

Transcript of “*Knock*” for 2017–MarianNews YouTubeChannel
“Sister Anne” (Mary K.) Farran -- <https://houseofmaryomd.org>
An improved “chapter” version is in preparation for a book publication.

Good morning everyone!
Greetings to our audio and YouTube listeners!

Last week we spoke of the delightful Marian Apparition to a group of parishioners at Pontmain in the winter sky of France in 1871. This morning we’re going to speak of a Marian Apparition to a group of parishioners in the village of Knock, Ireland about eight years later, in 1879. Since Mary had nothing to say at Knock, I’m going to say a great deal!

Knock presents a strong case that the Apparitions of Mary are interrelated, as pieces of a mosaic. You can’t even talk about Knock unless you talk about LaSalette. First of all, Mary appeared at Knock on 21 August 1879 the very day of the canonical coronation of the statue of Mary at the Basilica of LaSalette by the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris who acted as the legate of the pope, in the presence of the Cardinal Archbishop of Toulouse and a vast assembly of bishops, priests and lay people who climbed the Alps for that occasion from every diocese of France.

In this very same year, the cathedral of Lourdes was also finished. For awhile the miracle waters made Lourdes more popular and France tried to forget the stern messages of LaSalette. But the disastrous war with Prussia wherein Paris was besieged exactly on September 19th--the anniversary of the day when Mary warned the people that punishments were on the way if they failed to repent--caused thousands of French Catholics to begin penitential pilgrimages to LaSalette from 1872 onwards. They carried heavy stones to build a basilica to Mary’s honor amidst the clouds of heaven, high up in the Alps.

So, on this very day when thousands of people were gathered in France, singing hymns to Mary at the spot where She had predicted a dire potato famine thirty years before, She now appears in a country where the potato famine had decimated the population. The political situation of Catholic Ireland has been extremely complex for centuries because of their stormy relationship with Protestant Great Britain. It’s almost impossible for an American, even one like me who can claim 80% Irish descent, to sort out an objective account of the situation. But we have to try if we are going to understand why Mary chose to appear at Knock in 1879.

A new, and unknown, potatoe blight ravaged across all of Europe in the 1840s, but whereas other parts of Europe suffered hardship and deaths, in Ireland it spelled absolute disaster because two-fifths of the population was solely reliant on the potato as their *only* food. Families consumed an average of 4 pounds per person a day. Here is an extract from an editorial by a journalist before the famine:

It would be impossible adequately to describe the privations which the Irish laborer and his family habitually and silently endure . . . in many districts their only food is the potato, their only beverage water . . . their cabins are seldom a protection against the weather . . . a bed or a blanket is a rare luxury . . . their pig and their manure heap constitute their only property.

The worst period of starvation, disease, and emigration in Ireland occurred between 1845 and 1852, in the years immediately after the Apparition of LaSalette of which it’s doubtful that any of the Irish farmers were aware. World historians call it the Irish Potato Famine but the Irish gave it a Gaelic name that means “the Great Hunger.” At least one million people died and at least another million left their homeland on leaky boats. On those “coffin ships” disease spread so rapidly that many passengers were consigned to the ocean as their graveyard. Ireland was ruled by England in those days and many scholars, trying to be objective, have brought forth evidence that the government did indeed stand back, and deliberately pursue a race-and-ethnicity cleansing by doing little or nothing to come to the aid of the starving. There are many recent monuments erected to the “Irish Holocaust and Genocide.”

At Knock in 1879, the country is still in turmoil, caught in the grip of poverty. The average age of marriage had risen to 29-33, and as many as a third of the young people never married, due to low wages and impossible economic problems. In that very year, in the same county Mayo, the potato crop had failed again, so fear was in the air. There were many economic factors contributing to low world trade prices, but in Ireland the land problem was the primary cause of endless riots and political discussions. High rent was the main factor. Absentee ownership was common; some landlords visited their prop-

erty only once or twice in a lifetime, if ever. Landlords regarded the land as simply a source of income, from which as much as possible was to be extracted. It's very difficult to make broad statements and be fair. Some landowners were Irish, some English, some were Protestant, some Catholic. The clergy were more educated and they themselves were divided about the situation. It was a complicated class struggle, and of course, the lowest class took the brunt of it.

The village of Knock in 1879 was blessed with a holy parish priest, Archdeacon Bartholomew Cavanagh. He lived in one of the village's thatched cottages with an earthen floor. Father Cavanagh had been ordained to the priesthood in the year of LaSalette 1846 in the midst of the Great Hunger, so his first experiences as a priest were in comforting the starving and burying the dead. He cared for his flock even after they were in their grave. On the very morning of the Apparition in Knock he had celebrated the last of one hundred Masses for "whichever souls in purgatory our Blessed Mother wished released."

