, p. 278-279

4 Ibid, p. 278-279

5 Carr, **The Irish Carmelites**,p 55

6 Ridge, p. 153

7 Reid, p. 55

8 Dunphy, p. 22

9 Dixon, p. 17

10 Ibid, p. 42

11 O'Callaghan papers. To attract interest in the pilgrimage to the shrine at Knock, O'Callaghan drafted a notice outlining the trip, and providing some background on the importance of the shrine. In it he described the "scapular devotion." A scapular is a piece of cloth worn close to the breast (as a medallion would be). Its purpose is sacramental in nature.

12 Ibid.

13 Carr, **The Irish Carmelites** , pgs. 18-19. The movement to achieve freedom from Great Britain through armed violence before the creation of the Irish Free State is referred to as Fenianism. In Ireland the movement became known as The Irish Republican Brotherhood; in the US it was known as the Clan Na Gael.

14 Carmel, 1906-1927, p. 114

15 Ibid, p. 158

16 Ibid, p. 158

17 Ibid, p. 145-6

18 Ibid.,p. 155

19 O'Callaghan papers. Letter from S. O'Kelly, January 8, 1961.

20 Carmel, 1906-27, p. 144

21 Reid, p. 55; O'Callaghan papers

22 O'Callaghan papers

23 Reid, p. 55

24 Dunphy, p. 22

25 Reid, p. 55

26 Carr, **The Irish Carmelites**, p. 55

27 Carmel, 1927-47, p. 89

28 Ibid, p. 89

29 Ibid, p. 97

30 Ibid, p. 89

31 O'Callaghan papers. Letter to C.B. Driscoll, March 24, 1945

32 O'Callaghan papers. **The Manhattan College Quadrangle**,1945

33 Carmel, 1927-47, p. 181

34 Carmel, 1947-86, p. 1

35 Ibid, pgs. 1, 23

36 Ibid, p. 2

37 **The New York Times**, May 10, 1973

38 Reid, p. 55

39 O'Dwyer, Paul, p. 82

40 O'Callaghan papers. Letter from C. Neenan. Dec. 8, 1944

41 Ibid. Letter from C. Neenan. July 8, 1946

42 Reid, p. 56

43 O'Callaghan papers. **The Rebel** (the magazine of the County Cork Association), September, 1945

44 O'Callaghan papers. Letter from C. Neenan, March 28, 1946

45 Ibid, Letter from C. Neenan, May 28, 1946

46 O'Callaghan papers. Minutes of UICA meeting, March 29, 1946

47 **The New York Times**, June 5, 1947, p. 2.

48 O'Callaghan papers. Handwritten note, undated.

49 Reid, p. 89

50 O'Callaghan papers. Undated note.

51 **The New York Times** , November 23, 1947, p. 3

52 Reid, p. 89

53 **The New York Times**, November 23, 1947, p. 3

54 O'Callaghan papers. Letter to J. Fogarty, June 15, 1947

55 O'Callaghan papers. Letter from J. Comerford, June 26, 1951

56 O'Callaghan papers. **The Brooklyn Eagle**, March 20, 1952

57 O'Callaghan papers. Letter from B. Truden, March 19, 1955

58 O'Callaghan papers. Letter to S. MacBride, January 29, 1951

59 O'Callaghan papers. Letter from J. Comerford, October 23, 1954

60 Conversation with Carr, William J.

[61](#) Carr, **The Irish Carmelites**, p. 5

[62](#) Irish Letters. Letters exchanged between O'Callaghan and De Valera during May, 1965

[63](#) Irish Letters. Letters exchanged between O'Callaghan and De Valera during February and March, 1966

[64](#) Irish Letters. Note from De Valera, September 21, 1972

[65](#) O'Callaghan papers. Clip from **The New York Times**

[66](#) Reid, p. 116

[67](#) O'Callaghan papers; correspondence with S. O'Kelly

[68](#) O'Dwyer, Paul, p. 140

[69](#) Reid, pgs. 60-62; O'Dwyer, Wm. and Paul, pgs. 229-30; p. 269

[70](#) Conversation with Carr, William J.

[71](#) Ridge, pgs. 143-44

[72](#) Reid, p. 119

[73](#) O'Callaghan papers. Letter from H. Whelton, January 17, 1958

[74](#) O'Callaghan papers

[75](#) O'Callaghan papers

[76](#) O'Callaghan papers. Letter to Harry Hynes, May 9, 1961

[77](#) O'Callaghan papers

[78](#) O'Callaghan papers. Letter from S. O'Callaghan March 12, 1956

[79](#) **The New York Times**, November 23, 1947, p. 3

[80](#) Ibid, June 15, 1947, p.52

[81](#) O'Callaghan papers. **The Christian Family and Our Missions** (magazine), August 1950

[82](#) Ibid.

- [83](#) Irish Letters. Letter to De Valera, October 1, 1962
- [84](#) O'Callaghan papers. Letter to J. Conway, February 9, 1956
- [85](#) O'Callaghan papers. Letter to J. Whelton, November 16, 1970
- [86](#) O'Callaghan papers. Letter to S. MacBride
- [87](#) O' Callaghan papers. **The Gaelic-American**, May 6, 1949
- [88](#) O'Callaghan papers. Letter from A. Carter, November 17, 1959
- [89](#) O'Callaghan papers. Clip from Irish weekly newspaper
- [90](#) O'Callaghan papers. Writer unknown, June 15, 1950.
- [91](#) Carr, **The Irish Carmelites**, pgs. 14-15

Bibliography

In addition to the sources listed below, this work draws extensively from the papers of Donald M. O'Callaghan, which were donated by the Carmelites after his death to the American-Irish Historical Society (991 Fifth Avenue, NYC), and which have been catalogued by Prof. J. Peden. Included in these papers are various letters from and to Fr. O'Callaghan, as well as newspaper clips, brochures, pamphlets, etc.

Books, articles, unpublished works:

Carr, William J. **The Irish Carmelites of New York City and the Fight for Irish Independence, 1916-1919**. Middletown, NY: The Vestigium Press, 1973.

Carr, William J. "Eamon De Valera and the New York Irish Carmelites." Paper presented at the American Conference on Irish Studies at the American Irish Historical Society, November 4, 1989.

Carr, William J. "The Cradle of Irish Independence in America --The Carmelite Parish of Our Lady of the Scapular of Mount Carmel." Paper presented at the New York Irish History Roundtable, October 4, 1989.

Dixon, Frank, O. Carm. **Archbishop Corrigan and the Irish Carmelites**. New York: The Vestigium Press (n.d.)

Dunphy, Liam. "County Cork in New York: A History of the County Cork Association." **The Journal of the New York Irish History Roundtable**, Vol. 3, 1988

Griffin, William D. **The Book of Irish Americans**. New York: Random House, 1990.

Fitzgibbon, Constantine and Morrison, George. **The Life and Times of Eamon De Valera**. New York: MacMillan, 1973.

"Important Papers" The Irish Plank and Four Irish Letters. Edited by Alfred Isacson, O.Carm. Unpublished, 1987. (A compilation of letters and messages concerning Irish affairs in the US during 1919-20. Included is a copy of the minutes of a meeting held in June 8, 1920 in Chicago prior to the Republican National Convention. Attendees at the meeting include Eamon De Valera and Daniel Cohalan. The papers are a riveting chronicle of the reasons behind the De Valera-Cohalan rift.)

© Copyright to this work is retained by the author[s]. Permission is granted for the noncommercial reproduction of the complete work for educational or research purposes.
