



I Edmund

The Concluding Years (1838-1844)

Edmund Ignatius Rice
b. June 1, 1762, Callan, Ireland
d. August 28, 1844, Waterford, Ireland



I Edmund

Blessed Brother Edmund Ignatius Rice, Founder of the
Presentation Brothers and the Congregation of Christian Brothers

The Concluding Years 1838 – 1844

(ages 76 – 82)

In the winter of Edmund's seventy-fifth year his body signaled, with a variety of aches, pains, and touches of restricted mobility, it was time to recalculate his engagements. In January of 1838 he wrote his Brothers announcing a General Chapter and forecasting his impending resignation.

The following month he updated his Last Will and Testament noting that while weak of body he had full powers of mind and thought.

Jesus proclaimed, I am the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus died in what we understand was his 33rd year. We look to his longer-lived followers to grasp how His way might guide us in our later years. Those who have gathered memories of Edmund Rice report both incidents and impressions that served first as support for the cause of his beatification and now as inspirations for his followers as Christian Brothers or as members of the ever-expanding network of those touched by his Charism.

The Edmund Rice Networking Council of the North American Province has taken on the task of reviewing the plethora of books and articles on Edmund with a view to how he lived each of the decades of his life. My assignment is a review of his concluding years. I have chosen to begin with 1838 when he entered his 76th year.

Guided by my training as a psychologist, sensitized by clients as well as those I have mentored in the art of counselling, I have come to a respectful appreciation of individual differences in terminating activities. Bringing to closure any of the significant phases of our lives involves a series of behaviors. Each of us has an ongoing story of “moving on” – from childhood to adolescence to young adulthood; a change of residence, leaving home, a loved mission, a group that is disbanding; graduating, moving off to a new position, mourning a loved one – such are the life events in which a pattern of termination begins to emerge, consolidate, and be appropriated as a personal style for establishing closure. Planned or unexpected, we face moments in which we are called to adjust, to become proactive in responding to new realities. Impending death brings such behavioral patterns into sharp relief.

A review of transition moments in the life of Edmund reveals a well-honed practice of discernment, seeking advice, praying, mapping out in detail what needs to be done, and then taking decisive action. We know little of what might have been operating in his move from home to beginning work with his uncle. We do know of his intense engagement in what was for him a new venture. Again, we know little of his courtship and decision to marry. We do see the response to the tragedy of losing his wife, his sustained and intense practice in his profession, his devotion to his daughter, his methodical engagement in charitable works, and,

eventually, his vocational deliberations. When he came to the moment of decision his actions were explicit, comprehensive, and irreversible: the liquidating of his business, the transformation of a stable into a school, the invitation to the families of Waterford to send their sons.

His 1838 circular letter and his Last Will and Testament present clearly both his plans and his motivations. Trust in Providence did not silence his businessman's understanding of the need to assure financial sustainability for his fledgling Institute.

Edmund had exhausted much of his accumulated wealth in the founding of the initial school. Skillful management of donated and acquired properties produced a limited source of income. Begging door to door had challenged the well-being of his Brothers and raised objections among the clergy. He believed pay-schools would be critical to the continuation of the core mission. Families that could afford modest fees would contribute to the maintenance of the schools and the Brothers, supporting the gospel-based mission of education for those unable to pay.

As Superior General, Edmund sought the discernment of the Brothers, knowing well that those who had joined him were deeply committed to a professed vow of "gratuitous instruction of youth." Many considered this promise inconsistent with the charging of fees. Edmund's proposal did not elicit universal acceptance. Those who would gather for the General Chapter he was now announcing were deeply and passionately divided on the matter.