The village was comprised of a church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, two schools and a cluster of small thatched cottages. Tradition said that St. Patrick had stopped at Knock while on his way to begin a 40-day fast on the nearby rocky mountain now named for him, Croagh Patrick. He blessed the place and predicted that it would one day become a place of devotion, bringing large numbers of pilgrims from far and near. It was probably that prophecy that led to the erection of a new church in 1829 that was much larger than required for such a small village. This inscription was cut into the stonework of the western wall: "My house shall be called the house of prayer to all nations" (Isaiah 56:7).

On the Thursday evening of August 21st rain was falling steadily. It was the eve of the Octave of the Assumption which was specifically commemorated in the liturgy at that era. On the previous Sunday, the liturgy celebrated the rather new feast of the Pure Heart of Mary. At about 7 o'clock, Mrs. Carty saw "a collection of statues" near the southern gable of the church. It was raining and getting dark so she continued on her way, thus her name will not be listed among the official fifteen witnesses. Shortly afterwards, Margaret Beirne locked up the church for the night. She noticed "something luminous" but she didn't feel moved to investigate either. The Archdeacon had been on a sick call that afternoon and arrived home thoroughly drenched. His housekeeper, Mary McLoughlin, built a peat moss fire for him, then she went out to visit a friend.

And so the tale goes on, of how various people were out and about as the sun was setting and the rain was pouring, and finally this one or that one took notice a marvelous tableau on the side of the church. They would look for awhile and then run off to tell someone else. Eventually eighteen persons saw it and these fifteen gave testimony:

Patrick Hill, 11
Mary McLoughlin, 45
Mary Byrne, 29
Patrick Walsh, 65
Patrick Byrne, 16
Mrs. Margaret Byrne, 68
Dominick Byrne, Junior, 19
Mrs. Hugh Flatley, 44
Bridget Trench, 75
Catherine Murray, 8
John Curry, 5
Judith Campbell, 22
Margaret Byrne, 21
Dominick Byrne, Senior, 36
John Durkan, 24

I'm not sure why they are listed in that order. Since it's not by age or by alphabet, I assume it's the order of those who saw the Apparition first.

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- Three men, six women, two teenage boys and a girl, and two children
- three Patricks, two Margarets, two Johns, two Marys
- The spelling of the last names is not consistent in the records. This was an era when the older generation was still speaking only Gaelic, and the younger generation was obliged to use English in school, and understood little or no Gaelic.
- Many of the witnesses were interrelated: mothers, daughters, fathers, sons, nieces, son-in-laws

Let us use the an extract of the most detailed testimony, that of Patrick Hill. Someone had called him:

We ran over towards the chapel gable (that is, a part of the wall that encloses the end of a pitched roof). We immediately saw the lights; a clear white light covering most of the gable from the ground up to the window, and higher. It was a kind of changing bright light, going sometimes up high and again not so high. We saw figures: the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and St. John, and an altar with a lamb on the altar, and a Cross behind the lamb . . .

I went up closer; I saw everything distinctly. The figures were full and round as if they had a body and life; they said nothing but as we approached they seemed to go back a little towards the gable. I distinctly beheld the Blessed Virgin Mary, life size, standing about two feet above the ground, clothed in white robes which were fastened at the neck; her hands were raised to the height of the shoulders, as if in prayer, with the palms facing one another, but slanting inwards towards the face . . . Her eyes were turned toward Heaven. She wore a brilliant crown on her head, and over the forehead where the crown fitted the brow, a beautiful rose . . .

I saw the figures move, but She did not speak . . . One old woman went up and embraced the Virgin’s feet [this was 75 year old Bridget Trench]. Ghe clasped nothing in her arms or hands.

I saw St. Joseph to the Blessed Virgin’s right hand; his head was bent from the shoulders forward; he appeared to be paying his respects. I noticed his whiskers; they appeared slightly gray . . . His hands were joined like a person in prayer.

The third figure that stood before me was that of St. John the Evangelist. He stood erect at the Gospel side of the altar and at an angle with the figure of the Blessed Virgin, so that his back was not turned to the altar, nor to the Mother of God . . . St. John was dressed like a bishop preaching; he wore a small mitre on his head; he held a Mass book or Book of the Gospels in his left hand; the right hand was raised to the elevation of the head . . . I came so near that I looked into the book. I saw the lines and the letters. St. John wore no sandals; his left hand was turned toward the altar that was behind him.

The altar was a plain one, like any ordinary altar, without any ornaments. On the altar stood a lamb, the size of a lamb eight weeks old; the face of the lamb was fronting the west and looking in the direction of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph; behind the lamb a large cross was placed erect or perpendicular on the altar. Around the lamb I saw angels hovering during the whole time. I saw their wings fluttering but I did not perceive their heads or faces which were not turned toward me. For the space of an hour and a half we were under the pouring rain and I was very wet. I noticed that the rain did not wet the figures . . .”

Patrick seems to be the only one who saw the angels. Some accounts say he was eleven, others that he was aged fourteen.

