

SAMUEL J. BOLAND

SERGEANT A. S. DOWDEN, EXTRAORDINARY  
SECRETARY OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

From the files of Redemptorist archives there has emerged a curious but quite edifying story of the immediate postwar years<sup>1</sup>. It is the story of a simple and devout British soldier of the army of occupation in Rome. Chance had thrown him into contact with Fr. P. Murray, Superior General, and others of the community of S. Alfonso; and he showed himself extremely generous in assisting communication with some of the provinces and equally honourable in respecting the confidences entrusted to him. Besides being so curious the incident was probably also unique, and for that reason seems to merit being put on more accessible record. It provides a picture of Italy in the experience of others than those involved in the struggle for political stability.

CENSORSHIP DURING THE OCCUPATION

The involvement of the British soldier in the business of the Redemptorist Superior General was occasioned by the condition of Italy after World War II. The country had gone through a severely testing experience in the long months before the end of the war. The hard-fought campaigns from Sicily, the South of Italy and the Anzio beachhead left their deep scars, not only on so many historic buildings but on the people, who in spite of themselves were by force of circumstances much more than spectators of the conflict.

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<sup>1</sup>The following archives have been used in this study: AGR: Redemptorist General Archives, Rome. In the sections of immediate interest they are still in the process of organisation. ALP: Archives of the London Province, Clapham. ACP: Archives of the Canberra Province, Sydney. The province of Dublin is also represented in AGR, but its own provincial archives have not apparently preserved the corresponding documentation.

After the entry of the allied troops into Rome in June 1944 the fighting continued as the Germans strenuously resisted. Now there was a further complication. The Italian resistance, which heroically aided the offensive, brought to the fore a redoubtable Communist element, which was to remain for a long time a significant political force in the country.

After peace in Europe in May 1945 there began for Italy, as for all combatant peoples, an anxious process of reconstruction. Each nation which had endured the war had its own peculiar problems. For Italy reconstruction was complicated by the presence of an expanding Communist party. There were many, including especially Church leaders, who viewed with grave alarm the possibility of seeing the fascist regime replaced by an equally totalitarian Marxism, with allegiance rather to Stalin's Russia than to an Italian nationalism not yet a hundred years old.

The downfall of Mussolini and the monarchy entailed the formulation of a new constitution. The election of the Constituent Assembly and the early tentative steps of the new republic were a time of deep concern for the Church and the emerging State<sup>2</sup>. It was a trying period during which the Government exercised a tight check on communication with the rest of the world. Obviously, the censorship proved a considerable inconvenience for religious authorities. The Redemptorist provincial in Australia, for example, contacted his Superior General through a chaplain serving with the armed forces<sup>3</sup>. With the transfer of the helpful Father Parker the appearance of Sergeant Dowden seemed providential<sup>4</sup>.

### SERGEANT DOWDEN

Who was Sergeant Dowden? The sudden appearance of the stranger was understandably puzzling to the provincials. Father John Cullen presumed that he was a good Catholic serving with

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<sup>2</sup> J. DEREK HOLMES, *The Papacy in the Modern World, 1914-1978*, Crossroads, New York, 1981, 171-172 speaks of the early relations of the Church with the emerging republic.

<sup>3</sup> Cullen to Parker, 22nd July 1945. AGR, Prov. Aust. Father A. Parker was a chaplain with the Australian Air Force stationed in Rome. The letterspeaks of other correspondence which had been of special help "in these months". Unfortunately, the correspondence mentioned has disappeared.

<sup>4</sup> Dowden to Cullen, 13th September 1945. ACP, D 2/45. The Sergeant's rank was sometimes written in the alternative spelling as "serjeant".

the Australian Military Forces Overseas<sup>5</sup>. Apart from the evident contact with the Superior General, Father Patrick Murray, and his helpfulness, nothing further was known about him. A chance meeting in Sydney between Father William Byrne and a certain Major Dowden seemed to confirm the impression that the sergeant was an Australian<sup>6</sup>. One gathers from the little relevant correspondence with the Irish provincial that he was just as vague.

In his first letter to the English provincial, Father John Charlton, the sergeant introduced himself and explained his being so intimately involved in the correspondence of the Superior General<sup>7</sup>. The letter was headed A. 5. Dowden 2044261, Transportation (Br.) Main, and the signature at the end was Anthony S. Dowden.