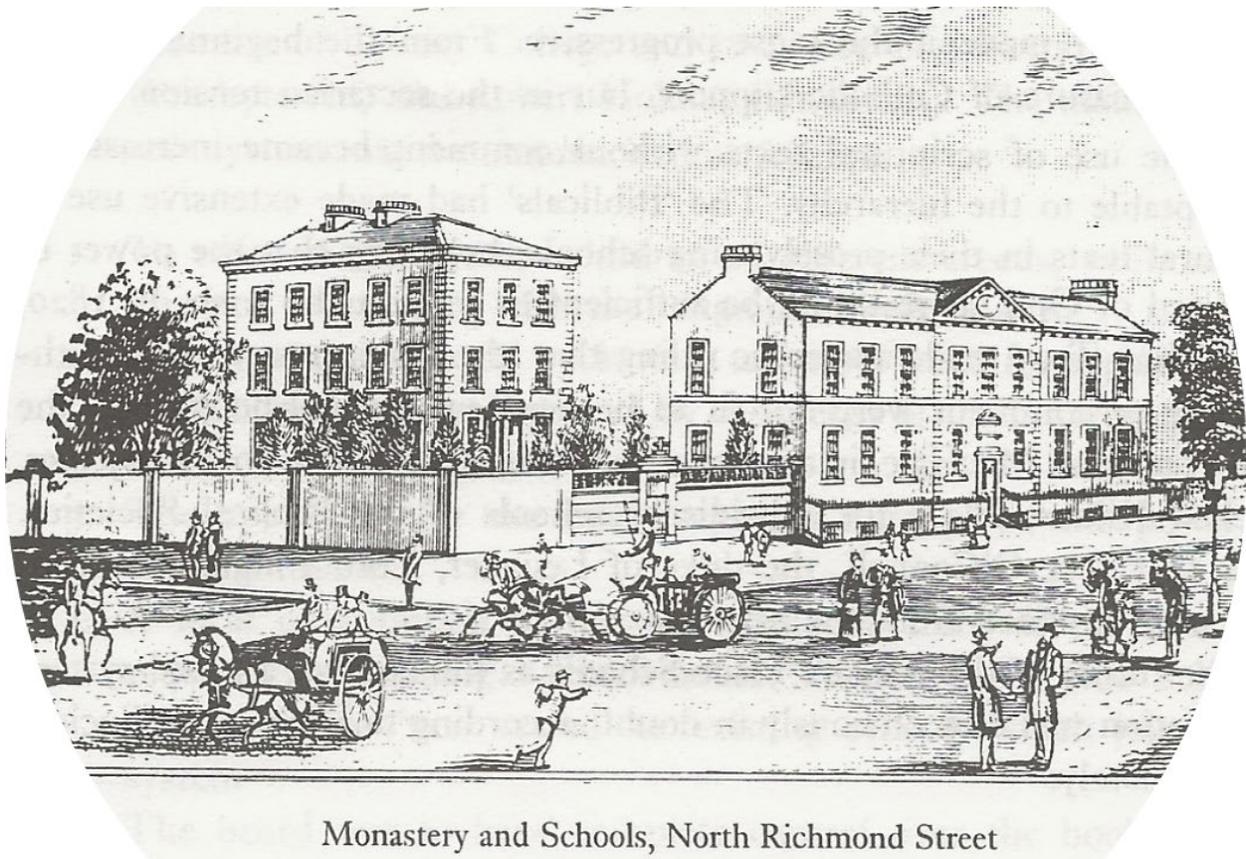
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In drafting his Last Will and Testament, Edmund was skillfully sustaining the ongoing financial matters of the Institute while circumventing regulations that denied legal status to any Catholic religious group. Lands, properties, accounts, and any other form of assets were required to be under the direct ownership and management of individuals or a group of trustees of legitimate organizations. Roman Catholic groups were explicitly excluded from owning properties in England dominated Ireland. Edmund's solution had been to hold such assets in his own name and the names of three other Brothers. Now, by this document, he

declared that on his death his share of the holdings would pass to the other trustees, their legal descendants, and their designates. The beneficiaries of these trusts would be exclusively the Brothers and the schools they had established or would establish in the future.

Some of the significant figures in these concluding years were: Brother Michael Paul Riordan, Edmund's successor as Superior General, Brothers Edward Austin Dunphy, a close friend, Brothers Stephen Carroll and Stanislaus Hyland, who as novices had attended to the Founder in Waterford, and Mrs. Kitty Lloyd Barron, nurse and caretaker in his last years. Brothers Michael Mark Hill and M. Columba Normoyle each had a significant role in gathering the pieces of Edmund's life story. I am particularly indebted to each of these seven individuals as I gather the courage to write a first-person account of our Founder's concluding years. (See end notes ** re Carlo Caretto's, I Francis)

My intention is to enter Edmund's interior reflections ever chided with the thought: Who am I to take on such a challenging venture? My hope is to demonstrate that it is a possible and worthwhile exercise for any follower of Edmund, and to encourage those with all the skills this work requires to produce more worthy presentations.