The witnesses were asked how they knew it was St. Joseph. I can’t find the quote but I remember reading that one of them said “well *anybody* would know that was St. Joseph.” At Lourdes, Mary appeared calling herself the Immaculate Conception. This was just four years after Pope Pius IX had declared the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. Now St. Joseph appears at Knock less than nine years after the same pope, Bl. Pius IX had publicly declared St. Joseph as Patron of the Church, in 1870. In the decree *Quemadmodum Deus* the Pope spells out his reasons:

Because of this sublime dignity which God conferred on his most faithful servant, the Church has always most highly honored and praised Blessed Joseph, next to his Spouse, the Virgin Mother of God, and has besought his intercession in times of trouble. And now, therefore, when in these most troublesome times the Church is beset by enemies on every side, and is weighed down by calamities so heavy that ungodly men assert that the gates of Hell have at length prevailed against her, the venerable prelates of the whole Catholic world have presented to the Sovereign Pontiff their own petitions and those of the faithful committed to their charge, praying that he would deign to constitute St. Joseph Patron of the Church.

Standing before the laity in a position of patron and protector, St. Joseph turned towards Our Lady with his head slightly inclined, as if saying “in these most troublesome times” you should turn to her, and I am with you also.

The identification of the bishop figure came about because some of the parishioners had been to the church of St. John the Evangelist at nearby Lecanvy, and the figure at Knock resembled the statue in that church. However, that statue did not show St. John wearing a mitre. And it was a short mitre more typical of the post Vatican II era, than of the ones worn in the 1870s. It isn't the custom for artists to depict Apostles wearing a bishop's miter. Apostles are represented with the tongue of fire from Pentecost above their heads or a halo, or nothing on their head but holding some identifying symbol such as keys, a sword, etc.

Was the mitre a tip of the hat to another recent dogma? After years of consultation and discussion, in 1870, papal infallibility was solemnly defined and proclaimed. Again it was Bl. Pope Pius IX. And while we're on the subject 1879, the year of this Apparition at Knock, marked the 25th anniversary of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception which had been proclaimed by the same saintly Pontiff, Pius IX. He was reigning during the events of Lourdes and LaSalette but died a year before Mary came to Knock.

The Pastor of Knock

I want to talk about the parish priest of Knock. Last week, after speaking about the Apparition of Pontmain, I found a web article on the fairly recent opening of the official cause for the beatification of the parish priest of Pontmain. How beautiful! But I cannot say that I've been noticing a pattern like this in the mosaic. Not all the Apparition sites occur at a place where the clergy are known for outstanding piety, but sometimes I think Providence deliberately chooses a parish for an Apparition because there is a pastor there who is willing to take on the considerably extra burden of allowing his quiet routine to be turned upside down to welcome a stream of pilgrims, many of them sick and poor and wanting the sacraments.

A notable absentee at the Apparition of Knock was the parish priest who was a short distance away in his thatched cottage. His housekeeper returned to tell him about it, but things are not clear as to why he did not go out to join his people at the gable. Some accounts suggest that he was under the impression that the phenomenon was over. He had just been out on a sick call and he was soaking wet. It was now quite dark and raining hard, so it seemed reasonable to wait until morning to collect the facts. Or did he *deliberately* stay away so that anti-Catholic Protestants would not be able to say that the people were set up for the tale by a money-scheming priest? The only thing that his parishioners heard from him was that, to the end of his days, he regretted not having seen the Apparition.

Bartholomew Aloysius Cavanagh was widely regarded by the laity as a very holy priest in spite of his refusal to join them in their political problems with the landlords. He was 58 years old at the time of the Apparition. Fr. Cavanagh had a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In fact, it was rumored that he had had visions of her himself at earlier times. He never complained that his workload greatly increased after the August evening of 1879. His number of daily Masses and confessions grew; his correspondence was heavy, but he was always gracious and gave interviews readily. He personally scraped bits of plaster from the gable of the church and sent these relics to every land where English was spoken. Then he saw to the publication of the cures wrought by the plaster. He died on the feast of the Immaculate Conception nearly twenty years after the Apparition, and was buried in the very church whose gabled wall was blessed by that Apparition. The memorial tablet erected by his parishioners to his memory reads (translation from Latin):

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Pray for the soul of the Venerable Archdeacon Cavanagh, Archdeacon of the Chapter of Tuam, and parish of Knock-Aghamore, whose fame, on account of the extraordinary sanctity of his life and his devotion to the Mother of God, was diffused thus far and wide. Unwearying in the confessional, assiduous in works of piety, he died, full of years and merits.---- December 9th, 1897, R.I.P.

