

*Ed. Connolly*

# GALWAY CATHEDRAL



**MOST REVEREND MICHAEL BROWNE**





CATHEDRAL  
OF  
OUR LADY ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN  
AND  
SAINT NICHOLAS  
GALWAY

*A History and Description*

By  
MOST REV. MICHAEL BROWNE  
BISHOP OF GALWAY







## Foreword

*There have been so many requests from our own people and from visitors for a booklet descriptive of the Cathedral and its contents, that I felt compelled to undertake the task.*

*I have prefaced it with a short historical account showing how the dioceses of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora came together, how the project of a Cathedral was initiated and developed by my predecessors and how eventually the work was completed at the solemn dedication by His Eminence Cardinal Cushing on August 15, 1965.*

*Next there is a section explaining the architectural design and the motives which inspired it. These two sections may most conveniently be read at home at one's leisure.*

*The third section, the description of the Cathedral, is intended to be read as one walks around the exterior and the interior.*

*I can only hope that this booklet will fulfil a need, not merely as a description of the Cathedral, but also as a record of what several generations of Catholics tried to achieve in Galway for the glory of God. It should have been written sooner, but attendance at the Vatican Council and other duties delayed it.*

✠ MICHAEL BROWNE

10 August 1967



# *History of the Galway Cathedral*

**G**ALWAY has had a very interesting ecclesiastical history. When the town was first built in the twelfth century, it was in the territory of the ancient diocese of Annaghdown, and was a parish with a church dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the patron of sailors. About 1300 the diocese of Annaghdown was absorbed into that of Tuam and Galway became part of the Archdiocese. In 1484 the citizens, with the consent of the archbishop, applied to the Holy See to have the parish church made a collegiate\* church with a warden and eight other priests and a choir school, so that the sacred liturgy—solemn Mass and Office—could be chanted there every day. The right of appointment of the warden and vicars was given to the mayor, bailiffs and freemen of Galway.

Then came the Reformation and the Catholic people saw their church taken over by the Protestants about 1570. They recovered it for two short intervals in 1645 and 1688, but after the battle of Aughrim lost it definitely, and with it the right to have any church and to practice their religion publicly. But the priests remained and Mass was celebrated in private houses. When the rigour of persecution moderated, a small church was built in Middle Street about 1750, which was called "the parish" or the parish chapel. This was enlarged in 1816.

Meanwhile, the Catholic people had maintained the old system of electing the warden and vicars: whenever a vacancy occurred, they met in "the parish", went through the form of electing a Catholic mayor and bailiffs and admitting freemen. But already in 1792 there had been protests against the custom whereby only members of the fourteen families called the Tribes could be freemen with the right to vote. Protests and complaints were sent to Rome and eventually the Holy See settled the controversy in 1831 by establishing Galway and the adjacent parishes from Oranmore to Oughterard into a diocese with a bishop of its own. Then the parish chapel became the Pro-Cathedral of the diocese.

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\* A permanent community of clergy forming a legal unity or corporation is called in Canon Law a capitulum or chapter. If attached to a cathedral church, it is called a cathedral chapter. If attached to a parish or other church, it is called collegiate.



It was small, without any architectural or artistic claims. The clergy and Catholic people of Galway, with that confidence in divine help which had sustained them through darker days, looked forward to the day when they could build a nobler church, but for the time—and times were difficult from the famine of 1841 to the land oppression of the nineties—they concentrated on building the parish churches and schools that were so needed in the diocese.

In 1876 a Fund for building a Cathedral was inaugurated with a bequest of £500 from Mr. Murray, a native of Galway who resided in Kinvara. In 1909 Bishop McCormack acquired the site of the old Shambles military barracks at O'Brien's Bridge and he left in his will £3,000 for the Fund.