Monastery and Schools, North Richmond Street

Dublin, Ireland

1838 Edmund at age 76

Each Order, and every individual member of an Order should strive that the Lord may use it and him to bless it so that it may serve Him in the Church's present great necessity. Blessed are the lives which are spent in doing this.

*** Life of Teresa of Jesus, Chapter XL, 20.

"Praise be to you O Christ." These words are on my lips each morning.

On retiring, on my better days, I call to mind blessings while also noting how many opportunities I have missed to proclaim the Good News. These days every physical movement is exacting its cost. Getting dressed, taking a few steps, opening a door, I am ever aware of my physical decline. At times the joint pain is so intense I cannot walk. My feet have become increasingly sensitive and are often bloated. My balance? I hold to handrails and doorknobs and know to rise slowly from a chair steadying myself before moving on.

Thank God I still have my senses. I find myself testing my mind, delighting in the capacity to add, subtract, and quickly calculate interest rates and projected returns. Then again, I am ever searching for words and names. I've developed some skills in keeping these lacunae to myself – thanks to alternative vocabulary and agility in social conventions. Clearly the time has come to hand over this work to others. The Brothers are entitled to someone more capable of coordinating the present and looking toward the future.

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Have I held too much to myself? So few Brothers understand the fragility of our operations. Thanks to a bequest the community in Cork is financially set. Other communities are living on the edge of destitution. The rent from some of the properties barely covers the necessities. Door to door begging as some are doing, is neither appropriate nor sustainable. The only solution I am seeing is that of opening our schools to families who can pay modest fees.

Pay schools are considered by many Brothers as inconsistent with our professed commitment to “gratuitous education of poor boys”. They playfully, but also seriously, remind me of my repeated admonition, “Providence is our inheritance”. As much as I have experienced the timely interventions of the Divine, there are days I regret having acknowledged it so openly inspiring presumptuous confidence! Into Your hands, O Lord.

The letter I have struggled with these past few months is now posted to all the communities. The announcement of the Chapter and my intention to resign are in the hands of the brothers. May their discernment bring us to an effective consensus and guide whomever will be called to take on the role of Superior General. Meanwhile, I need to put in place the structures that will sustain our houses and schools into the future. My renewed Last Will and Testament should make clear what happens on my passing. My share in each of the properties will go to the other trustees and their successors to be held for the benefit of the brothers and the schools.

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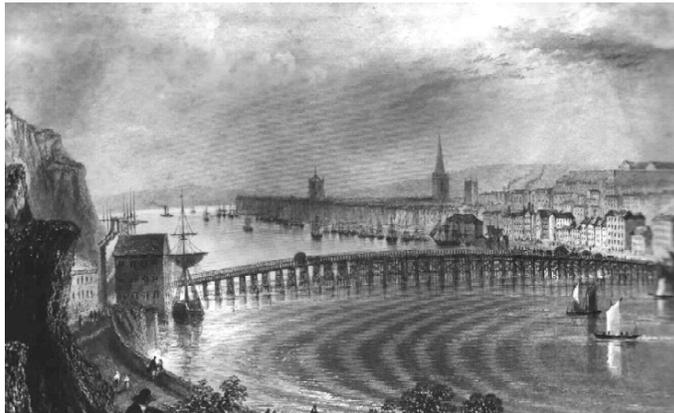
Soon after the opening of the Chapter I gave my official resignation and relinquished the role of President of the Chapter. As the delegates moved into election mode, I withdrew to my room. Here I prayed for both the outcome and my embrace of whatever might be decided.

I am concerned about the divisions. The Cork faction (the Leonard brothers and M. P. Riordan) has been critical of me since the Papal Brief of 1820. It took them another six years before reluctantly accepting our new reality. I have been told that they consider me unbalanced, suffering from a “slight mental aberration,” and unfit for the job.

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In the late afternoon one of the novices came by to share the news that Michael Paul Riordan has been elected as the new Superior General. I prayed again, and then went to the dining hall where I waited at my usual place. When the capitulants entered the room I signaled to Brother Paul to come toward me. I placed his hand on the chair, said to him this is now your place, and then moved off to another seat. My hope is to give every sign of my full acceptance of his election.

I saw the look on the faces of some of the men and realize the transitions may be difficult for them.



