



CONGREGAZIONE
DELLE CAUSE DEI SANTI

Rome, July 11, 1998

Prot. N. VAR. 4482/97

Dear Mr. Fahey,

I have received your kind letter of June 19, 1998 together with other material regarding the supposed "Irish Hunger Martyrs".

In thanking you for bringing this information to our attention, I wish to inform you that the question is presently under the study of this Congregation.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

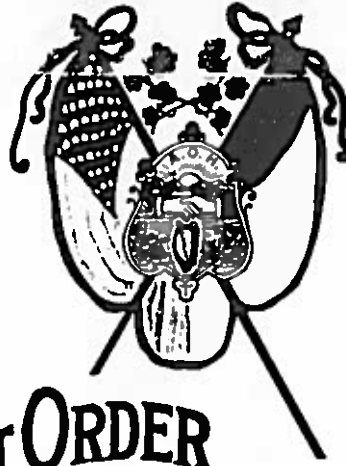
+ José Saraiva Martins
+José Saraiva Martins
Prefect

Mr. JOHN W. FAHEY
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United States of America

NATIONAL BOARD

OFFICE OF THE
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HUNGER COMMEMORATION
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ANCIENT ORDER
OF HIBERNIANS IN AMERICA
INCORPORATED

Organized in New York City, May 4, 1836

Congregation For the Causes of the Saints
Archbishop Alberto Bovone, Prefect
Piazza Pio XII, 00193
Rome, Italy

March 27, 1997

Dear Archbishop Bovone,

The Irish diaspora is commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the worst European social disaster of the 19th Century, the Irish Hunger, or Famine. During the period 1845-1850 more than 3.5 million men, women and children died or emigrated from Ireland. One of the aspects of this tragic event most overlooked by historians is the demonstrated strength of conviction by Irish-Catholic peasants of their faith. Tens to hundreds of deaths occurred daily in a single village or workhouse. Facing certain death for themselves and their families, they declined to accept the bribe of free soup in exchange for conversion to Protestantism. Incredibly, it was also reported that, on Fridays, many of the starving peasants refused soup containing meat. For most, their end came as non-identified corpses disposed of in mass graves, coffinless and without receiving last rites. Also largely overlooked are the number of Catholic Priests and Nuns who died attempting to administer to the sick and dying, providing humanitarian assistance and sacraments, while aware that such service could mean their own demise. Reportedly, Archbishop William Crolly, then Primate of Ireland, suffered an early death in this manner. This letter is an appeal to the Church to acknowledge the dedication and sacrifices of the appropriate Irish people and Clergy to the Catholic Faith during the famine period with a "Mass Beatification of these Blessed Irish Hunger Martyrs".

We fully recognize that the suffering and deaths caused by malnutrition and by the spread on related diseases were ecumenical in nature. Also, many of those of other faiths and nationalities were afflicted while assisting the Irish Catholic sick and dying. However, no group was as devastated proportionally and in total numbers as were the Irish Catholic peasants in western Ireland.

"Ireland Unfree Shall Never Be At Peace."

The long-term impact of the government's early 18th Century Penal Laws, of Gaelic-Irish cultural apartheid and to outlaw the practice of the Catholic religion in Ireland, created a class of people living in abject poverty and squalor when the potato blight struck. Historical records in Rome and recent research by academics and authors corroborate these facts. However, the issues of ethnic and religious cleansing are not the subjects of this appeal.

We ask that the Catholic Church acknowledge the dedication and sacrifices of the Irish Catholic peasants and Catholic Clergy during the Famine period to give a rightful and peaceful closure to their deaths. Their mass beatification as "The Blessed Irish Hunger Martyrs" would bring the universal dignity that they deserve for the heroic virtue that they displayed. Justification for this appeal is presented as follows:

