

Father John M. Murphy

John Murphy was born in Duncummin, Emly County Tipperary, Ireland on the 16th December 1855. He was educated at St Munchin's College, Limerick where he studied Classics and then St Patrick's Diocesan College Thurles where he studied from 1873 to 1879. He was ordained a priest there on 21st March 1880 by Archbishop Thomas W. Croke of Cashel for Cashel Diocese.

Fr Murphy was then sent on loan to St Andrews and Edinburgh in Scotland serving first as assistant Priest at St Mary's Stirling from 1880 to 1881 and then coming here to St Patrick's Kilsyth in 1881 where he served for 4 years until 1885 working throughout this period with his Parish Priest who was also called Fr John Murphy(!) – his PP only later becoming John Canon Murphy after Fr John M Murphy's departure in 1885. As far as we can tell from the Scottish Catholic Directory, Fr John M. Murphy is the first assistant Priest to be appointed to St Patrick's Kilsyth in recognition of the growing Catholic population in Kilsyth and the surrounding villages of Banton, Banknock, Twechar and most notably Croy which also had a large and growing Catholic Population. St Patrick's Kilsyth ministered to the needs of all of these surrounding villages until the creation of the Parish of 'Holy Cross' in Croy in 1902.

After leaving Kilsyth Fr John M Murphy was sent to St Joseph's Linlithgow in West Lothian (which was renamed St Michael's during his period there - St Michael's had been the pre-reformation name of the Parish which had served the Scottish Royal family at Linlithgow Palace) where he served from 1885 to 1889. It was during this time in Linlithgow he was to build (quite literally having been trained as a stone mason before becoming a Priest) the new St Michael's Church in Linlithgow which saw its first Mass on St Valentine's Day 1888 and was fully completed by him later that year.

In 1889 he was sent as assistant priest to Birmingham for a few months before being recalled to Cashel.

Once back in Ireland he was appointed as assistant Priest in Borrisoleigh, County Tipperary again only for a few months in 1889 before being moved to Moycarkey, County Tipperary where he was to stay for a year until 1890. His final appointment as an assistant Priest was at Knocklong in County Limerick (the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly has parishes in both County Tipperary and County Limerick) where he stayed for nineteen years from 1890 to 1909. There, utilising his building skills, he built the curate's house in 1892. After this he was appointed as Parish Priest of St John The Baptist at Boherlahan in County Tipperary on 13th June 1909 where he served until his death on Christmas Day 1917. During this mission he was also a builder and a renowned educationalist. He erected teacher's residences at Dualla (now a community centre) and at Ballytarsna (now sold) to house and attract teaching skills to the area. His Archbishop, Archbishop Morris of the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly, described Fr. Murphy "*...as a zealous priest, a sterling patriot, and revered by his people.*" Fr Murphy was buried in the churchyard of St John the Baptist amongst the parishioners which he served there. Fr. Murphy was succeeded in Boherlahan by Fr. John Duggan.

"Acutely aware of the high cost of building a new church and of how little they could spare from their small incomes they were nonetheless actively engaged in saving for their own premises when their prayers were heard and answered. The appointment of Fr John M. Murphy was very

fortuitous indeed since he had trained as a stonemason before being called to the priesthood. A good pastor he quickly associated himself with the needs of his parishioners and ...advertised in the 'Glasgow Observer' that he intended holding a grand bazaar, 'to raise funds for the erection of a church dedicated to Queen Mary'."

Less than one year after his arrival and with the willing help of the young men of the parish he set about building the church himself. The foundation stone was laid by the Archbishop in 1887. (Indeed, lodged in the archives is the ceremonial trowel beautifully inscribed - "Presented to His Grace Archbishop Smith by the Members of the Catholic Congregation, Linlithgow on the occasion of his laying the foundation stone of the Mary Queen of Scots Memorial Church. 14th June 1887".) It would appear from reports in the local paper that it was on this occasion that the decision was taken to change the name of the parish from St. Joseph's to St. Michael's and to dedicate the church to St. Michael though still in memory of Mary Queen of Scots, the only church in Scotland so Dedicated." **Web Site of St Michael's Linlithgow – History – The Church on Blackness Road.**

"He [Ed- Fr John M Murphy] built St Michael's Church Linlithgow; completed in 1888. The Irish exiles were the first to benefit from the ministrations of such an essentially Irish Priest, full of patriotic sentiments and determined in every contingency to advance the moral and material interests of his beloved countrymen. His labours in Scotland were abundantly fruitful for the Church and for the sons and daughters of Erin." **Tipperary Star Jan 5th 1918 p6.**

"...it would be difficult to adequately describe his beneficent and benevolent activities in those populous parishes. Very few farmers of the Parishes had been relieved of the incubus of dual proprietorship. The recent Land Acts had not been extensively availed of, but carrying his old and firm nationalist traditions to this patriotic part of Tipperary, Fr Murphy added many future successes to his records in the Land struggle. From his induction to his death he was president of the Boherlahan branch of the United Irish League*. As a result of Fr Murphy's untiring leadership and counsel almost the entire parishes have been converted from duality owned into proprietorial holdings.

A good deal of congestion and uneconomic farms existed in the Ballinree district but through the instrumentality of Fr Murphy, Lord Barrymore was induced to sell his Barrymore Estate and it was suitably apportioned amongst the small holdings of the locality, thereby turning the countryside into one of the happiest and most contented in Munster.

His Nationalism had a larger tinge than the local; it was of the bigger description being truly national. All this the vicissitudes of Irish Politics for the last decade and more Fr Murphy stood unflinchingly and unwaveringly by the standard of Irish Nationalism as enunciated and declared by the chosen representatives of the Irish people...

Fr Murphy's record as an educationalist is as great as his achievements in furtherance of the Devine Call and the twin cause of fatherland. His work in connection with the development and remarkable success of the Boherlahan Co-op, Creamery Society will be long remembered in the history of the Society." **Tipperary Star Jan 5th 1918 p6**

*The United Irish League (UIL) was a nationalist political party in Ireland. The UIL was explicitly designed to reconcile various political fragments by bringing them together into a new grass roots organisation around a program of agrarian agitation, political reform and Irish Home Rule. The UIL took up the issue of land redistribution, which the Irish Land League had campaigned on two decades earlier, but had been side-lined. The UIL's first electoral target was for the county council elections under the new revolutionary Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898 which broke the power of the landlord ascendancy dominated "Grand Juries", for the first time passing absolute democratic control

of local affairs into the hands of the people through elected Local County Councils, next to Home Rule a remarkable concession to popular rights and economic reconstruction in Ireland.

Our thanks to Ailish Larkin, Librarian of St. Patrick's College, Thurles, Co Tipperary Ireland for helping with our research.