Waterford, Ireland

1839 Edmund at age 77

I used to pray to our Lord for help; but, as it now seems to me, I must have committed the fault of not putting my whole trust in His Majesty, and of not thoroughly distrusting myself. Life of Teresa of Jesus, VIII, 18.

The move to Mount Sion in Waterford has been a blessing. After the Chapter I asked the possibility of being assigned here and having permission for occasional trips to Carrick and Dungarvan. Br. Paul responded crisply: “Oh, you are a free man to go wherever you please.” While liberated in one sense, I am disturbed to

understand he perceives me as outside his domain of concern as if the further I am away the better. He must find my presence discomforting. Then again I find him straining to be courteous to me. Lord, let him touch into your joy.

Being here in Waterford I am closer to my daughter. Mary has been blest with a sequence of women who have lovingly sought to embrace her as their own child. I am most grateful for each of these saintly ladies. Mary's condition elicits compassion. Her disposition is one of childlike joy. Now in adulthood she delights in each day – could it be that her limitations shield her from the needless fretting that too often occupies me and others?

The brothers have consistently been supportive of my care for Mary. They assure me they will do whatever is needed for her continued wellbeing. There are times when I sense my former role as husband and continuing role as father stir discernment in their struggles with a call to celibacy. May God's will be done in each of them.

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Brothers have noted my improved health. Being out of leadership has helped the cause. When possible I visit the schools, particularly the one in Dungarvan. I listen to the boys as they read. Their joyous youth gives added life to the text. Today a small group had been assigned a bible story. I asked why the Queen procured the death of Naboth? One bright fellow blurted out: "Why, sir, to come at the ground!" We all broke out in laughter. How aware are these fellows of what it means to own land.

Then again, ownership has its challenges.

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In February I was called to Dublin. The overnight coach ride wreaked havoc on my body. I noted in a letter to Brother Austin Dunphy, that it will be well if this work does not kill me. Later in the spring, feeling up for a bit of vacation, I arranged for the various financial activities of the charitable works in Waterford to continue in my absence and set off on a journey north to Clare, I visited Br. Joseph Mulcahy, the only surviving member of our original Mt. Sion group. He, too, is showing his age. We had a delightful time exchanging stories and marveling at how the whole adventure has developed. He took great encouragement in hearing of the missions to England and Gibraltar.

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Now back in Waterford I have been given an added task by the Bishop. The past few years, our Capuchin friend Fr. Theobald Mathew has done a masterful job of raising awareness of the plague of alcoholism that afflicts so many families. His crusade convinced many men to make a pilgrimage to Cork to take a pledge of sobriety. In November of 1839 Bishop Foran established a local branch of the Total Abstinence Society (TAS) for women in Waterford.

One of the target populations was poor Poll Carthy. How many times has her overindulgence raised public concern. A while back I had been encouraged to speak with her in a moment of sobriety. She acknowledged her unacceptable behavior and promised to stop the drink. A few months later she had lost her resolve.

Dr. Foran asked me to approach her with the suggestion of joining the Waterford TAS. She listened, said that she had heard of Fr. Matthew's crusade and realized it might offer a solution. She was clear however it would only be to Fr. Matthew that she would make the pledge.

When I offered to pay for a coach ride to Cork. She protested. "So, I should arrive like the Queen of Sheba! Not a chance. I need to go as a penitent sinner." A strong-willed woman, for anything other than alcohol, she had decided to make the seventy-five-mile trip each way by foot. I suggested she might want to clean up her appearance. With her blessing, I made arrangements in the shop of local clothing merchant. Both of my Mary's have convinced me of the power of having new clothes. A tailor shop at Mt. Sion assures that no scholar or teacher comes to school ill clad. And so, Poll, in a clean and well-tailored outfit, is off on her journey to sobriety. Lord, into your hands.

1940 Edmund at age 78

May it please the Lord, since He is powerful and can do what He will, that I may succeed in doing His will in all things, and may He not allow this soul to be lost which so often, by so many methods and devices, His Majesty has rescued from hell and drawn to Himself. Amen. Life of Teresa of Jesus, XL, 34.

News of what is happening in Dublin is most disturbing.

Last Fall, Brother Paul began to come to an understanding of the complexity of the financial situation of the Institute. He has ordered me and each of the

trustees of the various trusts to give a full account of the holdings. The Protestant Charities Commission has become suspicious and is asking if these are the illegal assets of an illegal religious entity.

