MIRACLE AT MASS ROCK!

Tony Fahy

This article first appeared in the Carrigallen Parish Jubilee Celebration publication: 'Jubilee 2000'.

THE THREE main events of the Jubilee Year in Carrigallen were: the Pilgrimage, the Mass on Tully Rock and the Jubilee end-of-year Mass in St Mary's.

My particular story takes place at Tully Rock, a place so far out in the wilds of Carrigallen that I nearly gave up looking for it, till I met one or two others in the same predicament. I took quite a lot of pictures, and afterwards retired to a very nice presentation of tea and sandwiches which were very welcome. I was talking to Mrs Doherty from Beaghabeg, whom I hadn't seen for some time when I was interrupted by Christine Murtagh. She drew me to one side to introduce me to one of her friends, a nurse, although Irish, had lived in Africa in recent years. And she was only going to be in the country for a short while. But she was from Dublin as I was originally, which is why Christine introduced us.

We were chatting away, having the tea, when Gemma, as she was introduced to me, said that she was from Dundrum in Co Dublin. I, in turn said that I had spent the first two months of my life in Dundrum. 'Yes' I said 'We lived in Annaville Grove'. Gemma stopped and looked at me and said 'You're Anthony Fahy, aren't you'. Now, only family in Dublin would have known me by Anthony. I said 'How can you possibly know that? I've never met you, have I? 'Well', she said 'No, but you lived in No 1 Annaville Grove and we lived in No 2.'

'But' I said 'I only lived in Annaville Grove for about two months as a baby. You couldn't possibly remember me from that time, even if you did know me then'. 'Well' she said 'Not only that, but I've been praying for you for the last 40 or so years'.

There was a bit of a stunned silence, that was followed by me saying: 'You've been what?' And she repeated what she had said, word for word.

'But you've not seen me since then, have you?' I said to Gemma, 'There must be more to this'.

'Well, said Gemma, 'My brother was born around the time that you were (pointing at me). At that time it was customary to include the babies in your night prayers and as you, Anthony, had just been born, and was added to the prayers, of not only myself, but my whole family' (Gemma later confirmed this to me in an email). I could see the headline in the Wednesday's Leitrim Observer—**'MIRACLE AT MASS ROCK!'** Fr Young would have a field day! I was truly astonished by what I had just heard.

Gemma went on to say that over the years she often used to wonder who this person was that was in her prayers since being a baby

My mother and father, Teenie & Paddy Fahy, my sister Susan and myself (front left) when I was about 2 years of age

herself. Was he still alive? What exactly did he mean to her to be included every night in her prayers...someone she did not know. Finally, about five years ago, she decided to drop this 'Anthony Fahy' from her prayers. I said to her 'Well, that's funny, that's about the time when things started to unfurl on me...'

You can imagine that if I found this all hard to believe, then to Gemma it must have been even more amazing, as she thought that I had existed at some time and possibly did so still, but that the possibility of meeting me was so remote that I was more of a legend to her. Whereas, I did not know of her...at all!

Considering the chances of the two of us being in the middle of nowhere, meeting on the top of a rock that had hardly been visited since penal times; Gemma only fleetingly in the country, don't mind Carrigallen; only meeting because of all the people that were on the Rock that day, Christine introduced us, as she knew we had some tentative Dublin background. And

Mass Rock at Tully

Gemma, sitting at the Mass Rock.

me who was just about giving up on finding Tully Rock and had literally turned the car back when I saw someone else.

That night we all met again in John Joe Dolan's, had a great sing-song, re-told the story a few times and then Gemma was off to Dublin.

Next morning, after processing the pictures I had taken, I was delighted to discover that I had actually taken a picture of Gemma. I never thought at the time to have someone take a picture of us together.

But sure hopefully, we can do it again, on some far off hill in the middle of Africa...no that couldn't happen...could it?

ADDENDUM

Below is the text of an email sent to me by Gemma shortly after returning home

'Greetings

Yes everyone remembers you, not only I, but also my sister and brother prayed for you for years not knowing who you were. It seems that you were born around the same time as my brother so you were just bunged into the prayers. My mother says that your parents had a flat upstairs of the house next door to us–'Clunes' of which family only the son remains still living there. My mother remembers your parents–that your mother was from Donegal–as is my mother and that your father, from Galway, worked in Radio Éireann. Your mother gave my mother the feathers to make a Red-Indian headress for my brother!

I enjoyed my Leitrim weekend–will come again. Keep up the great music!

Gemma Brugha'

THE OLD AND THE NEW *Sr Brigid Jane McGuinness*

IN IRELAND, in the early part of the 20th century, the lack of material wealth left room for neighbourliness and hospitality as some people suffered from poverty at that time. To cope with the challenges of life, they worked hard. There were prepared to suffer, trusting in God and gathered together in prayer.

They had great devotion to the Rosary, and were convinced this helped to solve the problems of day to day living. Without modern conveniences, people were far more self sufficient than they are today. Without telephones, TV's., computers or freezers, the community acquired a practical knowledge of the many aspects of living, which we take for granted today. They repaired shoes, built out houses, learned to recognise and treat human sickness, as well as animal diseases.

Pigs were the main source of meat foods, which they killed to cure as bacon. Families grew their own vegetables, baked bread, drew water from the well, had their own cows for milk and butter, and hens for eggs. They gathered together to save hay, prepared food for weddings and funerals, and helped to deliver babies into the world. They even helped each other to care for the elderly, and invalid members of the community.

Sadly, where this wasn't possible, the elderly were admitted to the County Home, where they remained until death. Neighbours shared all they could with those who had less than themselves. In the evenings they 'ceiled' in the neighbours house, sat around the open fire, telling ghost stories, or jokes, or played cards.

But how things have changed in recent years. Care for our Senior Citizens present a serious social problem, though thankfully they are financially better off. If we look around, we discover old people living alone in isolated rural areas with no one to share a word or feeling with, many of them living in the past, nurtured only by memories of happier days. Old people are too readily removed from their Community and family surroundings.

Having retired, and while still in good health there can be the painful feeling of being no longer of use to anyone. Preparation for retirement is very important in order to learn to let go of whatever work one is doing. To join an Active Age Group can be helpful, it caters for people in many ways i.e. Meeting with others, Social Afternoons, Parties, Outings etc. Attend a Day Hospital where old people's needs spiritual and physical are catered for. Young people should be encouraged to visit the aged in hospital and at home. When done with sensitivity it can be of great value with each sharing their life experiences.

We are told to grow old gracefully; our faith in God helps us with this challenge. Life is a circle, and we are all wayfarers on the road, passing from youth to mature years and then to old age.

From the *Book of Ecclesiaites 3:*

There is a season for everything, A time for every occupation under heaven, A time for giving birth, a time for dying, A time for sowing, a time for reaping, A time for loving, a time for peace.