

NEW ORLEANS, THE FAMINE & MARGARET

**Maura Williamson &
Helen Corcoran**

"Your letter of March 28, 2014, to the Holy Father regarding the possible cause of Margaret Haughey has been transmitted for competence to the Congregation of the Causes of Saints".

MARCELLO BARTOLUCCI
SECRETARY CONGREGAZIONE DELLE CAUSE DEI SAI TIROME

THE 2014 International Famine Commemoration was held in New Orleans. Two members from the *Birthplace of Margaret of New Orleans* committee were invited following a visit from Dr Laura Kelley during the summer to the cottage. Maura Williamson and Helen Corcoran attended the four day event on behalf of the committee. These events commenced with a boat trip down the Mississippi river accompanied by Irish dignitaries, Minister Heather Humphreys TD *Minister of Arts Heritage and the Gaelteacht*, Joe Hannon, Secretary General, and Paul Gleeson, *The Consulate General of Ireland* based in Atlanta, and special guests. The tour gave a spectacular view of the city port and the guide spoke about the cost of the lives of countless Irish immigrants who dug the sixty foot wide, seven foot deep canal by hand using shovels and picks between 1832 and 1838. In 1831 the New Orleans Canal and Banking Company were chartered to build a six-mile waterway that linked up town New Orleans and Lake Pontchartrain. The canal diggers toiled from twelve to fifteen hours a day often working in pestilent water teeming with mosquitoes and disease. Many labourers succumbed to cholera, yellow fever and accidents as they clawed the trench through the cypress swamps to the lake.

The participants disembarked at the Mississippi Riverfront where they were greeted by dancers from *Muggivan School of Irish Dance* and a lone piper lead them through the streets of New Orleans to a reception at the *Williams Research Centres of the Historic New Orleans Collection*, where the Official Opening of the Commemoration was conducted by Minister Humphreys.

Friday 7th November began with a business breakfast at Brennan's restaurant,

hosted by Louisiana Lt Gov Jay Dardenne and the Greater New Orleans, Inc followed by Tulane University Symposium, speakers consisted of Carolin Callery Strokestown House, Roscommon; Sean Tenner; Richard Campanella; Terrence Fitzmorris; Ciara Breathnach, University of Limerick; and Christine Kinealy at St Alphonous Center. During this day event Maura and Helen displayed literature and conversed the story of *Margaret's Birthplace* to those present.

The following day there was an *Irish Historical Tour of New Orleans* exploring the neighbours where the Irish settled, see the churches built by the Irish including St Patrick's where Margaret's funeral was held and many of her orphans received the Sacrament of Baptism. From there the tour joined with the Minister's entourage escorted by the New Orleans Sheriff's Department to Margaret's statue on Camp Street. The evening reached a crescendo at the IN-NOLA Gala Ball at New Orleans' historic Gallier Hall. This black tie event consisted of cuisine from the top chefs and restaurants in the city, and entertainment was supplied by a

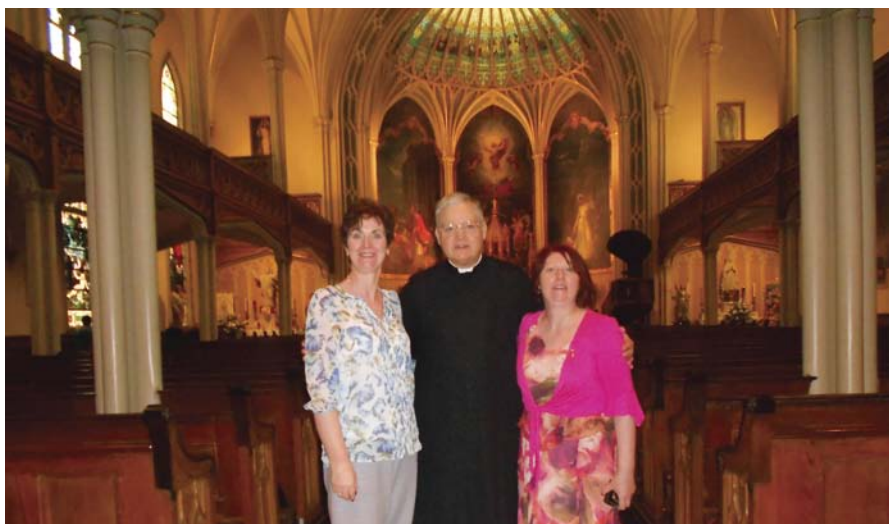
■ **Maura Williamson, Minister Heather Humphreys Arts, Heritage and the Gaelteacht, & Helen Corcoran at Margaret of New Orleans Statue and inset at the Famine Memorial Cross.**