But would the story every be *fully* told of what Fr. Cavanagh went through during those first twenty years after the Apparition? It seems that most of the clergy held aloof, and cynics and scoffers were not lacking. It’s true that the Archbishop of Tuam, Most Rev. Dr. John MacHale, did his duty and within three months set up an ecclesiastical commission of inquiry on 8 October 1879. The Commission consisted of Irish scholar and historian, Canon Ulick Bourke, Canon James Waldron, as well as the parish priest of Ballyhaunis and also, Archdeacon Bartholomew Cavanagh. Depositions of witnesses were taken in the ensuing months.

Then silence. No official pronouncement. No conclusion? No zeal for the cause of the Holy Virgin? One gets the impression that Fr. Cavanagh was left alone by the clergy and hierarchy to shift for himself. To get an idea of how poor and primitive the conditions were, in 1953 Knock still had no running water. And Father Cavanagh had to contend with a massive thorn in his side in the person of an Anglican convert who became a Poor Clare, and then a political activist. This woman was popularly known as the “Nun of Kenmare.” We need to get to know her to understand why Knock fell under a cloud.

The Nun of Kenmare

Margaret Anna Cusack was born in Dublin, Ireland into Protestant, Church of Ireland, gentry. When she was a teenager, her parents separated. She was sent to live with her grand-aunt where she joined the evangelical Christian Plymouth Brethren. She became engaged to Charles Holmes. Crushed by the sudden death of her fiancé, she joined a convent of Anglican nuns. However, disappointed at not being sent to the Crimean War, she converted to Roman Catholicism and joined an active congregation of Poor Clares where she taught poor girls. In 1861 she was sent with a small group of nuns to Kenmare, one of the most destitute parts of Ireland, to establish a convent. To raise money, she eventually wrote 35 books on topics ranging from history to poetry. In the famine year of 1871 she raised and distributed £15,000 in a famine relief fund. She publicly railed against landlords of the region, particularly Lord Lansdowne, who owned the lands around Kenmare. She kept two full-time secretaries for correspondence, writing letters on Irish causes for the newspapers of Ireland, the United States and Canada.

After ten years in Kenmare she left the Poor Clares in 1881 to establish shelters and vocational schools for Irish girls who had emigrated to the US. She supported herself through lectures and books. Her superiors ordered her to come to Newry, but she was determined to erect a convent in Knock where she had gone to live. After pressuring Archbishop McEvilly of Tuam (who had evidently succeed Archbishop MacHale, the one who had ordered the First Commission), Sr. Margaret Cusack finally received permission to establish a convent in Knock where St. Joseph had appeared with Mary. However, the archbishop wanted her to establish a community of Poor Clares, but she wanted to found an entirely new congregation. Deadlock ensued.

After three years, in 1884, she traveled to Rome and obtained a personal interview with Pope Leo XIII to seek his support. She obtained his permission to leave the Poor Clares and found a new congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, for the establishment and care of homes for girls, to train them in domestic service and inculcate good moral habits.

Soon after her successful trip to Rome, she received an invitation to establish her new religious congregation in the Diocese of Nottingham, so she left Ireland for good and went to England. Bishop Bagshawe of Nottingham sent Margaret to the US, to raise money for her foundation and to promote her work. While there, she was invited to establish a similar house in Jersey City, New Jersey. This would be the first foundation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in the United States. The congregation expanded in the United Kingdom, Canada, Haiti, Ireland and the US and still exists today.

But in 1888, after only three years from the founding of this new congregation, Mother Margaret got into a disagreement

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with her bishop and she left the Catholic Church to return to the Anglican communion. Thenceforth her writings and lectures would take on a new bent. She published books with anti-Catholic titles like: *The Black Pope*, *What Rome Teaches*, and *the Secret Conspiracy of the Jesuits in Great Britain*. She died on June 5th, 1899, aged 70, and was buried in a Church of England cemetery at Warwickshire, in England.

Historians and devotional writers who have sought to understand Knock have had to deal with a certain silence. Most of the documents from the early years at Knock mysteriously disappeared. In 1936, when, Archbishop Gilmartin of Tuam, wanted to reopen the investigation of the Apparition, no one could find the record of the testimonies of the first commission of 1880. That second commission had to rely upon interviews with the last three living witnesses, their children, some press reports and devotional works printed in the 1880s. What had happened? Was it because of the poverty and political chaos of late nineteenth century Ireland? Nothing came to light until 1996. I’ll be quoting a website which reviews Volume 4 of the Winter Issue #4 published in 1996 in the historical series of “18th-19th Century Social Perspectives.” The article is titled *Margaret Anna Cusack, aka Sister Mary Francis Clare, aka ‘The Nun of Kenmare.’* But first I turn momentarily to a Wiki article to help us understand the meaning of the term Land War.

