

The new Chapel of Meditation / “the Nun’s Chapel”

The Chapel of Meditation, has recently been restored and refurbished to a very high standard, the work being completed early in 2015. It is now a beautiful yet functional space within our church which provides a comfortable and warm facility for our parishioners to be part of prayer groups in vocal or contemplative worship or in their own private worship.

The parishioners are very grateful for this new facility, it has long been a need particularly for older members of our parish attending the weekly Eucharistic Adoration.

As always, we are very grateful to those parishioners who contribute weekly to the Restoration Fund and those who we know have made specific donations for the refurbishment of this chapel.

We must also acknowledge the great generosity of two benefactors from afar....

We were delighted to receive a donation of €5,000 from the Healy-Murphy Foundation in San Antonio, Texas. This is the organisation which was founded by Cahersiveen born, Margaret Mary Healy Murphy in 1888.

And a donation of €2,000 from the Archbishop of the Diocese of Melbourne in Australia. These donations were a huge help in enabling us to complete the refurbishment of the Chapel of Meditation.

Thank you so much. What a blessing it is to have this beautiful new chapel and it would not have been possible without all of your kind donations.





Take a trip down memory lane by viewing a few youtube videos taken by Patrick O’Sullivan. Just click the links to view.

Quel dommage!(what a pity!) On May 31st, 1992, the late Sr Loretta gave a tour of the old convent in Cahersiveen, what is now the Watermarque Hotel. Jerry Ring, a brother of the late Owen Ring, Cahersiveen, decided to make a video. In this video, Sr Loreto gave a detailed tour of the following: Left hand parlour and the Refectory, where the Nuns had their meals.

The late Sr De Lourdes wrote a book , As We Lived It, about her life at Cahersiveen Presentation convent.

In her book, De Lourdes, (1980) gives details about the strong connection the convent house has with The Liberator, Daniel O’Connell: It was Daniel O’Connell who brought the sisters to Cahersiveen. Mother Joseph brought two other Sisters with her on October 21st, 1840, and they settled down to live in the house that the Liberator had bought for them. It belonged to a Church of Ireland minister though he had never lived in it (Stack, 1980). The right hand parlour housed a piano that Daniel O’Connell presented to the nuns, shortly after they arrived in Cahersiveen in 1840, and an original fireplace from the lawn mansion, at Castlequin, Over the Water, Cahersiveen . As we have read, this is a very historic house. It is thankfully standing, though the school and sleeping quarters of the convent were demolished in 2005.

(Reference list: Stack, A. L., & Stack, D. L. (1980). As we lived it. Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland: Kerryman Ltd.. Pp 21, 39)

Front Door and Right Parlour (Daniel O' Connell piano), Convent, Cahersiveen, Co. Kerry, Ireland
www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gb3na3GYXA

Left parlour and Refectory, Presentation Convent, Cahersiveen, Co. Kerry, Ireland.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_1EMDy8Tpw

First electric lights in Cahersiveen, dating from 1915, the Nuns' First electric lighting in Cahersiveen, dating from 1915, an inscription that a local nun, Sr Bernadette carved on a pane of glass in the convent infirmary, a fine table crafted from Valentia slate, and finally, the Nuns' Chapel. In Spring 1915, Edward Leo Cantwell arrived in Cahersiveen, bringing electricity to Cahersiveen. The Presentation Convent in Cahersiveen was one of the first houses in the town to have electricity - the lights in the Convent's community room and Nun's chapel date from 1915.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=TD4F-f5SS5Q

A tour of the garden, Presentation Convent, Sr Loreto gave a detailed tour, including the following highlights: historical parlours, with a piano that Daniel O' Connell presented to the nuns, shortly after they arrived in Cahersiveen in 1840, an original fireplace from the lawn mansion, at Castlequin, Over the Water, Cahersiveen, the Nuns' refectory - the first electric lights in Cahersiveen, an inscription that a local nun carved on a pane of glass in the convent infirmary, various items crafted from Valentia slate, and finally, St Joseph's Convent School, with its impressive doll collection www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4mK_d8XZ54

The Infirmary and St Joseph's Convent School, Cahersiveen, Co. Kerry, Ireland. The late Sr Loreto gives a detailed historical tour, including the following highlights: historical parlours, with a piano that Daniel O' Connell presented to the nuns, shortly after they arrived in Cahersiveen in 1840, an original fireplace from the lawn mansion, at Castlequin, Over the Water, Cahersiveen, the Nuns' refectory - the first electric lights in Cahersiveen, an inscription that a local nun carved on a pane of glass in the convent infirmary, various items crafted from Valentia slate, and finally, St Joseph's Convent School, with its impressive doll collection www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4mK_d8XZ54

St Joseph's Primary School yard and school, including the collection of dolls. On May 31st, 1992, the late Sr Loreto gave a tour of the old convent in Cahersiveen. Sr Loreto gave a detailed, historical tour, including the following highlights: parlours, with a piano that Daniel O' Connell presented to the nuns, shortly after they arrived in Cahersiveen in 1840, an original fireplace from the lawn mansion, at Castlequin, Over the Water, Cahersiveen, the Nuns' refectory - Some of the first electric lights in Cahersiveen, dating from 1915, an inscription that a local nun carved on a pane of glass in the convent infirmary, various items crafted from Valentia slate, and finally, St Joseph's Convent School. All these highlights are spread over the eight videos on this documentary.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmJdt37lvMw

The Re-Dedication of the Nun's Chapel 2015 by Sr. Mary Hoare

Congratulations to the people of South Kerry who, led by successive parish priests, embarked on the courageous journey of restoring the O'Connell Memorial Church and are on target to date with their plan of action.