He explained that he was a regular visitor to the church of S. Alfonso and the residence of the Superior General in the via Merulana, where he had become acquainted with Father Murray. He added that he had already assisted the Superior General in contacting Father Gibson, who was serving with the military forces, and the Consultor General, Father Alexander McMullan<sup>8</sup>.

He went on to say that Father Murray was anxious on account of the difficulty he had in sending cables to the distant provinces. He had himself assisted by making enquiries in Italy and now wished to ask that Father Charlton agree to send the cables from England. He sent one as a trial with his letter, which as coming from the occupying forces was not delayed by the Italian censorship. The cable was addressed to the Redemptorists of Argentina announcing the death of the superior of the Lower German (Cologne) province with one of his consultors during the war and the appointment of a successor<sup>9</sup>. Further cables, he suggested, could be simply sent to Brother Joseph Smith of the Clapham community for dispatch.

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<sup>6</sup>Father Cullen added a note to the first of the Dowden letters in the provincial files. ACP D 2/45.

<sup>5</sup>Cullen to Dowden, 24th October 1945. ACP, D 4/45. Father William Byrne was the previous Provincial.

<sup>7</sup>Dowden to Charlton, 7th July 1945. ALP, Bb 199.

<sup>8</sup>Father Gibson of the English province was a long-serving military chaplain. (cf. Catalogue C.S.S.R., 1955, p. 388). Father Alexander McMullan of the Australian province had been elected Consultor General on 20th November 1944, but had not yet been able to reach Rome. (cf. SH 2(1954) 257-258).

<sup>9</sup>The Argentinian Redemptorists until 1943 had formed a vice-province dependent on the Lower German (Cologne) province.

This first letter from the sergeant went on to express the Superior General's concern over the ill health of Father Hill, another of the chaplains of the province. There was also a message for Father Demets of the West Indies, should he be in England, assuring him that he would receive a letter from Father Murray, even though he might have to wait a long time in the difficult circumstances<sup>10</sup>. The letter finished with a request for Rolls razor blades for the Superior General and for Father Lutz, Procurator General.

It seems that the method of transmitting cables through Brother Joseph proved satisfactory, since there is no further mention in later correspondence. No doubt it was an invaluable service to the general government. The other matters mentioned in this first Dowden letter to survive were typical of the contents of the considerable correspondence that followed. It was characteristic of the familiar and personal communication that was usual between the Superior General and the provincials, a fact which itself speaks plainly of the confidence the sergeant inspired. This first letter was to be the pattern of future correspondence between Rome and the three provinces. Father Murray gave his letters to the sergeant, who then copied them for transmission as his own mail thus avoiding the irksome Italian censorship. The replies were addressed to himself, and he handed them on<sup>11</sup>. The contents of the letter had the usual tone of past correspondence with the small exceptions of the sergeant's own few words of respectful greeting and the warm words of appreciation of his generous service added by the provincials.

One must emphasise with a sense of gratitude what is already evident enough. Sergeant Dowden was clearly of such a character as invited confidence. Father Murray, who knew him best, did not hesitate to entrust to him much of the regular business of his office. The correspondence, such as remains in the various archives, comprises some fifty or so letters that passed through the sergeant's hands. It shows that to a considerable extent he was admitted to intimate details of Redemptorist life.

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<sup>10</sup> Father A. Demets, a Belgian attached to the vice-province of Roseau in the West Indies was to be named coadjutor to the Bishop of Roseau in 1946. cf. S.J. BOLAND, *A Dictionary of the Redemptorists*, Rome, 1987, 104.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. John Cullen's note ACP, D2/45.

His honourable conduct merits due recognition, which will become more apparent if we look more closely at the correspondence in which he shared.

To use the privileges of the occupying army in order to circumvent the censorship obviously implied infringing some regulations. Nothing can be learned of the discussions that must have occurred before the sergeant undertook to expedite the Superior General's letters. It is evident, though, from the considerable exchange that he was not troubled by fear of possible repercussions of his proceedings. The first of his letters to survive is that of 7th July 1945 to Father Charlton, the English provincial<sup>12</sup>. In it he simply explained his association with the community of S. Alfonso and then went on to give the messages entrusted to him by Father Murray. Father Charlton's reply showed some caution which revealed his puzzlement and some concern not to compromise the sergeant<sup>13</sup>. He gratefully acknowledged "those messages from our friend, so dear to our hearts". His next letter, a little over a week later, omits even that trace of caution<sup>14</sup>. He speaks of proposed nominations being forwarded by Father McMullan "for Father Murray". In his first letter the Irish provincial, Father Hugo Kerr, showed himself a little hesitant, addressing the sergeant as "Dear Mr. Dowden"<sup>15</sup>.