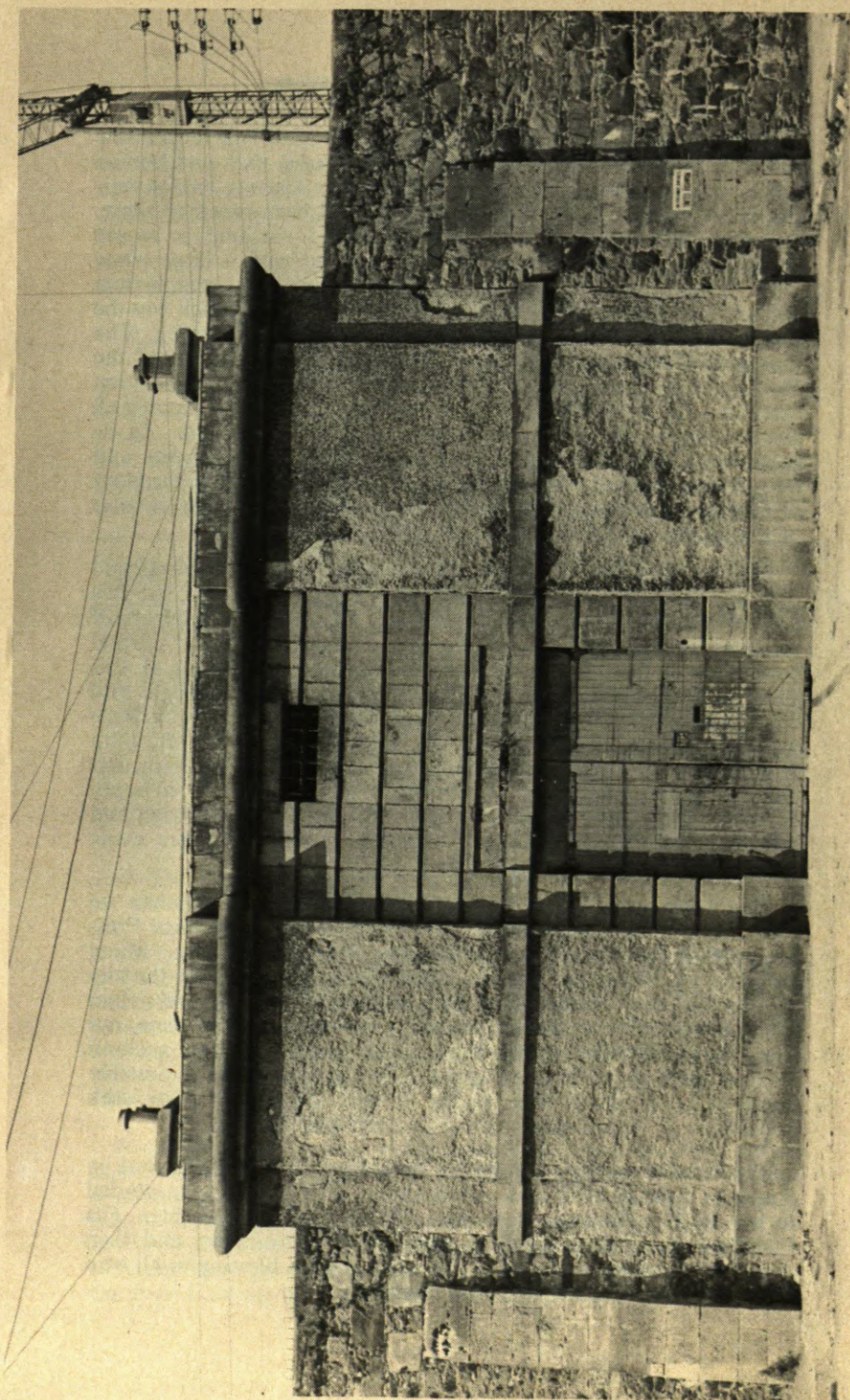
In 1883 the adjoining ancient diocese of Kilmacduagh was formally united with Galway by the Holy See and the Bishop of Galway was made Apostolic Administrator of Kilfenora—for that diocese is in the province of Cashel. Thereby the need for a proper Cathedral was more widely and more urgently felt.

When Doctor Thomas O'Dea became bishop in 1910, he started a collection to build a diocesan College and Cathedral. The amount collected barely sufficed to build Saint Mary's College, but the Bishop continued to build up the fund for the Cathedral, and at his death in 1923 it amounted to £41,000. His successor, Doctor O'Doherty, increased the Fund and was about to undertake the building of the Cathedral when his untimely death occurred on December 15, 1936. The Fund then had reached the figure of £108,000.

When the present Bishop was appointed in 1937, he was advised that the site at O'Brien's Bridge would not be suitable for two reasons—firstly, it was too small and would hardly contain a church of the size of the new parish church of Athlone or the Cathedral of Mullingar; secondly, it would provide no space for the parking of cars. Fortunately an alternative soon presented itself. In 1939 the Government found that there was no longer need for the Jail in Galway. This had been built in 1810; the bridge over the river connecting the Courthouse with the Jail was built in 1818.