Celebratory Eucharist

Pope Francis declared 2015 as the 'Year of Consecrated Life' and the Cahersiveen Deanery marked the event on 28th August, combining it with the re-dedication of the Nun's Chapel which was refurbished earlier in the year. The letter of invitation from Canon Larry Kelly PP, states "The Mass forms a key part of our parish celebration for the 'Year of the Religious'. It is also part of the annual Daniel O'Connell Summer School". These events fit finely together as Daniel O'Connell is closely connected with the history of the Presentation Sisters in Cahersiveen and there are many Presentation past pupils who joined various Religious Congregations both in Ireland and abroad.

The Nun's Chapel – The Upper Choir

I rejoice at the news that the Nun's Chapel is now part of the Church and in use all year round. The refurbishment and re-dedication is serving a need for a comfortable and warm space for prayer and it also ensures that the memory of the Presentation Sisters in Cahersiveen will endure. It is our privilege and responsibility to pass on to the next generation, what we have received. Nowadays, availability of education is taken for granted but in the 19th and early part of the 20th century, Catholics were poor and uneducated and without means of redressing this situation. Nano Nagle founded the Presentation Sisters in 1775 in Cork and she imbued in each of them, her zeal for education and service of the poor. Mother Joseph O' Mahoney, a relative of Daniel O'Connell, came with two other Sisters from the Presentation Community in Dingle and together with a fourth Sister from the Milltown Community, they founded the Cahersiveen Community and school in 1840. Within just weeks, there 458 pupils enrolled in the school.

Enclosure

At that time and up to Vatican II (1963-65), the Congregation was bound by the Rule of Enclosure which meant that the Sisters did not go outside the Convent grounds. They taught in the classrooms and had their own Chapel in the Convent where they prayed. There was no Chaplain so they had to attend the Parish Church for Mass but Enclosure demanded separation, hence the need for the space known to the Sisters as the 'Upper Choir'. Here, behind the grate, the Sisters attended daily Mass and all Church services. The grate was opened only to give access to the priest to distribute Holy Communion and after Mass it would be locked again.

Memories

During my school years (1956-69) when I had the benefit of an excellent education on my doorstep in Presentation Primary and Secondary Schools, we never saw the sisters in the shops, library, pathways, graveyards or beaches apart from Ballinskelligs. (Just occasionally we would see them at a distance on Ballinskelligs beach where there was a retreat Convent for nuns to have a holiday in the summer). Neither could we see them in the church but we were very aware of their presence behind the grate. I imagined it to be a very mysterious place from where they could see us without being seen so I was surprised in later life to discover that in fact, they could see very little, not even the altar!

I remember processing through the Upper Choir on our First Communion Day but apart from the strangeness of the place and knowing it was the route to the Church beforehand and to the Communion Breakfast afterwards, little else remains in the way of memories. The other memory I have is as a secondary student being called upon to help with the dusting before special feast days. I have a clear memory of the glass 'Connection' full of colourful plants that led into the Upper Choir, the smell of polish in the Choir and the unusual wooden seats referred to as 'stalls' and the 'prie dieu' from where the Sisters received Holy Communion. We could talk in the Connection but had to be quiet in the Choir, emphasising that it was a holy place and the Sisters had a keen sense of the presence of God. We were rewarded with chocolate for our efforts at dusting.

I checked my memories with one of the Sisters who lived in the Convent and she explained First Communicants and Helpers were exempt from the Enclosure boundary. Also, the Sister who accompanied school children could be present in the body of the Church so there were occasional glimpses of Sisters, outside of school hours. Of course the Sisters who came to Cahersiveen after the renewal era that followed Vatican II, have little association with the Upper Choir as they were free to enter the Church to participate in the Eucharist of whatever services they wished to attend.

Hope for the Future

In more recent years, I loved to visit the Christmas Crib which was artistically housed in the Choir but I remember the cold air and rough ground underfoot, now thankfully replaced with a beautifully tiled mosaic floor and a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The refurbishment combined with years of faith-filled and faithful presence will no doubt support all the future prayer and faith related activities.

When Pope Francis was setting out the aims of the Year of Consecrated Life, he called upon the exhortation which St. John Paul II proposed to the whole Church at the beginning of the Third Millennium The call from the Pope, suits the celebratory occasion in Cahersiveen on 28th August 2015, “You have not only a glorious history to remember and recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things.” (Vita Consecrata, no.110).

“Go maire solas na Toirbhirte in ár measc go deo.”

– Sister Mary Hoare, the Presentation Order. Native of Cahersiveen.



New resting place for the Presentation Sisters near the old entrance from the Church to the primary school.