Meanwhile the North Richmond School and Community are in dire straits. Brother Austin Grace has been brought in to right the ship. Brother Paul has moved out and relocated the General Council to Cork.

Legal Council has reviewed the arrangements made in 1821 with our great benefactor Mr. Bryan Bolger. He had generously provided the thousand pounds necessary to launch the North Richmond Street building project. The monies came from an unsecured bond in the form of a loan from his projected estate of which I am the executor. Over the years no interest was charged. It was clear Mr. Bolger intended the amount to be a gift. Mr. Bolger died in 1834. His legitimate heirs are now insisting there be security of repayment. The best legal advice has been to put a lien on the North Richmond Buildings. Brother Paul has voiced his opposition to the plan.

To make clear his position the Superior General has placed me and the other trustees under our vow of obedience not to mortgage the buildings. My dilemma: Obedience? Law? Justice?

In the past few months I have requested the counsel of two ecclesiastical lawyers. Each concluded that obedience cannot require an action that would in effect be unjust. Mr. Bolger's legal heirs are entitled to the security they seek. I, as executor, am obliged to assure justice to the claimants. The other Brothers, constituted trustees, must also be faithful to the charge they accepted, in obedience, when I was their Superior.

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Summer now finds me again in Dublin. I am staying with Br. Bernard Dunphy in Hanover Street. The house was short a bed for me. A request to borrow one of the many empty ones from the North Richmond Street Community was denied. I have been made aware of a growing tension among the Brothers. Brother Austin Dunphy is working hard to promote some dialogue. Some of the men in favor of pay schools have drafted a memorial to the Vatican decrying the failure of the Superior General to carry out the decisions of the General Chapter. It listed, as in support of the document, my name and Austin's. We both refused to sign it.

Meanwhile my brother Fr. John Rice, OSA, has learned from his many Vatican contacts that Brother Paul wrote to Rome last year noting the discord and requesting a blocking of any move toward permitting involvement in pay schools. The Vatican has subsequently responded favorably to his request. However, the response has not been shared with the Brothers.

On 8 July, 1840, with a clear conscience, I signed the document placing a mortgage on the North Richmond Street building. No doubt the action will be held against me and serve as evidence of either a violation of my vows or, more charitably, the action of someone who has lost his mind. Brother Paul has charged me and each of the trustees with formal disobedience and intends to refer the matter to the next General Chapter.

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My younger brother, Fr. John Rice, OSA, passed away in mid-December. All of Callan and much of Waterford came together to acknowledge his saintly life and commitment to serving the people of God. May he rest in peace. Would that the Lord had left him and taken his older brother. As I think of John I might be mindful of the many ways he helped us in obtaining the Papal Brief, and then in various Vatican related struggles. However, the image that comes to the fore is one of him in his childhood years. He willingly participated in our “let’s pretend” school. I had the role of teacher. He would alternate his comportment between ideal scholar and class troublemaker. I loved him in all his roles and now deeply feel his absence.

1941 Edmund at age 79

Discontent with this world gives such a painful longing to quit it that, if the heart finds comfort, it is solely from the thought that God wishes it to remain here in banishment.

[https://www.azquotes.com/author/19882-Teresa_of_Avila\)](https://www.azquotes.com/author/19882-Teresa_of_Avila)

St. Patrick’s Day we received notification from the Superior General of a special Chapter to be held in Mt. Sion in July. It was accompanied by the Vatican report he had received last year and a request for the names of who had signed the alternative memorial that had gone to Rome. Those who have dissatisfactions are to come forward.

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Charles Bianconi Coach

In April I visited Limerick and Ennistymon, staying the whole month of May. On the return home I realized this was probably my last venture out of Waterford. The travel has become too much. Even walking is becoming a challenge. I avoid using a cane but am forever looking to hold on to something for balance.

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In early July the delegates began to arrive for the Chapter. As a member of the host community, I did all that I might for them to feel welcome and at home. I understood, as the Founder and former Superior General, I would be attending the Chapter. I recalled a motion to that effect approved by a previous Chapter and confirmed by Rome. Brother Paul was of a different opinion and sought a canonical opinion. It confirmed his opinion. Taken literally the proposal could be read as applying only to the Chapter in which the Superior General resigned, not necessarily all subsequent Chapters. While the matter was put to the elected delegates to decide I was asked to step outside the Chapter room. The majority voted as not in favor of having me present, even as an observer. I will admit that hurts -- deeply.