Apart from those initial and somewhat tentative approaches the correspondence has all the ease and frankness on all sides of the normal relations of religious and their superior.

## THE CORRESPONDENCE

One consideration that was reassuring to the provincials was the fact that Sergeant Dowden had already been in correspondence with Father McMullan, Consultor General, before his first letter to Father Charlton<sup>16</sup>. A considerable part of the material in the

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<sup>12</sup> ALP, Bb 199.

<sup>13</sup> Charlton to Dowden, 11th July 1945. AGR, Prov. Ang.

<sup>14</sup> Charlton to Dowden, 22nd July 1945. ALP. Bb 200.

<sup>15</sup> Kerr to Dowden, 21st August 1945. AGR, Prov. Hib.

<sup>16</sup> Dowden to Charlton, 7th July 1945. ALP, Bb 199. Father McMullan's epic journey to Rome took him from Australia to India, England, Ireland and South Africa, enabling him to make canonical visitations on the way. He does not seem to have kept the sergeant's letters to him.

Dowden files is concerned with nominations, which were made in all provinces by the general government in those days. There are lists with comments by Father McMullan and all the respective provincials for India, Ireland, England and South Africa. Needless to say, much of the material was of a highly confidential nature<sup>17</sup>. In a very short time Father Murray and the provincials found that with easy minds they could repose confidence in the sergeant.

Similarly confidential were certain dispensations transmitted through Sergeant Dowden. In September 1945 the English provincial was informed that a dispensation from an impediment of age had been granted to a member of the province and that the rescript would be sent on by the more regular mail service<sup>18</sup>. Rather more confidential was the dispensation similarly arranged for a clerical student of the Australian province to transfer to the lay religious state<sup>19</sup>. The delicate nature of these transactions, especially the case of the clerical student, is yet further indication of the confidence reposed in Sergeant Dowden. It was not misplaced, as these cases and other matters normally kept from the ordinary members of the provinces were never suspected of having passed through the hands of a man other than the major Redemptorist Superiors.

With the long awaited cessation of hostilities Father Charlton in England, together with his consultors, made plans. These were principally concerned with developing the missions in South Africa; and the provincial explained his aims to Sergeant Dowden, to be handed on Father Murray<sup>20</sup>. What was projected was to be largely for the benefit of the native and coloured population, "something very precious in the eyes of the Holy See". The provincial spoke of proposed new foundations with a juvenate, for which personnel could easily be provided. And he asked that the mission be given the status of a vice-province.

The reply from the sergeant was a verbatim quotation of what he had been given by the Superior General<sup>21</sup>. Besides the promise to consider the proposals concerning South Africa as soon as

<sup>17</sup> Cf for example McMullan to Dowden, 7th March 1946. AGR, Prov. Ang.

<sup>18</sup> Dowden to Charlton, 17th September 1945. ALP Bb 200. The dispensation in question was \*om a requirement of age. Its purpose is not clear, as the man in question had been ordained in November of the previous year.

<sup>19</sup> Dowden to Cullen, 6th October 1945. ACP, D 4/45; 21st November 1945. ACP, D 6/45; Cullen to Dowden, 24th October 1945. AGR, Prov. Aust.

<sup>20</sup> Charlton to Dowden, 27th October 1945. AGR, Prov. Ang.

<sup>21</sup> Dowden to Charlton, 21st November 1945. ALP, Bb 201.

Father McMullan, the long-awaited Consultor General, should arrive, there was welcome news. The Apostolic Delegate, newly appointed, had expressed warm appreciation of the Redemptorists and their work for the Blacks. This encouraging letter ended with a few personal remarks from the sergeant himself. In addition to his good wishes he expressed a nostalgia for "a good old London pea-souper". He was undoubtedly a most obliging character, but his tastes were very strange.