[Extracts] The last three decades of the 1800s saw a period of continual agitation in Ireland in efforts to better the position of tenant farmers and ultimately to obtain a redistribution of land to tenants from landlords, especially absentee landlords. While there were many violent incidents and some deaths in this campaign, it was not actually a “war,” but rather a prolonged period of civil unrest. In February 1870, the Land Conference passed resolutions condemning “capricious evictions” and demanding what were commonly known as the *Three Fs*: freedom to sell, fixity of tenure, and fair rent. At this point in time, most Irish tenant farmers outside Ulster had few legal rights. Tenant farmers had no right to be given a written lease; when a rental agreement ended, they could be evicted. When evicted, they could not claim compensation for any improvements they had made on their farm. If they had a lease, they could not sell the remaining term.

Unfortunately, the 1870 reforms became less relevant in the worsening economics of the following decades. Low world prices, bad weather, and poor harvests after 1874 all over Europe caused the era to be named by historians as the “Long Depression”. The Long Depression resulted in violence, widespread upheavals, and extensive evictions when Irish tenant farmers were unable or unwilling to pay their rents and resorted to a rent strike.

This was the case particularly in Connacht where the land is poorer, weather is wetter, farmers were poorer, and there were fewer Irish police on the ground. The first “monster meeting” (a huge rally) of tenant farmers was held [four months before the Apparition of the Blessed Mother] on 20 April 1879 near Claremorris in County Mayo. This summer saw a famine that occurred mainly in the area of Connacht, also in County Mayo, the same county as Knock.

So now we take a look at the information that came to light in 1996 concerning the Nun of Kildare and her interference in Knock. I will quote now from the above-mentioned review of the article from *18th-19th Century Social Perspectives* by John White:

I was always intrigued by the coincidence of Knock with the Land War . . . In the summer of 1995, while doing research in Washington, DC among the papers of Margaret Anna Cusack (Sister Mary Francis Clare), foundress of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace, I inquired about the contents of a large box marked ‘pre-foundation papers.’ As the purpose of the archive is to facilitate research into the development and the history of their congregation . . . I was told that the box did not really contain much of interest, but that I was welcome to take a look if I wanted to.

Upon opening the box, I had some small sense of what it might feel like to find a chalice in a bog or a Caravaggio painting on Great Denmark Street. The box contained the original, unedited depositions of several of the 21 August 1879 witnesses of Knock, and the original manuscript of the parish priest’s account of cures, depositions and statements taken from witnesses in 1880, and hundreds of other documents and letters from people seeking or claiming cures through the intercession of Our Lady of Knock.

. . . In light of the documents found among these Cusack papers . . . Knock was *not* a rearguard reaction against the forces

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of modernity: it was *itself* a force and a manifestation of modernity. The Land League and the pilgrimage developed in parallel and simultaneous ways, involving many of the same characters, and utilizing similar techniques of popularization and propagation. Both movements began in Mayo and quickly succumbed to control from outside as they became part of a larger, international Irish world that was bringing a new social, economic, and religious culture to Mayo.

Writers like T.D. Sullivan of *The Nation*, John McPhilpin of the *Tuam News*, which first broke the Knock story in January 1880, and the ‘Nun of Kenmare’, as the devotional writer Sister Mary Francis Clare Cusack was known, all avoided making explicit reference to the land agitation in their writings about Knock. Yet [journalists] Sullivan and McPhilpin found themselves in prison during the Land War, and [Sister] Cusack made her way from Kenmare to Knock in 1881 after receiving death threats upon publication of her book outlining the abuse of tenants on the Landsdowne and Kenmare estates in Kerry.

[Father] Andrew Higgins, who developed a profound dislike for [Sister] Cusack while he was parish priest in Kenmare, was the government choice [as bishop] to fill the Kerry see, precisely because of his opposition to the tenants’ cause.

Sister Mary Francis Clare left Kerry less than a week after Higgins was named bishop. While she denied any *official* connection to the Land League, the ‘Nun of Kenmare’s Relief Fund’ collected over £20,000 in 1880, distributing large sums through local Land League branches. . . .

The press played a critical role in the land and the Knock movements. . . . The active involvement of the American Irish press meant that the ideas, aspirations and the experience of the Irish living abroad would help determine the outlook of Mayo peasants and would shape events in Ireland during the land war.

Similarly, the pilgrimage and message of Knock came to represent ideas originating far from Mayo. As reporters came to Knock beginning in 1880, stories from Knock found their way into papers all over the Irish world.

The [Sister] Cusack papers show how many figures, from moderate nationalists to Land Leaguers and Fenians were actively involved with Knock. We find requests for prayers and favors and letters that contained donations from local Land League branches in British cities and on the American frontier, from Irishmen serving in the British army throughout the empire, and from such figures as James Redpath of the New York Tribune, a Protestant and a major American proponent of the Land League. Redpath and New York’s Tammany Hall boss ‘Honest John’ Kelly raised thousands of dollars for the Nun of Kenmare at Knock by giving lectures in New York. [Sister] Cusack also enlisted support from prominent figures in the Church whose sympathy was known to lie with nationalists or with the Land League. Archbishop Croke was a regular supporter of Knock and of [Sister] Cusack, donating relics for the altar stone in her convent and protecting the Nun from her detractors among the Irish episcopacy. She also had the support of Edward Cardinal Manning of Westminster and Bishop Bagshawe of Nottingham, who often displayed sympathy for Irish causes.