The Government transferred the Jail to Galway County Council and on March 15, 1941, the Council by deed conveyed it to the Bishop of Galway and trustees for the building of a Catholic Cathedral. On May 21, 1941, the keys of the Jail were given to the Bishop by Eamonn Corbett, Chairman of Galway County Council; Martin Quinn, vice-Chairman, and Clement I. O'Flynn, County Manager.





*The old jail*



The building of a Cathedral on the site of a jail is a remarkable and very rare event. A jail is a place of darkness, pain and human suffering; many Irishmen had been punished in Galway Jail for their efforts on behalf of Irish freedom: many had been executed there. The place where their bodies had been buried—in lime, to secure the dissolution of their bones—is now marked with a large white cross. What more wonderful proof of the victory of our people than that they should build a Cathedral in the very place which was the symbol of their oppression and the scene of their suffering. The President of Ireland, speaking in Galway on the occasion of the blessing of the foundation stone, expressed the feeling of the nation when he said: "All that remains of the old jail will disappear and all the memorials of its unhappy history will be obliterated. In its place there will arise a glorious symbol of the new, happier and independent Ireland, the Cathedral which will be raised to the glory of God and the honour of the people of Ireland, and in particular of the people of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora".

Before the end of 1941 the jail buildings were demolished and only the external wall and gate-house were left standing. At this time World War II was still raging and there was no prospect of undertaking construction until the war would be over and normal conditions of finance and materials be restored. But during all this time the Bishop and diocesan Chapter devoted much thought and consideration to preparing for the work. One of their major problems was the selection of an architect. In 1949 they appointed Mr. John J. Robinson of Dublin, an architect of experience and distinction who had built a number of churches in different dioceses. Then began a period of planning when every aspect of design, construction and materials was carefully studied; sketches and models were made and the final plan gradually worked out.

This took some years but was completed in 1954, when an unexpected complication arose. Letters appeared in the local Press urging that the Cathedral should be built in Eyre Square. Many people thought the Jail site too remote from the centre of the city and its life: they felt that Eyre Square provided a better and nobler emplacement. Our architect was very favourable to this view, but there were difficulties mainly of a legal character. The legal position was not quite clear, for there were certain rights-of-way and possible controversy involved. Eventually, it was decided not to seek acquisition of Eyre Square, but to proceed with the Jail site.

The final drawings and plans were made. The Bishop was in Rome in March 1957 and on the 18th at an audience accorded to him by His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, he submitted the plan. His Holiness examined it carefully and with great interest, and then graciously gave his approval to the work and his blessing to all who would help towards its successful completion.



On October 27 of that year His Eminence, Cardinal D'Alton, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, solemnly blessed the site and the foundation-stone in the presence of a large gathering which included the President of Ireland and the Taoiseach. The sermon was preached by the Archbishop of Tuam, Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, and the Bishops of Kerry, Achonry, Killaloe, Elphin, Killala, Cork and Clonfert were present.

Tenders for the building of the Cathedral had been invited in July. Because of the magnitude of the work, they took some time to prepare. They were opened on November 26 and carefully analysed. On December 6, the feast of Saint Nicholas, the lowest tender, that of Messrs. John Sisk Ltd., of Dublin, was accepted. For the sum of £600,000 the firm undertook to build the Cathedral fabric from the foundations to the cross on the dome. The tender did not cover the internal equipment, decoration and furnishings—such as altars, rails, seats, windows, stations of the Cross, mosaics, organ, heating and lighting. It provided that increase in wages or materials would be added. To this sum must also be added professional fees of architect, quantity surveyor, consultants and clerk of works.

### **Our Resources**

As already mentioned, in 1876 the fund for building a Cathedral was inaugurated by a layman, a native of Galway living in Kinvara, Mr. Murray, who left a bequest of £500. The fund grew slowly. By 1908 it had reached £1,550. Then bequests and donations became more frequent and generous, and were carefully invested by Dr. O'Dea and Dr. O'Doherty. When the present Bishop, Dr. Browne, was appointed in 1937 the fund had reached the sum of £108,000 and in December 1957 it amounted to £250,000 at the current prices of securities held.