In addition to the messages about South Africa the letter contained a most unexpected request. Through the Superior General the Apostolic Delegate asked for English Fathers to replace the Austrians in the vice-province of Copenhagen. The reason for the request was what was described as the intense hostility of the population for the Germans, which it was feared would extend to the Austrians. All the English provincial could promise in view of the expansion planned for South Africa was that the request would be considered<sup>22</sup>. As it happened, the Austrians continued their mission in Denmark without the feared disadvantages.

Even during the dismal war years there had been some encouraging expansion at a distance from the hostilities. Reports of this kind of growth came to Rome in the difficult post-war years; and it was sergeant Dowden who acted as intermediary. It was to him that the Irish provincial, Father Hugo Kerr, wrote of his careful planning for a studendate at Bangalore in India<sup>23</sup>. Through the sergeant he sent on the plans of the building together with detailed information about how the proposal was to be financed. Similarly, in Australia there were plans for an increased Redemptorist presence in places remote from the established houses. Father John Cullen, the provincial, explained to the sergeant the work contemplated in Townsville, North Queensland<sup>24</sup> and Christchurch, New Zealand<sup>25</sup>. Sergeant Dowden was able to express Father Murray's gratification at news of growth at a time so apparently unpromising<sup>26</sup>.

Welcome news came from Rome by way of the sergeant concerning two Australian Fathers who had served as military cha-

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<sup>22</sup> Charlton to Dowden, 15th December 1945. AGR, Prov. Ang.

<sup>23</sup> Kerr to Dowden, 21st August 1945. AGR, Prov. Hib.

<sup>24</sup> Cullen to Dowden, 24th October 1945. AGR, Prov. Aust.; 11th December 1945. December 1945. ACP, D 7/45; 13th March 1946. AGR, Prov. Aust.

<sup>25</sup> Cullen to Dowden, 13th March 1946. AGR, Prov. Aust.

<sup>26</sup> Dowden to Cullen, 6th October 1945. ACP, D 4/45.

plains and had been held in Japanese prisoner of war camps<sup>27</sup>. Of Father Gerard Bourke Sergeant Dowden was able to report that the Apostolic Delegate to Indo-China had written in glowing terms of his courageous ministry to his fellow prisoners on the notorious Burma Railway. The sergeant also expressed the Superior General's concern for the welfare of Father John Kennedy, who had also worked on the railway before being transferred to mines in Manchuria. Among the Dowden papers is to be found also mention of chaplains and prisoners of war among the Fathers of the English province<sup>28</sup>.

Particularly intriguing is mention by Father Kerr of a visit to Ireland by Father Wheelwright<sup>29</sup>. The visit, the provincial reported with an almost audible sigh of relief, "had none of the unpleasant consequences that might have been feared". With his famous half brother, Eamon de Valera (Dev to Father Kerr and Father Murray), he had visited each of the houses. No doubt, whatever of the sergeant, the Superior General would have understood the evident relief with which the provincial spoke of the guest's departure and of Dev's letter "expressing profound gratitude".

There is considerable mention in the correspondence of concern among the Redemptorists of their concern for those of their confreres who had suffered most in the conflict just ended. Italy had been the theatre of fierce land battles as the retreating Germans resisted the advancing allied armies. Together with the rest of the people the Redemptorists suffered deprivations. In November 1945 Father Kerr asked the sergeant if he would be willing to accept gifts of clothing to be handed on to the authorities of S. Alfonso<sup>30</sup>. In the margin of the letter Sergeant Dowden jotted "Yes, most certainly". A problem about sending aid to fellow Redemptorists was that the more usual channels, the Red Cross and UNNRA, would not undertake to deliver goods to specified destinations. A similar problem about transferring funds prompted the Irish provincial to ask how the no doubt much needed financial assistance might be sent to Italy.

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<sup>27</sup> Dowden to Cullen, 21st November 1945. ACP, D 6/45.

<sup>28</sup> Charlton to Dowden, 11th July 1945. AGR, Prov. Ang.

<sup>29</sup> Kerr to Dowden, 19th January 1946. AGRm Prov. Hib. Father Thomas Wheelwright of the Baltimore province was a half brother of Eamon De Valera, the Irish leader, whose person was to some degree controversial.

<sup>30</sup> Kerr to Dowden, 6th November 1945. AGR, Prov. Hib.