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The Chapter has finally ended. As the delegates moved off only Austin came to bid me goodbye. Then again I did not make myself as present as I had been in the welcoming. My dear friend shared what happened over the past two months. They had struggled to come to consensus on how to respond to a second Vatican rescript granting permission for pay schools, the admonition of those who had sent the memorial to the Vatican critiquing the actions of the Superior General,

the paying of the debts of the Founder, and the disobedience involved in mortgaging North Richmond Street. The actions of both the Superior General and the Brothers who had voiced their opposition, and those involved in signing the mortgage, other than me, were examined. I assume in my case my supposed incompetence, “imbecility” excused me from moral culpability. All others on both sides, including the Superior General, were found not guilty by reason of the fact each had acted conscientiously. *Causa finita!*

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The “debts of the Founder”? Austin explained: the conditions on which I had accepted bequests and taken on the role of executor for estates in donation were being considered as obligations incurred by the Founder. The continuing care of those named in Wills, the repaying of debts incurred in meeting the terms of a contribution, Masses to be said for the deceased, as well as repairs on rented properties were cutting into anticipated income. Do they not realize that spending is a part of the process of having an income? Austin had labored hard to convince the delegates of justice owed to the benefactors. The Chapter acquiesced and permitted him and the trustees to continue to meet these obligations.

Benefactors. How much I and the Brothers are indebted to those who have made us the beneficiaries of their hard labors. Men and women of means have shared with us their good fortune. Families who have blessed our Institute with their sons and brothers. Widows and widowers have left to us their homes and properties. Daughters and sons have made generous donations in honor of their parents. Parents have given memorials asking that their departed children be held up in prayer. In churches, convents, and cathedrals, all over the country and in mission lands, Masses are being said in perpetuity for the souls of deceased family members and dear friends. Many have sought to participate in the good works of the Brothers. They have built schools, endowed monasteries, covered our debts – asking only for the blessing of our prayers.

1842 Edmund at age 80

And if he perseveres, I hope in the mercy of God for him, seeing that no one ever took Him for his friend that was not amply rewarded. Life of Teresa of Jesus, VIII, 7.

In December of 1841, I became seriously ill. Then, as now, I have no pain or uneasiness, but rather a pervasive weakness. All assumed, including me, the end was near. I was confined to bed and prayers were asked of the communities for the grace of a happy death. But here it is January and I am up and feeling much better. I have resumed my correspondence.

Br. Ignatius Kelly informs me that Bishop Murray has consented to act a trustee for Mr. Bolger's will freeing me of any worry over how it will be handled and assuring that the interests of our schools in Dublin, particularly on North Richmond Street, will be sustained.

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When weather permits – the cold had kept me in most of the winter. I hate the cold! -- I go out into the garden each day. One day I had in mind it would be good to take a walk outside the gate. As I began to leave the property there was a call from Brother Superior to reenter immediately. Of course, I am particularly attentive to obedience these days! Concern for my physical, and perhaps mental condition has him and the other brothers on alert – and me being watched or accompanied wherever I go.

The resurgence of my health was temporary. I am now unable to walk. The Superior had mercifully purchased a wheelchair. Young brothers took turns bringing me out to the gardens where I sat and read or dozed or prayed. That was delightful until it wasn't. One day my young attendant had me moving at too rapid a pace as we came to an angle in the path catapulting me from the chair into a rose bush. The scratches on my face and hands looked much worse than they were, and the poor young brother was horrified. All subsequent rides have been much less exciting.

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As my decline became more evident. A nurse was hired. I am now restricted to this room. My days of confinement bring me to a deeper appreciation of how prayer has accompanied my journey. The early childhood practices of country family Catholics were givens – morning prayer, prayer before meals, the rosary, Sunday Mass, Lenten fasts, celebration of the great feasts of Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi, Mary, All Saints and All Souls. In the days following Mary's tragic death the Memorare lifted me up when "I felt as low as ditch water." In lower

moments through the years, I often employed the prayer. But these days, it is the Hail Mary that offers the consolation which I have offered to so many facing the end of their earthly lives. “Mother of God pray for us sinners now and at the hour of my death.”