There remained a very large balance to be found, very large for a diocese of 58,000 souls. The people responded with great enthusiasm: a weekly collection of two shillings and sixpence per house was adopted in every parish, except three which had the building or renovation of their own churches on hand. For six years this collection was maintained and brought in a total sum of £204,606.

In addition, there were many individual donations from inside and from outside the diocese. His Holiness Pope Pius XII sent a contribution of £2,000. In 1960 the Bishop of Galway and Very Rev. F. Heneghan, P.P., of the Cathedral parish, spent five months in the U.S.A., collecting in different dioceses with the permission of many bishops. They received a total of £104,000—of which Cardinal Cushing gave £26,000. Generous donations were received



from twenty other bishops and from many priests, especially those of Philadelphia and San Francisco. Meanwhile, at the suggestion of Dr. Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne, Fr. Vincent Jennings, M.A., was sent to Australia and brought back £8,860.

Generous donations meanwhile were given by the priests, sisters and laity of the diocese which, in all, amounted to £71,361 and includes a bequest of £14,000 from the late Mr. McDonnell of Maunsell's Road, Galway. From the clergy and people of Ireland outside the diocese we received great help, which up to 1965 amounted to £112,387.

Each year in December the Bishop gave an account at a public meeting in Galway of the amount expended and received during the year.