Knock was also given support by Mayo priests who were active in the Land League. Canon Waldron of Ballyhaunis and Canon Corbett of Claremorris assisted the Archbishop of Tuam’s commission to investigate Knock. They were among the first Mayo priests to support the tenants’ agitation. The ‘Godfather of Mayo politics,’ Canon [Father] Ulick Bourke of Claremorris, was also on the commission. . . . John McPhilpin of the *Tuam News* was his nephew, and the paper was considered to reflect Father Bourke’s personal views. Accustomed to thinking nationally, Canon Bourke joined T.D. Sullivan and the Nun of Kenmare in developing Knock as a national Marian pilgrimage. Other priests associated with the Fenian movement often led organized pilgrimages to Knock. We find Canon Monahan, a close advisor of Bishop Bagshawe of Nottingham, claiming to have seen visions at Knock in 1880. The former prior of the Augustinian convent at Ballyhaunis, James Anderson, recently transferred to Drogheda, led a group of pilgrims from there to Knock in 1880. Fr. Quick, the confessor to the Manchester Martyrs [probably killed in the Land War], was allegedly healed of a hand ailment while leading a group of Lancashire pilgrims that same year.

The second meeting of the land agitation was held at Knock on 1 June 1879 [three months before the Apparition] to protest a sermon by Archdeacon Cavanagh in which he condemned local Fenians who were instrumental in the April 15th Irishtown meeting considered to be the birth of the Land war. The principal Fenians involved in the Knock protest were John O’Kane and P.J. Gordon of Claremorris. . . . As the pilgrimage grew, Gordon saw to the quite profitable operation of outside cars between the railway station at Claremorris and Knock, about five miles distant. . . . Gordon’s twelve year old daughter Delia was subject to violent pain in her left ear. Ten days after the August Apparition, Gordon’s wife and daughter were at Mass at Knock. At the elevation, Delia screamed as the pain became intolerable. Hurrying the girl outside the church to the spot where Mary had appeared, Mrs Gordon scraped a bit of plaster from the gable wall, and after making the sign of the Cross over her daughter with the fragment, touched it to the child’s afflicted ear. The cure, the first at Knock, was instantaneous. Delia’s cure was given tremendous publicity. [Note: Gordon was a Fenian and Fr. Cavanagh preached against Fenians!]

Archdeacon Cavanagh saw to the creation of eleven national schools in the combined parishes of Knock and Aghamore. It was necessary for Cavanagh to preach in English and Irish each Sunday as the schools saw to the replacement of Irish with English as the language of the young. This linguistic crisis may be connected with the silence of the Knock visions, as the oldest witness, Bridget Trench, had no English, while the youngest, six year old John Curry, was being educated with no Irish.

. . . The original press account in Canon Bourke’s *Tuam News* described how the west of Ireland was the ‘trysting place’ of all who sought to improve small farmers’ positions, the flames from which were embracing all four provinces. Similarly, the west presented another attraction, a ‘second Lourdes’. . . . By associating Knock with Lourdes it helped Knock to be understood as an international phenomenon. . .

The focal point of the pilgrimage to Knock was confession and the reception of the Eucharist. In August 1880 three priests sat beneath umbrellas in the rain while crowds gathered around them seeking to be shriven. The silent visions were interpreted as either confirming the Irish in their present practice of Catholicism or as the Virgin’s offer of succor and support in the struggle against Britain.

Unlike France, where national Marian pilgrimages were offered as reparation for the sins of the nation, there was no sense of national sinfulness connected with Knock. The Cusack papers can help us to understand why Knock failed to continue developing after 1883. The “Nun of Kenmare” lost patience with Archbishop McEvilly’s failure to take her counsel. . . . Leaving Knock late in 1883, Cusack took not only most of Knock’s documents but also the money subscribed to build a convent there. This caused an international scandal and gave Knock a tainted reputation from which it took over fifty years to recover. As for the “Nun of Kenmare,” she never recovered from the wounds she thought were inflicted upon her at Knock, as rumors and innuendo about her departure from Knock followed her to America, where they contributed to her eventual apostasy from Roman Catholicism.

Without the capital needed to build comfortable accommodations for middle class pilgrims, Knock withered for fifty years until heaven called a devout couple to rescue it. Once again we are indebted to a rather recent publication to understand this nineteenth century Apparition. In 2004, Mrs Ethna Kennedy, published the book *Providence My Guide*, about her aunt and uncle. I’ll be drawing on a website book review.

The Papal Dame

In 1924, Judy Begley, the youngest of 11 children in an Irish farming family, married District Court Judge Liam Coyne and settled into their comfortable life in County Mayo.