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Cultivated habits are yielding fruit in old age. “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,” is spontaneously on my lips as I arise. My morning prayer is simply a long list of the names of those who bless my life. Once the list began with my colleagues in service and leadership. These days it is Brother Paul and his assistants. Then I recall each of the men in my local community, followed by a general petition for all of our Brothers and students. I move on to my family, each by name, and to the various individuals with whom I will interact today. Lest I miss anyone, I raise up all the Church, all included in what St. Paul identifies as the Body of Christ, Corpus Christi.

An Ave brings me to the Mary’s of my life, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary my cherished wife, and Mary our precious daughter.

Until recently daily Mass was the most blest moment of my day. In a chapel or local church, wherever I was, the Eucharistic Prayer gathered the whole Church, living and deceased, into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Together we are reminded of the fruits of faithfully engaging in our daily labor and of the hope to which we are called. “While you work for God, whether you succeed or not, he will amply reward you.”

Now, here in my bedroom, I find ways to be in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. The daily scriptural readings are ever a source of inspiration. The occasional confession, anointing, and viaticum offered by visiting priests are a welcome blessing.

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The novices who care for me have noted the picture of St. Teresa of Avila in my bedroom. I take the occasion to share her sayings. Their service might elicit one of the these:

- *It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.*
- *A life not lived for others is not a life.*
- *To have courage for whatever comes in life - everything lies in that.*

As I lie here I recall for myself some of her advice:

- Prayer is an act of love; words are not needed. Even if sickness distracts from thoughts, all that is needed is the will to love.

- Mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do what best stirs you to love.

https://www.azquotes.com/author/19882-Teresa_of_Avila

A while back when I could still be brought out to the garden I was seated with a text of St. Teresa¹ open before me. One of the novices quietly came up behind me to see what I was reading. He saw and shared with the others that the book was upside down. My eyes no longer can make out the letters on a page – but my fingers seem to evoke recall of what I have so often read. So too with the Bible. Yes, I want it near me, to touch it and to listen within.

While Teresa admonished me “*Be gentle to all and stern with yourself.*” I am now sensing the need to also be gentle with myself. She suggests: *We can only learn to know ourselves and do what we can - namely, surrender our will and fulfill God's will in us.*

When I ask for prayers, as I often do these days, I ask that God’s will be done in me.

How long O Lord?

1843 Edmund at age 81

It happened to me, on another occasion to be grievously tried, and much spoken against on account of a certain affair ... by almost everybody in the place where I am living, and by the members of my Order. Life of Teresa of Jesus, XXVI, 3.

Nurse Kitty and novices are attending to my every need. There is warm water in the morning, a bit of food throughout the day, and ever a fire to keep the room warm. I must have mentioned my feet were cold. Kitty had me in warm socks day and night. Now my legs and feet are bound up with cloth like Lazarus in the tomb. or the first time in a decade, I have neither pain nor cold, nor any other sensation, coming from my lower extremities.

Visiting Brothers share news in ways that indicate they are holding back matters that might disturb me. A few close friends have shared their concerns. Yes, the schools are prospering, men are joining us, brothers have moved on to England and Gibraltar, and as far as Australia. Brother Stephen, once one of my attending novices, is off to Australia for the opening of a first school on that distant land. Brothers are producing textbooks that are being used throughout the land. Br. Paul has translated a life of St. John Baptist De La Sale, and had it circulated to all the schools.

Meanwhile he and Br. P.J. Murphy have journeyed to France and initiated conversations about affiliating our Institute with theirs. Both have referred to that great saint as their Venerable Founder. Those who have survived the days of our founding know a very different story. I realize Br. Paul believes it best to distance the Institute from me and what he perceives as the faults of my administration, and of course, my disobedience. He is careful to excuse my behavior as the result of illness and a feeble mind. Br. Joseph writes of my imbecility”.

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Brother Bernard Dunphy of North Richmond Street died in February and Brother Joseph Cahill of Thurles in June. How many of the founding members of this graced brotherhood have gone to their eternal reward. How few can appreciate the blessings that have accompanied us through the years.

1844 Edmund at age 82

May our Lord, who is all-powerful, grant—and He can if He will—that I may attain to the doing of His will in all things! May He never suffer this soul to be lost, which He so often, in so many ways, and by so many means, has rescued from hell and drawn unto Himself! Amen. Life of Teresa of Jesus. Chapter XL, 34.