Father Cullen in Australia, acting on locally received advice, sent a large gift of clothing for the students of the impoverished Neapolitan province<sup>31</sup>. He had also sent a large cash donation by cable, no doubt with a fervent prayer that the funds would reach their proper destination.

#### SERGEANT DOWDEN AFTER ROME

In February 1946 Father Murray wrote directly to Father Charlton<sup>32</sup> and he concluded with the news "I regret to say that Sjt. Dowden is leaving here, probably in March. We shall miss him, as he has been doing great things for us". The news stirred the English provincial as his next communication showed, being concerned with the coming interruption of the correspondence<sup>33</sup>. He found it, he declared, impossible to express how much he appreciated the help given by such "a fast and valued friend". His inability to find the necessary words led him to indulge in a little fantasy. "If I were king I could raise you to the peerage: if I were Pope I should pin some glittering star of honour on your breast".

With the loss of such an excellent go between the provincial wondered what he should do in the months ahead. He feared that communication with Rome would once more be difficult, and he appealed to the sergeant's "fertile ideas" for suggestions.

As it turned out, communication through the obliging sergeant continued, as through him Father Charlton and Father McMullan arranged for the erection of a vice-province in South Africa<sup>34</sup>. The efficiency of the process is evidenced by the reply of the Superior General announcing the erection of the vice-province in a letter dated 27th March, less than a week after the provincial's request<sup>35</sup>. Father Murray announced that the sergeant now expected to remain on hand until the end of the following month. For what should happen after that he had his misgivings. Air mail was now operating; but the cost was prohibitive, especially since the

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<sup>31</sup> Cullen to Dowden, 11th December 1945. ACP, D 7/45.

<sup>32</sup> Murray to Charlton, 10th February 1946. ALP, Bb 202.

<sup>33</sup> Charlton to Dowden, 18th February 1946. AGr, Prov. Ang.

<sup>34</sup> Charlton to Dowden, 21st March 1946 and McMullan to Dowden, 7th March 1946. AGr, Prov. Ang.

<sup>35</sup> Murray to Charlton, 27th March 1946. ALP, Bb 202.

general curia could no longer receive funds from outside Italy. He gloomily foresaw problems after Sergeant Dowden left at the end of April.

Father Murray expressed his regret and that of the whole community of S. Alfonso<sup>36</sup>. "He was certainly a great help to us, but also gave us great edification". In an earlier letter he had spoken of the sergeant as coming to the church daily for Mass and Holy Communion<sup>37</sup>.

After he left Rome, presumably at the end of April as he had said, Sergeant Dowden remained in some contact with the Redemptorist in Clapham. Needless to say, correspondence with him no longer appeared in the archives. Towards the end of the year Father Murray wished to confer on him and his wife a diploma of affiliation with the congregation as oblates<sup>38</sup>. The Superior General hoped that the diploma would reach them for Christmas. He had been delayed because he had not known Mrs. Dowden's Christian name; but he then discovered that the extraordinarily omniscient Irish porter of S. Alfonso, Brother Stanislaus, was able to supply the information. After the passage of almost a year the sergeant was still remembered with affection, and some in Rome "were always wishing for his return". After Christmas Father Murray was able to announce that a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Dowden had spoken of their having received the diploma and of their being very proud to be associated with the Redemptorists. They deserved it, the Superior General declared, for their very great help during the war.

The writer of this article was able to trace the address of Mr. and Mrs. Dowden to Upminster to the north of London. Enquiries in the parish, however, in 1989 brought the information that both had died. It was naturally a disappointment to be unable to make the acquaintance of a man who deserved so much of the Redemptorists for his generous service in difficult times.

Something quite remarkable and deserving of emphasis in the curious interlude is that apart from the superiors involved nobody seems to have known that so much correspondence with the Superior General was passing through the hands of a layman.

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Murray to Charlton, 10th February 1946. ALP, Bb 202.

<sup>38</sup> Murray to Charlton, 8th December 1946. ALP Bb 204.

That speaks volumes of an extraordinarily honourable character. Sergeant Dowden had access to intimate information concerning three Redemptorist provinces, including some matters that were particularly confidential; and he showed himself at all times worthy of the trust.