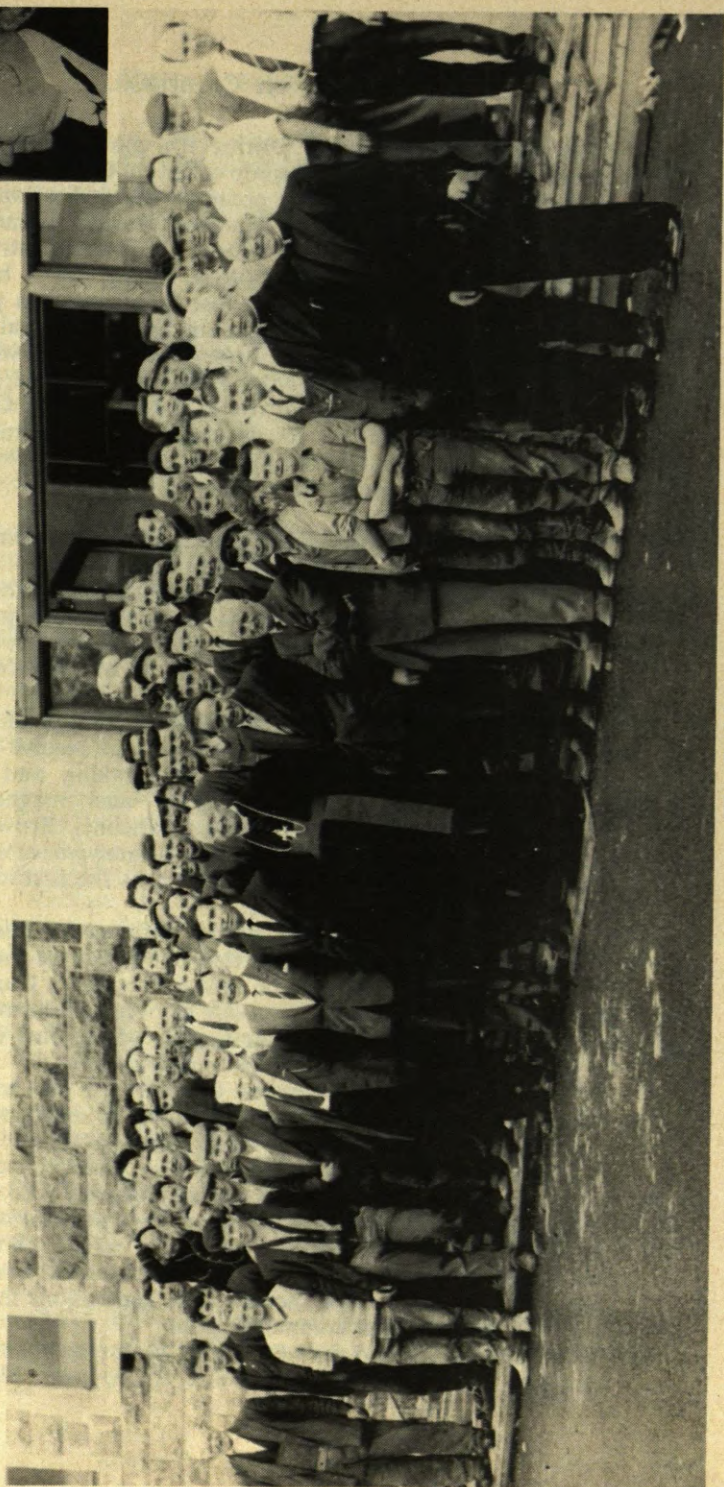
### **The Construction**

The actual work of construction began in February 1958, with the digging of the foundations. Rock-solid green granite was found a few feet under the surface. The building of the walls went ahead without any untoward incident. There was no strike; and there was no accident, though as the walls rose the men had to work at great heights, without shelter from rain or cold. The time provided for completion of the contract was six years, so that the work should have been finished in February 1964, but there came one prolonged period of sharp frost when no work could be done during the months of January and February 1963. Steady progress was, however, made and a tribute is certainly due to Messrs Sisk, to their foreman, Mr. Lillis, and to their workers for the energy and devotion which they gave to the work. As it came near completion, we had to plan ahead for the dedication and opening of the Cathedral.

On 15 August 1964, at the blessing of the renovated Kiltartan church, the Bishop announced that he hoped to have the dedication of the Cathedral on the next 15th of August. Work went steadily ahead. In May 1965, the Cathedral bell was blessed with the name John, in memory of Pope John XXIII, and was hoisted into the eastern tower.

During all this time, the Vatican Council was in preparation or in progress and the Cathedral is almost exactly contemporaneous with the Council. Its walls had begun to appear above ground when Pope John XXIII decided to summon a Council. The Bishop of Galway was appointed a member of one of the preparatory Commissions in August 1960 and had to visit Rome frequently before the Council met in October 1962 and to attend its sessions. During the first session, the Bishop met Cardinal Cushing in Rome: he immediately enquired about the Cathedral and promised to give





*The Builders*



another substantial contribution. During the third session, in the afternoon of October 1, 1964, the Bishop called on Cardinal Cushing and asked His Eminence would he come to the dedication which had been fixed for August 15, 1965. The Cardinal immediately assented; he recalled that he had promised another contribution and proceeded there and then to write a cheque for a hundred thousand dollars. On October 22, the Bishop presented a petition to the Holy Father asking that he would appoint a Pontifical Legate to dedicate the Cathedral. His Holiness Pope Paul VI, who had succeeded the greatly loved Pope John XXIII in June 1963, granted the request and appointed our great friend and benefactor, Cardinal Cushing, as Pontifical Legate to dedicate the Cathedral. The appointment was announced officially on January 23, 1965. The papal letter of appointment is as follows:

"To our beloved son Richard James Cushing, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Archbishop of Boston.

"At Galway, Ireland, a new Cathedral Church has been erected and will soon be opened. After many years of painful, prayerful waiting, after many hopes deferred, it has now been happily completed to take the place of the old Catholic Collegiate Church of Saint Nicholas.

"Thanks to the solicitude and zeal of recent bishops of Galway and Kilmacduagh, who inspired the generous resolve of their people to take in hand this vast undertaking and thanks particularly to the great persevering and magnanimous resolution of our venerable brother, Michael Browne, the present Bishop, this sacred edifice with its stately pile of imposing structure will soon be solemnly dedicated as the first and chief church of the diocese.

"To honour this historic event and in deference to the wishes of the Bishop, We have decided that a member of the Sacred College of Cardinals should be sent to represent Our Person in Galway and we entrust to you our beloved son the most honourable function of acting as our Legate, whose duty it will be to perform the dedication of this venerable church.

"In carrying out the commission entrusted to you with your wonted grace and dignity, we wish you to express as our spokesman our ardent good wishes for the welfare of this distinguished church. It is our fervent prayer that this dwelling-place of God with man, now so auspiciously and fittingly dedicated, may be preserved to far distant ages as a shining symbol of unity, a house of prayer, a refuge of salvation and hope, an image of the heavenly Jerusalem, a vision of peace. So may it serve for thousands of generations those who love God and keep His commandments.

"With these prayers from our heart, we lovingly impart our Apostolic Blessing to you beloved son, to the most able Bishop



of Galway and Kilmacduagh, to all who have helped in the building of this sacred edifice and to all who are present at its solemn dedication.

