

## **Feast of Blessed Edmund Rice**

**5th May**

On the 1st of June 1762, Edmund Ignatius Rice was born in Callan, Co. Kilkenny. At that time life was difficult for the Catholics in Ireland. Catholics were not allowed to go to school and many were very, very poor.

Edmund went to work with his uncle in Waterford when he was 17 years old. He worked hard and soon set up his own business. He was a good man, and always tried to help those who were poor by giving them a job and a fair wage.

He married Mary Elliot in 1787. Three years later, Mary was involved in an accident with her horse and carriage. Mary died as a result of the accident. Edmund was devastated. He was broken hearted and sold off his business.

Edmund started a school for a few poor boys in a converted stable, with a room for himself above the classrooms. Most of his friends thought he was daft to do such a thing! The boys that he worked with had never been to school before, and many of them behaved badly. In fact, Edmund could not even get teachers to help him. People didn't want to work with the children that Edmund was trying to teach and help.

Eventually, two of his oldest friends came to support him. They had heard about what Edmund was doing and wanted to support him. They agreed to live together in the rooms above the stable, and they worked hard to teach as many boys as they could. Soon, people came to hear about the good work that Edmund and, his friends, Thomas and Patrick were doing, and they wanted to join them.

One day the Bishop of Cork came to see Edmund's School. He was so impressed by what he saw that he decided to start a school like it in Cork. Edmund agreed to help. Many men wanted to follow Edmund's good example, and lots more schools were set up just like the one in Waterford. The men who worked in the schools lived together like a family and so they became known as the Christian Brothers. In total, the Christian Brothers set up almost one hundred schools in the Republic of Ireland. Today, these schools are part of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. On October 6th 1996, Edmund Rice was declared "Blessed". This means that he is in the process of being named a saint.