Those who knew him personally, especially Father Murray, the Superior General, spoke in appreciation of his character and his edifying conduct. He was clearly an altogether admirable person. His service to the Congregation certainly gives him a claim to grateful remembrance.

#### DOCUMENTS

The letters which follow are examples of the correspondence which passed through Sergeant Dowden's hands. They are letters of the provincials, Fathers Charlton, Kerr and Cullen as well as of Father McMullan, Consultor General, and of the sergeant himself as coming from Eather Murray.

1. Dowden to Charlton, 7th July 1945. ALP Bb 1 g9.

204426 1  
sjt. A.S. Dowden  
Transportation(sr.)Main

Dear Father Charlton,

Being a regular visitor to the church of St. Alphonsus and to your general house, it has been my pleasure to communicate with Father Gibson on behalf of Father General and also with Father McMullan at your address, the reason being the rapid means of communication as compared with other channels. Father General has been investigating the possibilities of sending cables from here, and at the suggestion of Father Gibson I have approached the local manager of Cable & Wireless Ltd. and it was ascertained that, whilst cables can be sent through the Italian Co., to most parts of the empire and U.S.A., there is not the same availability as there is from England, so it has been decided to try sending cables to you for retransmission. This procedure will also serve to save expenditure of lire, something which is most desirable under present circumstances. The following message from Father is more explana-

tory in details of procedure and also conveys other news etc.:

Your telegram of June 4th reached Father General on June 8th and he was very grateful for the news of Father McMullan's arrival. A letter to me would have taken about the same time to arrive. On July 2nd we received your letter of March 17th via the Vatican, and on the same day' yours of June 14th to Father Proc. General. He will send you the Papal blessing for Father Boyle's jubilee with a letter to remind him of the happy years they spent with yourself at Teignmouth. Father General was very happy to visit Teignmouth from Chudleigh in 1939, and especially the altar where he said his first Mass.

Do not worry any more about Electra House, at least for the present. When Father General's telegrams are not very urgent I will send them for him to Brother Joseph Smith, who can hand them in at your own telegraph office and put the tariffs down to Father General's account. Kindly give instructions to Brother Joseph or his substitute, and give him the following telegram as a trial:

To: Provincial Redentoristas Paraguay 1204 Buenos Aires

VONMEURERS AND CONSULTOR DEAD FLESH PROVINCIAL  
PATRICK MURRAY

It announces to the Argentine con\*eres the death of their former provincial, Father von Meurers, and his consultor, Father Goldmann. Both were mortally wounded in the bombardment, but both lived two or three days after being wounded. As far as we know, but we have not as yet exact information. The new provincial is Father Flesch.

Heartfelt sympathy for the case of Father Rice. Father General says you are very fortunate to have had so few accidents among the chaplains, and hopes Father Rice is improving, if not already cured.

If Father Demets is still there, Father General wishes you to thank him for his letter of Feb. 25th. When the letters take so long to come courage fails him to answer, as he doubts whether the answer will reach them. He is now in communication with the provincial of Belgium, though very slow.

Father Proc. General would be very grateful if you could send him through me (preferably by air) two Rolls Ra~or blades and also

two for Father General, if you can obtain them (I doubt it.) You could find out by telephone. They cannot be had here. If you can get some put them down to Father General's a/c. Finis.

Address your letters to me, Father, and I will deliver them personally. Hoping to hear \*om you soon, best wishes. Yours sincerely,

Anthony S. Dowden.

2. Charlton to Dowden, 22nd July 1945. ALP Bb200

My Dear Serjeant Dowden,

Father McMullan is writing to you enclosing (for Father Murray) a full list of our proposed appointments. The list is signed by myself and my two consultants. It expresses our unanimous opinion and covers all nominations, major and minor. The major appointments suggested are: Provincial, Fr. Frank Nolan with Fr. Kirk admonitor and Fr. L. Hull secretary. And the rectors are: Clapham, Fr. Locke; Bishop Eton, Fr. Ring; Perth, Fr. Barron; Sunderland, Fr. M. Hayes; Erdington, Fr. Wilfrid Hughes; Stortford, Fr. Spencer; Hawkstone, Fr. Upton; Machynlleth, Fr. Dorrian; Novice Master, Fr. J. Ord; Juvenate, Fr. E. O'Brien; Student Prefect, Fr. Marsh.