“Given in Rome at St. Peter’s on the tenth day of March 1965 in the second year of our pontificate.

—PAUL PP VI.”

All seemed to be going well, when we were informed in February 1965 by his secretary that Cardinal Cushing was in hospital and seriously ill. He made a wonderful recovery, however, and on August 13 he arrived in Galway with Monsignors Rossiter and Sexton and received an enthusiastic welcome from the Mayor, Corporation and people.

Next day, Saturday, at 4 p.m., he consecrated the High Altar and celebrated pontifical High Mass—the first Mass celebrated in the Cathedral. That evening, Cardinal Conway, Archbishop of Armagh—who had succeeded Cardinal D’Alton as Archbishop in September 1963 and had been created Cardinal on February 22, 1965—arrived and received a liturgical welcome in the Pro-Cathedral. This was the last public function to be held in that old church, which had seen the wonderful triumph of the Catholic Church in Galway during two centuries.

Next day was Sunday, August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, to whom the Cathedral is dedicated. At 12 noon Cardinal Cushing as Pontifical Legate, accompanied by his papal suite—Monsignor Mitchell of Maynooth, Monsignor Conway of the Irish College, Rome, and Prince Carraciolo as gentleman-at-arms—dedicated the Cathedral and preached a wonderfully eloquent sermon. Cardinal Conway celebrated the Pontifical High Mass.

The ceremony was attended by the Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, Most Rev. Dr. Sensi; the Archbishops of Tuam and Cashel, Archbishop Hurley of St. Augustine (Florida), Archbishop Dooley, former Apostolic Delegate in Indo-China and Archbishop McCarthy of Nairobi; the Bishops of Derry, Dromore, Nara, Achonry, Meath, Killaloe, Elphin, Kilmore, Cork, Killala, Down and Connor, Cloyne, Limerick, Clonfert, Ferns and Raphoe. From outside Ireland were the Bishops of Nottingham, Benin City, Bathurst, Woolongong, Sale, Ballarat, Sophene, Luxembourg and the auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne. There was also present by special invitation the Protestant Bishop of Tuam.

His Excellency Eamonn de Valera, President of Ireland, occupied a seat in the sanctuary and there was present the former President of Ireland, Mr. Seán T. O’Kelly; the Taoiseach, Mr. Seán Lemass,



and Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Frank Aiken; the Mayor and Borough Council of Galway, the Chairman and members of Galway County Council, many public representatives and an overflowing congregation.

There was one absentee: the architect who had planned, designed and overseen the work. Only eight months before, on January 31, he died in Dublin after a short illness. His name is inscribed in the stone on the west tower which commemorates the dedication.

On Monday, August 16, Cardinal Cushing celebrated a special Mass for the children of Galway and after it he baptised Richard William Holland, the son of the Mayor of Galway, and John Desmond Divilly, grandson of Martin Divilly, a former Mayor.

So concluded the ceremonies and the Cathedral began its service as the house of God and His people.