There are few moments of lucidity as I lie here in bed. My senses of sight and sound are gravely compromised. Like an infant child, my contacts with the world around me are primarily tactile. A hand on my forehead checking my temperature, the taking of my pulse, the rare hand grasping mine -- each stirs some awareness. Often there is an undistinguishable merging of dreams and reality.

Then again there are moments like this that I feel fully present to what is happening around me. I have lost all sense of time of day, or day of the week.

At this moment I am recalling a visit from two of the Carmelite Sisters. They had a document that required my signature. I knew fully what it was all about. There was a lien on the property of Mr. Dominic Burke. He had resisted providing the dowry for his sister Georgianna to enter the convent. It was complicated, but I found a way to oblige him to pay installments on the dowry in exchange for his sister's share of the family inheritance. The Sisters assured me he had completed the payments and that now my signature was required to terminate the obligation and free his property.

They helped me sit up, placed a board and the document on my lap and gently guided my hand to the proper place. While I have not held a pen for over a year, my fingers took charge moving into the curves of the initial E. While a bit shaky, I completed my name with a flourish.

I drift back to those days of my youth when I would return home to Callan from the city. My dress was fashionable. I delighted in being admired both at Sunday Mass and in the local dances – of which I was most fond. Mother loved folk dancing and coached us in all the steps. My brother John, most pious in those days as he discerned a vocation with the Augustinians, chided me on being too much of a “dandy.” It was about that time that I developed the scrolling signature that would become a trademark in my business and subsequently on any official document. I have not danced since Mary's death. In later life my attire, while ever a matter of pride, had become more appropriate for a religious professing poverty. My signature, however, never lost its flair.



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I must be approaching the end. Brothers and Nurse Kitty are ever at my bedside. Bishop Foran has come several times. The press of his oiled hand on my forehead brings deep peace. I am considered too weak and unaware to receive the Host. His presence itself unites me to the One Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

I think it was yesterday when one of the younger novices held my hand. I grasped it ever more firmly as he said something about having to go to dinner. I might have spoken. If so, I hope I asked that he pray God's will be done in me, thanked him, and gave him my blessing.

Brother Stanislaus Hyland recalls his last visit on the day before the Founder's death:

I had just returned from St. Patrick's branch schools, and I at once ran up to see him. He clasped my hand in his, now clammy before death. I noticed his grasp growing unconsciously closer and a doze seemed to come on him. His eyes were glassy. I was expecting the bell to ring for dinner, and I said aloud to him, "Goodbye, sir, the bell will soon ring." I disengaged my hand from his grasp, and he awoke and said to me: "Goodbye, and God bless you, my child." History of the Institute, Vol. 1, p. 394

This spark, then, given of God, however slight it may be, causes a great crackling; and if men do not quench it by their faults, it is the beginning of the great fire, which sends forth the flames of that most vehement love of God which His Majesty will have perfect souls to possess. Life of St. Teresa, Chapter XV, 6.



Chapel Mt. Sion Waterford, Ireland, final resting place of Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice

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End Notes:

* Portrait by Kenneth Chapman, CFC. Neither his head nor the frame could contain Edmund's magnanimity.
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** Carlo Carreto was a member of the Little Brother of the Jesus inspired by Charles de Foucauld. I read his reflection *I FRANCIS* while on a pilgrimage to Assisi during the General Chapter of the Congregation of Christian Brothers in March of 1984. It stirred an interest in how Edmund's story might be told. Now after sixty years in his Brotherhood and at the age at which he left us, I am giving it a try.

*** Edmund most likely had a copy of the first English translation of the Life of Teresa of Jesus, published in 1611 indicating Antwerp as the place of publication, but more likely London. The translator is WM (only initials used to protect priests in the oppressive English context --scholars argue whether it is an English Jesuit named Michael Walpole (most likely) or an Irishman, William Malone, SJ. Here, for convenience, and indicative of a rich treasury of Teresian sources available online, I am using a popular listing of quotes from Saint Teresa as well as citations from **The Life of Teresa of Jesus**, The Autobiography of Teresa of Avila, translated and edited by e. Allison Peers from the critical edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, C.D. scanned by Harry Plantinga, planting@pitt.edu, 1996. This electronic text is in the public domain. Those familiar with the various accounts of the life of Blessed Edmund and his letters, will easily see a confluence of admonitions focusing often on doing the will of God: **"May all creatures praise Him forever! Amen."**



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