We suggest that if it is difficult to send diplomas for all, his Paternity should follow the course previously taken and send a document authorising the new provincial to make a declaration for each superior. There is already an exemplar of this here. Also, in consideration of difficulties, that similar authority as before be given the new provincial to make what changes he considers necessary, observatis observandis et exceptis excipiendis.

As to South Africa, we all agree that appointments be postponed until after the approaching visitation there. Six Fathers are to go out from here within the next few months; and we hope that Fr. McMullan will be able to make the journey as soon as his work in Ireland and his visit to Rome are completed. October or November?

It is suggested that for our South African houses a resident Visitator be appointed with supervisory powers over houses and personnel, until a vice province can be erected there. Also that two "hospitia" or "stations" be created: at Pretoria (Garsfontein native mission) with Fr. J. Gibb'ons in charge helped by another Father;

and similarly at Diep River (for the coloured mission) with two Fathers residing, Fr. Pilkington in charge.

So for South Africa we propose (provisionally) Fr. John O'Brien as Visitor Residens with Frs. Johnson and Flynn as his consultors; Pretoria rector, Fr. Matthew Bonner; Diep River rector, Fr. James McHugh.

As to myself, I have told Fr. McMullan of my humble, submissive, but very anxious desire to be relieved of all administrative work; I am old and sick; and things nowadays demand the guidance of one vigorous in mind and body. But Fr. McM bids me state - in the event of a serious and essential claim on my continuance in office what alterations must be necessary in the list given above. They would be (suppose I continue as provincial): Rector Clapham and provincial admonitor, Fr. F. Nolan; Consultor to the rector of Clapham Fr. Kirk (dropping Fr. Coyne); Rector of Stortford, Fr. W. Locke (dropping Fr. Spencer). Personally, I feel I should be of best service, did the new provincial use me only unofficially. Having said this, I leave all in God's good hands. So will you be so kind as to show this to Fr. Murray, with my kindest greetings to yourself and asking his blessing.

Yours sincerely in Xto,  
J. Charlton (Provincial)

3. Cullen to Rev. A. Parker, 22nd July 1945. AGR, Prov Aust.

Padre A. Parker,  
RAAF Base Post,  
Middle Post.

Mayfield  
22 - 7 - 45

My Dear Fr. Parker (Murray)<sup>39</sup>

Your message from Father General reached me safely some few weeks ago. The contents were, of course, eagerly awaited. They were published about a week ago and gave general satisfaction. Father General might be pleased to know this. In the cable I sent him I was not able to enlarge on such details.

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<sup>39</sup>The name 'Murray' was handwritten in the typewritten letter, no doubt by the general archivist or his assistant.

The new consultors and self decided that it would be better to leave Fr. Selleck remain at Mayfield and have Fr. Borthistle as rector at Pennant Hills... on account of some arrangements pending with the bishop. A few of the house consultors had to be reallocated... All the rest was carried out as your letter indicated.

Father McMullan arrived safely in England early in June. He had an illness en route with a week in hospital in Cairo ... but had recovered well by the time he reached London. He will have finished his work in the English province by this time... and will commence with the Irish province. Father Charlton told me that Father Visitor will have more time between the Irish houses and so the work should not be so exacting there.

Australia has just recovered from the worst drought in her droughty history. Its effects were widespread, but the general rains of recent weeks have so changed the scene that even the most stricken areas now look forward to a bountiful season.

The provincial at Naples asked for help in the way of clothing. You might kindly tell Father General that our efforts in that way are not yet successful as the dispatch of articles is impossible at the moment.

Kindly accept best thanks from us all for all the help you have given Father McMullan and myself especially and to all C.SS.R. in Australia generally in recent months.

With every best wish, sincerely yours in JMJ,

J Cullen C SS R

4. Dowden to Cullen, 6th October 1945. ALP, D 4/45

Dear Father Cullen,

Your Superior General, Father Patrick Murray, has asked me to inform you that he received your telegram and immediately applied to the Holy See for permission for Joseph Holland to pass to the Lay novitiate. The permission has been granted and I enclose the Rescript of the S. Congregation of Religious No. 2854/45. You will see that Brother Holland has to make at least three months of the Lay novitiate. Whether he is able to make more than three months Father General leaves to yourself and your consultors to decide. He could not easily telegraph his reply on account of

the conditions contained in the Rescript, which would necessitate a very long telegram.