■ **Below: Minister Heather Humphreys, Arts, Heritage and the Gaelteacht, dispersing the Margaret of New Orleans Birthplace soil from Tully, around the Memorial.**

section of Irish musicians, dancers, New York Celtic-Jazz singer Tara O'Grady with the Black Velvet Band, and Celtic rock band Black 47.

On Sunday the final ceremony was held for the dedication and blessing of a new four-acre park on the site of the historical New Basin Canal. *The Ancient Order of Hibernians of Louisiana* in conjunction with the Irish Famine Commemoration Committee celebrated the launch of the





■ Helen Corcoran, Fr Stan Chloras & Maura Williamson at St Patrick's church, New Orleans, where Margaret's funeral took place and her orphans were baptised.
■ Below: Maura Williamson and Helen Corcoran standing at Margaret's Memorial in St Louis Cemetery, New Orleans.

Hibernian Memorial Park. In past times those who emigrated took a sample of their home soil with them to their new found land, so that it could be buried with them. During summer 2014, Dr Laura D Kelly visited the birthplace of Margaret Haughey in Tully South in Carrigallen, took a piece of soil from there and brought it back to New Orleans with her. As part of this Ceremony this soil was poignantly dispersed around the Memorial by Minster Humphreys.



This visit has secured strong links and opportunities for future liaisons between the two communities, which includes tourism and the possible opening of the process of beatification of Margaret of New Orleans.

Margaret's Spirit

Kevin Patrick

If Margaret moved amongst these gentle hands all gathered here to praise her name today. To see again her own sweet native land to feel that she had never been away. She might remark "Well this is mighty fine, to praise the long deceased, and speak my name when famine, war and want still cross each line whilst leaders speak of budgets and of blame. Far better and more fitting it would be to feed and clothe the hungry and the poor. To open hands of kindness with my fame and gift the homeless man his own front door". Well, one of us would then have to be brave to answer her strong spirit from the grave.

Our Margaret, that is what we seek to do in following your footsteps down the days. Your fine example teaches us anew for a woman who is wise, is one to praise. For truly you did prove the Widow's Mite is worthy more than riches, land or gold in giving with a joy and a delight to comfort the afflicted, young and old. You showed the World a way to live and be your orphans you did save, none turned away and blessed their descendants now call thee. That's why we gather here as one today. Tá faillte romhat abhaile, never alone which means Our Margaret, that, "You're Welcome Home".

THE BALLAD OF MARGARET'S BIRTHPLACE

Tony Fahy—Lyric and Music ©

CHORUS

*To Margaret's birthplace you can come
An open hearth and sing a song
Soda bread and a pot a tea
And Margaret's Well is flowing free*

She was born when times were rough
Penal times were very tough
Tully Mass Rock to Gulladoo
A sod of turf to see them through

CHORUS

Margaret's home had such a view
Carrigallen, Leitrim too
Mud and stone—firm and strong
Though wintertime was cold and long

CHORUS

Cold and hunger coming fast
Famine times were set to last
For Americae they'd have to leave
A six month voyage on the sea

You're so alone when leaving home
Say goodbye and you are on your own
Brothers, sisters—and parents too
Ne'er again to see that Tully view

CHORUS

In New Orleans in Margaret's Place
You can see her shining face
Her marble statue is renowned
As she proudly is in her home town

The Ballad of Margaret of New Orleans was written by Tony Fahy © and was performed LIVE on Charlie McGettigan's: "Saturday Connections" programme on Shannonside radio on Sat 20th Sept 2014. Bryan Mulligan accompanied Tony on steel guitar with both Mary Harte and Charlie McGettigan joining in on the chorus.

*You can hear it YouTube at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1sUtYkXR7c
or just type Ballad of Margaret of New Orleans into the YouTube window. It is hoped to have it available in CD format in 2015.*