Five years later they attended the golden jubilee of the Apparition of Our Lady at Knock (1879-1929), and were very

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surprised to discover that the Church had not given official recognition to the shrine. However, it wasn't until six years later when they went to Lourdes in 1934 that they felt called to do something for Knock.

“Each day we joined in the huge procession and as we did so, we asked ourselves again and again why we were not seeing the same thing happening in Knock? . . . A strange feeling of a *need* to do something to promote it began to nag at both my husband and myself, and there was no getting rid of it.”

Within a year, Judy and Liam founded the Society for the Promotion of the Knock Shrine and traveled the country distributing leaflets and holding lectures. They also brought order into the ceremonies at the shrine and found means for providing facilities for the care of sick pilgrims. In 1938 they published the first of their many books on Knock.

In 1953 Liam died, but Judy continued their work alone. That same year a Dublin Association contacted Judy to help them arrange a large pilgrimage to Knock. She met local resistance because there was no running water, but she facilitated the arrival of 50,000 pilgrims into that small village.

Before her husband died, they were closely involved in the Second Commission of Inquiry in 1936. Judy personally interviewed some of the original witnesses to the Apparition, and supervised the search for accounts of cures.

In the 1960s, she traveled to Italy to oversee the work of Professor Lorenzo Ferri who sculpted the statues that would adorn the gable end of the old Knock church. [This was before the basilica was built].

It was also Judy's idea to arrange a papal visit to Ireland and Knock. She put pressure on Canon James Horan and the Irish archbishops to invite Pope John Paul II to visit for the centenary of the Apparition at Knock in 1979.

Canon, later Monsignor, James Horan was Knock's longtime parish priest who zealously presided over a major rebuilding of the pilgrimage site, including a new Basilica alongside the old church. Fr. Horan secured millions of pounds of state aid to build a major airport near Knock. The project was condemned by critics in the media because the Irish economy was in depression. But contrary to the critics' expectation, Ireland West Airport became a commercial success.

Dame Judy was honored by the Vatican twice, first by bestowing on her the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Medal – the highest honor that can be given to a woman - and then by giving her the Order of St Sylvester award, making her the first Irish woman ever to receive that honor. It was presented to Judy when she was 92 years old by the Archbishop of Tuam in front of a large crowd at the Knock Basilica. Dame Judy continued working for our Lady of Knock until a few days before her death in 2002, at the age of 97.

Regarding the 1936 Second Commission of Enquiry which Judy and Liam probably did something to spearhead, it was established by Most Rev. Dr. Gilmartin, Archbishop of Tuam. The two surviving witnesses living in Ireland, Mary Byrne O'Connell and Patrick Byrne were examined. A special tribunal was also set up by the Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Hayes, to examine John Curry who was had emigrated to the United States. Mary Byrne O'Connell confirmed her evidence on her death-bed, under oath, adding, 'I am perfectly clear about everything I have said and I make this statement knowing I am about to go before my God'. She died six weeks later. The verdict of the Commission determined that the testimony was trustworthy and satisfactory. The Apparition was formally approved.

The meaning of Knock

I felt it was important to look at the human personalities surrounding this Apparition because we did not receive a verbal message. The interpretation of this enigmatic tableau in the evening rain is left to our own efforts. Of course, we wouldn't expect Mary to make a political statement about tenants and landlords. In fact, She seems to rain blessings on the just and the unjust, not discriminating between those who stood on one side or the other. In such a divided climate, how could she utter any general message? The poor needed words of comfort. The oppressors needed words of rebuke.

The Uniqueness of this Apparition

Let us look again at the uniqueness of this Apparition. It's far from a checkerboard rubber stamp of any other Apparition:

- In this vision there was no principal witness.
- Everyone who came could see the tableau, although not everyone saw the angels or the cross. Was it only because some admitted that they were so taken with this or that aspect that they didn't notice the rest?
- There was a great range in the ages of the witnesses.
- There was no ecstasy; the witnesses remaining in their normal state.
- There was no spoken or written message, no exhortation, no admonition, no tears
- And perhaps the most amazing feature is that no one saw the vision either come or go. Some had seen the light but it was awhile before people went to investigate. About 10pm Judith Campbell, left for home because of concern for her elderly dying mother. She soon rushed back, calling out that her mother had died. In fact, she had only collapsed in an unconscious state although death was to come on the morrow. By now only a few women remained gazing at the Apparition and they all hurried to the Campbell house. When they returned after a quarter of an hour, there was nothing to be seen--nothing except the rain lashing the grass and the gable that had previously been so dry.

The Date of the Apparition

The date of the Apparition is also significant because in Catholic and Hebrew liturgies, sunset marks the beginning of the new day, so monasteries are already starting to celebrate the next day's feast. August 22 will go through a series of changes in the liturgical calendar.