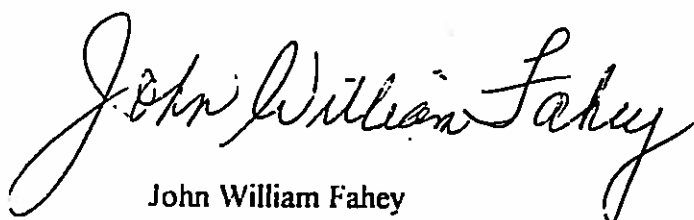
- The adherence of the Irish Catholic peasants to non-violence following the counsel of the Church, while food was being exported from Ireland, under armed guard, in front of their starving eyes.
- The refusal of peasants to convert from their Catholic religion by accepting free soup while they and their families were on the brink of death from starvation and related diseases..
- Their final fate came in the ignominious disposal of their bodies in unmarked mass graves, with many unidentified, coffinless and without last rites.
- Dutifully following their vows, Catholic Priests and Nuns performed the herculean tasks of attempting to administer care and sacraments to the overwhelming numbers of sick and dying, thus wilfully subjecting themselves to a similar fate.

The faith of these Irish martyrs and clergy has inspired Irish men and women to join the Catholic religious Orders in large numbers. They continue to serve the Church in every part of the world. Today, the number of Irish serving in Catholic and other charitable organizations in troubled third world countries is disproportionate to their relative population in the world. The good works that they have done and are doing is a credit to their ancestors who set the example by their sacrifices.

Indeed, as a result of the massive emigration from certain death in Ireland, the strong religious beliefs of the immigrant Irish served to establish the solid foundation for the growth and development of the Catholic Church in many of the receiving countries; North America is an outstanding example. In truth, their dedication to faith served to sustain these immigrants in their struggles to assimilate in their new and adopted countries. These strong beliefs are carried today by many of the 70 - 80 million people of Irish heritage worldwide.

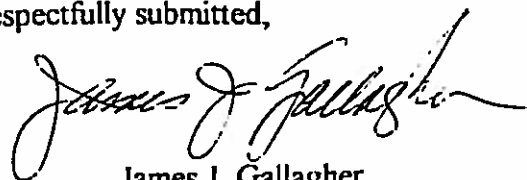
John Cardinal O'Connor, Archdiocese of New York, forwarded our request for the "Mass Beatification of the Blessed Irish Martyrs" to Rome in 1995. Petitions have been distributed and signed at Masses, and public and social functions throughout the United States and Canada. In 1996, approximately 600 signatures were sent to the New York Archdiocese to be forwarded to the Vatican in Rome. Approximately 4,000 additional signatures accompany this letter. The process will continue for the next several years.

Your consideration of this request will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

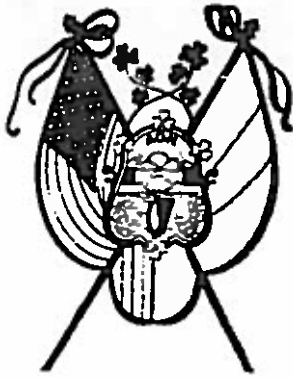


John William Fahey
Beatification Committee Chairman

Respectfully submitted,



James J. Gallagher
National Chairman, AOH Committee



ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS

IN AMERICA ESTABLISHED
NEW YORK 1836

March 27, 1997

TO: Archbishop Alberto Bovono, Prefect
Congregation For The Causes of The Saints

FROM: John W. Fahey, Chairman Beatification Comm. For
The Blessed Irish Hunger Martyrs.

SUBJECT: List of Contents in Binder Being Forwarded to
Support This Cause.

1. Letter from James J. Gallagher , National Director, Chairman of Hunger Commemoration Committee.
2. Letter from Cardinal O'Connor , 8/30/95, forwarding our request to the Holy See at that time.
3. References from the Catholic Encyclopedia on Beatifications that may be considered.
4. Copies of articles supporting our Cause from books:
The Irish Famine by Noel Kissane. Published by the National Library of Ireland, 1995, p. 86,87.

The Catholic Church and The Famine by Donal Kerr. Published by Columba Press, Dublin, Ireland, p. 82 - 92,1996.

History of Ireland, Vol. IV, by The Rev. E. A. D'Alton. Published by Gresham Publishing Co., London, England, p. 456 - 487. This shows the extent of previous Anti - Catholic persecutions under the Penal Laws.

Another book, Famine Echoes by Cathal Poirteir, p.161 - 181, gives information on this subject. Published by Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, Ireland, 1995.

5. Signed petitions from every section of the United States and parts of Canada. These petitions and others sent by the New York Archdiocese in 1996 contain about 4600 signatures.

Respectfully submitted,

John W. Fahey