## THE DESIGN OF THE CATHEDRAL

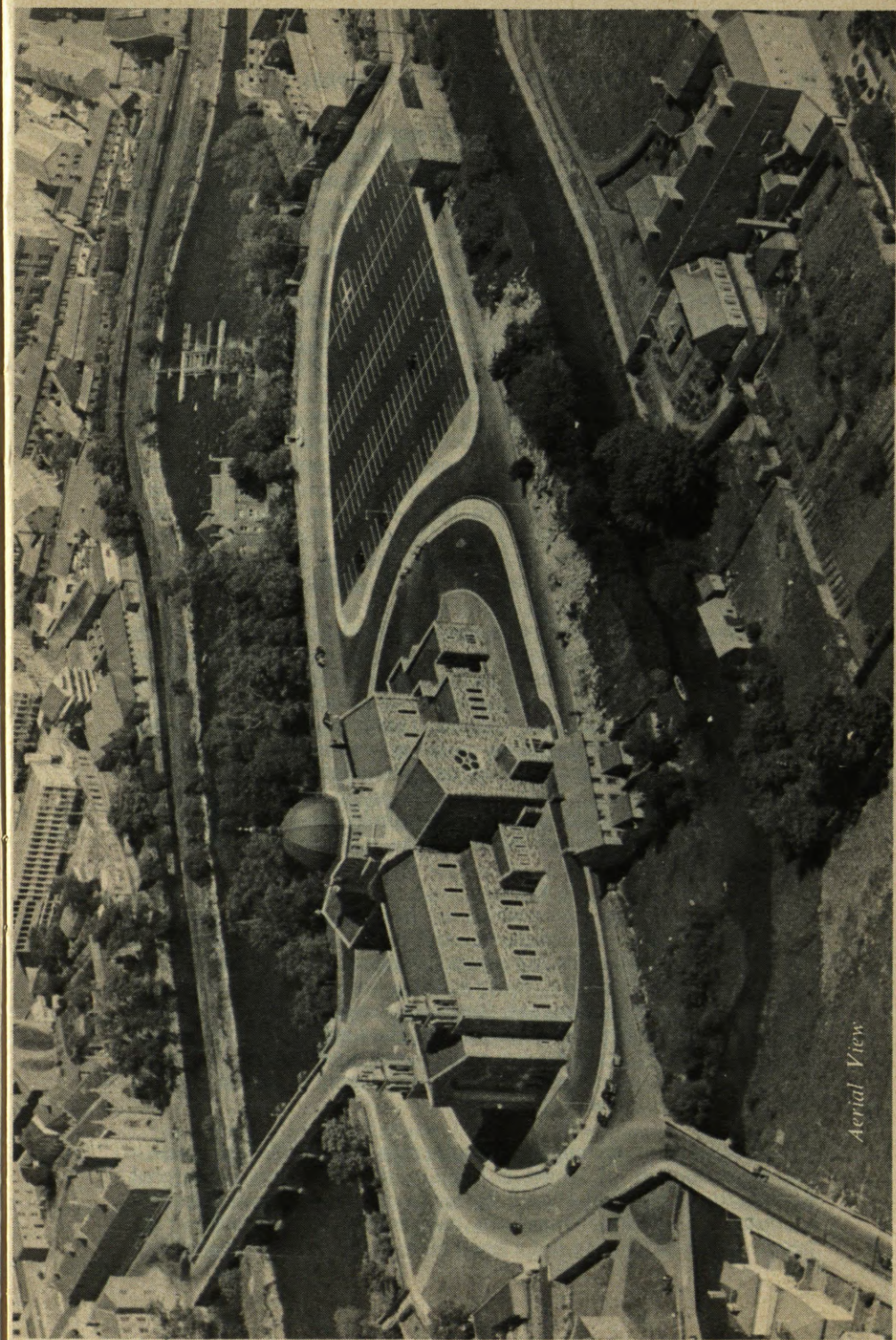
THE ARCHITECTURE of Christian Churches has shown a remarkable development since the fourth century when freedom to build churches was secured. The history of this development is a subject that requires extensive reading and expert knowledge. The main outline is that in Eastern Europe after the fourth century, the Byzantine style developed; in Western Europe, the Romanesque: the former was characterised by magnificent arches and domes built in brick, the latter by round windows and slender towers or campaniles. Then in the twelfth century, the Gothic style with narrow windows and arches and high spires came in. The next great change was in the sixteenth century—called the Renaissance—when there was a return to the Roman and Greek classical style of many columns and pillared porticoes: this style found individual expression in different countries—France, England, Italy and Spain.

In the present century, there has been developed what is called a modern style, relying on concrete and steel, but many recent churches, e.g., Liverpool Anglican, Guildford, Washington, have followed one of the traditional styles—Gothic or Romanesque.

One of the first elements to be considered in building a church is the material available. The Byzantine style used brick or concrete because there was no good stone available near Constantinople. Western Europe is rich in stone and it was used extensively in building Gothic churches.

When we considered the building of our new Cathedral, our





*Aerial View*



first decision was that it be in stone, not in concrete. The country around Galway is rich in limestone and in granite. We decided in favour of limestone as it is more easily worked than granite and there are excellent limestone quarries near the city. The Galway limestone weathers well and does not discolour—most of the important buildings in Galway are in limestone.

We favoured stone instead of concrete for another reason also—a liturgical and biblical one. In the Office and Mass of the Dedication of a Church there is frequent reference to the church as built from living stones. The prayer says: "O God who out of living and chosen stones prearest to thy majesty an eternal abode . . .". The hymn says: "Its stones are fashioned by many a stroke and blow of the Saviour-mason's hammer and chisel. Thus shaped they go to the making of this mighty structure, each being firmly joined to each and finding its appointed place in the whole building." This emphasis on the stone is derived from St. Peter who, in his first Epistle, Chap. 2, said of Our Lord: "Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious: and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house."

