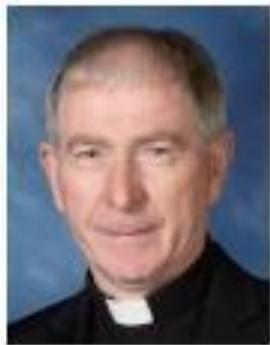


Father Martin's Pen

June 30, 2019

The Legacy of Generations



Later in my Father's life he developed a habit of visiting cemeteries. For him they were not sad occasions, but times of memory. As he read the name on the headstone, it would bring back a memory of someone that he knew and had happy thoughts of.

In more recent years, during my vacation to Ireland to see my family, I have taken to visiting a cemetery beside Burrishoole Abbey near the small town of Newport. There, is buried a personal friend, a Father Thomas Gibbons who used to visit our house and give me chocolate as a child.

Following a few prayers at his grave, I would go to the local ruins of the Monastery and attempt to relive the life of the monks who had lived there about 500 years ago.

The Monastery was built in 1470 by someone who is almost certainly a distant relative of mine, a Richard de Burgo. This is the French version of my name Bourke or Burke, who were Normans from France who came to England in the Norman invasion and then on to Ireland, settling on the west coast of Ireland. Richard built the Monastery without permission. The Pope relented and asked the local Archbishop of Tuam to belatedly grant permission to the Dominican monks. You may ask what happened to the Monastery. It was a victim of King Henry VIII's suppression of Catholic monasteries all over England and Ireland around 1539.

The monks were dispersed and so the Monastery became a ruin.

A famous monastery in north England in the Yorkshire area called Fountains Abbey suffered the same fate. At one time a prosperous and architectural wonder those ruins draw lots of tourists each year now to view what remains.

Fountains Abbey was attached to Clairvaux Abbey in France of the Cistercian rite.

The Cistercians of north France had their own time of trial when they backed a rival Pope in the Papal Schism of 1378 to 1409. Fountains Abbey was forced to cut its ties to Clairvaux and came under the finger of the Archbishop of York.

I have not visited north-east England or the Yorkshire area. Perhaps I need to put it on my bucket list. Besides a priest from my home parish has been Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle for the past few years, Most Rev. Seamus Cunningham.

The memory of those who have gone before us and the sacrifices they made to hold on to faith should be always to the forefront of our minds. Can we ever have sufficient respect and gratitude for the example of their lives? Will we ever measure up to their witness and tenaciousness? Will we be the saints that they already are?

Father Martin

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