Father General also says that as soon as Father McMullan arrives, the question you have asked will be studied and the reply sent to you.

Trusting this finds you well, I am yours sincerely,

Anthony S. Dowden.

5. Kerr to Dowden, 21st August 1945. AGR, Prov. Hib.

Dear Mr. Dowden,

Would you be so good as to inform Father General that Father McMullan brought with him from India a blue print of the plans of the new monastery and house of studies to be erected in Bangalore, at the cost of 25,000 pounds. Father McMullan examined the plans with Father Hickey on the spot in Bangalore and approved them. We have also examined them in our consultation and approved them. Father McMullan has authorised me to say that we are in conformity with the Rule. The cost of the building will be defrayed by the province without incurring extra debt. It will only somewhat delay the liquidation of our Galway debt. It should be mentioned that of the total sum required 7000 pounds have already been paid by a benefactor who wishes to be responsible for the complete cost of the erection of the church, 120 ft. by 50, which is included in the 25,000 pounds. The building as planned will be capable of extension as required when the number of students makes it imperative to do so. The estimated cost for the completed building is 38,000 pounds. Perhaps Father General will be satisfied with these data and recommendations to give the necessary permission. If, however, he requires us to send him the plans we shall try to do so.

Father McMullan is at present in Esker, and will finish the visitation of the entire province on Sept. 16th, when we shall give him the final draft of proposals for the nominations.

Kindly inform Father General that Fathers Clancy, Whyte, Kennedy with Brother John hope to get a passage soon to India, and will be stationed in Bangalore. Also kindly inform him that Fathers Scanlan and Magnier who escaped by submarine from the



Philippines to Australia, have at last arrived home after some months in USA. They are none the worse for their experiences. The solitary English novice (Capitaneo) was professed on August 2nd and is on vacation with our students until he can get across to England. We have ten of our own novices for profession next month and nine will receive the habit. We have not yet received any communication from the vice-provincial in the Philippines. Through the kindness of some USA army personnel we have received letters from some of the Fathers. But we know that all are safe and well, and I presume that for some time we cannot expect normal communications. Kindly inform Father General that Father McDevitt has not yet left for USA.

You see what a bag full of news and messages I have for you this time! With many thanks for your kindness and begging the Mother of Perpetual Succour to bless you always,

Very sincerely in Christ,  
H. Kerr C.SS.R.

6. McMullan to Dowden, 7th March 1946. AGR, Prov. Eng.

Dear Sgt Dowden,

Again I have to call upon your kind services - perhaps for the last time - to convey to Father General the following suggestions for the triennial nominations of superiors for our houses in South Africa. Father Charlton informs me that you are leaving Rome towards the end of March. As this, then, may be the last communication with you, I take occasion to thank you for the great help you have rendered us in communicating with Father General during the past year.

May God bless you for your kindness.

A. McMullan C.SS.R.

Your Paternity,

At long last I have been able to complete the visitation of South Africa, and I hereby send the suggested list for the nominations. I am taking for granted that you have already received \*om Father Provincial (Clapham) his suggestion re the establishing of a vice-province and a juvenate in South Africa and also his suggestion for the triennial nominations.

Vice-provincial: Fr. John O'Brien with Frs. James Johnson adm. and Mark Flynn sec.

Rector Pretoria: Fr. Matthew Bonner with Fr. Daniel McIlvena adm. and Frs. Joseph Lavin and Wm. Pilkington consultants.

Rector Diep River: Fr. James McHugh with Fr. J. Brooks adm. and Frs. Bernard Simpson and Laurence McCauley consultants.

Superior Garsfontein: Fr. Joseph Gibbons with Fr. John Dempsey.

Superior Retreat: Fr. Michael Charlton with Fr. Thomas Wrangham.

For very weighty reasons I have had to make two changes in the list as given by Father Provincial and his consultants.

(The reasons given are of a personal nature).

It will probably be some time before a juvenate is established here on account of the difficulty in getting a Govt. permit to build.

Fr. Provincial suggests Fr. J.O'Brien as Director with Fr. McMartin as socius. I am booked for plane to England on 27th March no chance of a boat for months. Hoping to see you soon in Rome and with every best wish asking your Paternity's blessing,

A. McMullan C.S.S.R. C.G.