- In 1879 it was the Octave day of the Assumption and it was specifically commemorated in the liturgy
- In 1944, Pope Pius XII placed the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on this day. In 1879 the Sunday before the Apparition the liturgy celebrated the Feast of the Pure Heart of Mary (double major of the first class), but now, after the apparition of Fatima, the feast was transformed from Pure Heart to Immaculate Heart.
- Then, in our era, after the renovation of the calendar after the Second Vatican Council, the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is placed next to the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and August 22, the octave of Mary's Assumption becomes the feast of the Queenship of Mary as the conclusion of her arrival in heaven.

At LaSalette where Mary wept continually it was the Feast of the Sorrows of Mary, but here at Knock, where Mary is dressed as a bride and crowned as a queen, the liturgical setting is also perfect.

Mary's pose at Knock is that of Advocate and Mediatrix of all graces

The witnesses said that our Lady appeared to be praying. When a Queen prays, it is to intercede for her people, to be their advocate, to obtain favors for them. None of the witnesses had ever seen a picture or statue showing Our Lady in this particular attitude, but it can be found in early Christian paintings in the Roman catacombs. The hands are lifted in what is called the "Orante" position.

St. John the Apostle

St. John held either the Book of the Gospels, or the Mass Book. Although Patrick Hill could see the letters, even the lines etched into the parchment, he evidently could not read the words. Were they in Latin or Greek? One witness said the index finger and the middle finger of the right hand raised, evidently not in blessing, but as if he were speaking and impressing some point forcibly on his listeners. What was St. John saying?

First of all, nothing! Was this a rebuke to pastors who are dumb dogs before the wolf and fail to defend their flock?

Secondly, he was preaching as a bishop. Was he addressing other bishops? His Gospel ends with a chapter in which Jesus questions Peter (the Pope) three times, urging him to take good care of the flock.

Thirdly, could he be reading from his own Gospel where he recorded Jesus' words, "Behold thy mother",

Lastly, could he be reading from the Apocalypse of which he is traditionally accepted as the author? Was he announcing the time of the events in this book?

The Lamb surrounded by Golden Lights or Stars

I just did a whole conference last week entitle the Lamb of Zion, making the case for the identity of the Lamb in the Apocalypse who is followed by the 144,000. In this conference I went into some detail with Greek lexicons, explaining that the word for Lamb in the Apocalypse is not the paschal lamb, but a very young lamb, just a few weeks old. This is precisely what the witnesses at Knock saw. They were familiar with farm animals. They judged the size between 5-8 weeks old, whereas the Passover lamb had to be a year old. This makes an extremely strong case for asserting that the message of Knock is an announcement of the imminence of events in the Book of Revelation.

The Famine

Famine is also mentioned often as a plague in the Apocalypse. About the time of Knock, Melanie will finally be able to publish the Secret of LaSalette which is full of images from the Book of Revelation. The parishioners of Knock are living witnesses of the ravages of famine. Are they presented to the world as a sign of things to come?

The Outdoor Altar

Ireland is full of Mass rocks where the people secretly celebrated the sacraments outdoors because it was illegal for Catholics to assemble in public churches. Is the sign of the cross and the outdoor altar a message of persecution to come? Will there be internal schism also. The Apparition of Knock was scoffed at by priests and ignored by prelates for 50 years. It was a time of modernism among the clergy and contempt of the lower classes.

The crown

Mary is dressed as a bride and crowned as a queen, but what is the rose on her forehead? The whole book of Revelation is about a great marriage feast of Christ and his Church. Mary is the icon of the Church. The rose is mentioned in scripture in connection with the bride of the Song of Songs

Our couch is green: the beams of our house are cedar, our rafters are pine. I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. As a lily among brambles, so is my love among maidens. [Song 1:16-2:1]

The “knock”

There is a famous knock at the conclusion of the seven letters of the Apocalypse. Was this a rebuke to those who were not helping the Irish poor?

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation. “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. . . . Behold, I stand at the door and KNOCK; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne [Rev 3:14-21].

Interestingly, knock in Gaelic means hill. LaSalette is on a high mountain, Knock is on a rocky, craggy hill.

Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and hills, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb [Rev 6:15-16].

St. Joseph

St. Joseph is the only person not found explicitly in the book of Revelation, except in the tribes of Joseph/Ephraim and Manasseh

St. Joseph stands at Knock among a group of family men

St. Joseph is bowing toward Mary, showing respect for his wife

St. Joseph, with St. John, is the Protector of the Virgin

Transcript of "*Knock*" for 2017–MarianNews YouTubeChannel
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St. Joseph is Protector of the Church
He seems to be ready to help the laity to protect their Church

The Holy Trinity

Joseph the Father figure
John, the son entrusted to Mary
Mary, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit

Some call the Apocalypse the book of Consolation

The sun is setting
Darkness covers the church
Famines threatens again
Rain drenches the parishioners
The souls in purgatory are part of the living Church, cared for by the parishioners and interceding for them
The Angels are doing battle in the heavens.

After several years of famine, the immediate effect on Ireland was consolation