The stones have, therefore, a deep spiritual symbolism: as they are shaped and put in position by the mason, so are we shaped by the Saviour-mason and placed in his Church, each by his spiritual strength and endurance contributing to the extension and strength of God's house, the Catholic Church. This liturgical and scriptural tradition seems to be unknown to those who in their fervour for what is modern are so keen on concrete churches. In Galway Cathedral the stones are visible not only on the outside but also on the inside, so that worshippers can be reminded that they themselves are the living stones which build up the majestic structure of the House of God.

The next important factor which has to be considered in planning a church is the site—its dimensions and shape, whether square, oval or rectangular. The site we were fortunate in obtaining is rectangular. It was, therefore, most suitable for a cruciform church which would have its long axis stretching down by the river. As the two main approaches to the site were at the upper end—on the east from the Salmon Weir Bridge and on the north from University Road—the main entrance could be placed facing this road and the side entrance in line with the bridge.

A cruciform or rectangular church may be of different styles—the most familiar of which is the Gothic. We next considered whether the Cathedral should be in the Gothic style and decided against it. In a Gothic church the nave is long and narrow and the people in the aisles have not a good view of the altar because pillars



intervene. Although Vatican II had not then taken place, or was even thought of, we wished to have a church where everyone would have a clear view of the main altar. Therefore, we wished to have a cruciform church with wide nave, transepts and apse, with the altar in the centre and the aisles used only for circulation. It is generally recognised that the central position of the altar and the elevation of the whole sanctuary enables the congregation to participate most fully in the sacred ceremonies. The central position of the altar also reminds us that the Sacrifice of the Mass is the central act of worship for which the Cathedral exists. The Bishop's throne and seats for the Canons of the Cathedral Chapter, which are an essential feature of a Cathedral, have been so designed that they do not impede the view of the people.

The great width in the nave and transepts—the four members of the cross—created a problem as to the form of the structure over the central crossing. It could be left without any opening in the ceiling, or there could be a tower, or there could be a dome. To leave the roof flat over the crossing would detract from the external appearance of the whole church and the dignity of the central altar. To erect a tower in stone would create a serious problem of masonry: there are towers over the crossing in some Gothic churches, and as in Gloucester, they are very impressive, but the nave in these churches is narrow. With a wide nave, the tower would have to be low and would look squat. After many designs from the architect, we decided in favour of a dome rising over a stone drum and surmounted with a cross. This gave a fine culmination to the fabric of the whole building, so that it can now be seen from a distance on all the main roads approaching Galway, but especially it can be seen for many miles out at sea on Galway Bay. It has the further and more important value that it reminds us of the sublime worship performed on the altar over which the dome rises and emphasises that the whole purpose of the Cathedral is to lift up our thoughts and souls to heaven.

It was originally intended to have a canopy or baldachino on four pillars in the sanctuary over the altar, but as the work went on, we realised that this would encumber the sanctuary and impede the ceremonies, especially when Mass is concelebrated with several priests. Moreover, the dome itself is the most effective canopy for the altar.

So the style of the Cathedral may be described as Renaissance with the dome, pillars and round arches which are characteristic of that style. But it is not a slavish imitation; it embodies features from different styles and periods, for instance, the rose windows and the mosaics. Christian art and architecture as they developed down the centuries produced many forms of sacred ornament and it would



be mere pedantry to insist that a church should be limited to the forms of building and decoration that were existing at a particular period. There are, however, in Galway Cathedral certain features which are of Spanish origin. Why Spanish and not English or French? Because in the sixteenth century Galway had close links with Spain and many of the houses built at that time show the influence of Spanish design, especially in the doorways, as can be observed in the Browne doorway re-erected in Eyre Square as a memorial of Old Galway.

So the main outlines of the design were reached: then the question of size arose. Galway city is relatively small: it has a population of 23,000 and there are already many churches there. A cathedral, however, is more than a parish church: it has to provide for diocesan needs and occasions, as for instance, the liturgical festivals held each year. It was decided to provide seating for 1,500 people. The resulting dimensions were:

overall length .....	300 ft.
overall width of transepts .....	158 ft.
width of nave between pillars .....	48 ft.
width of each aisle .....	11 ft.
height of nave .....	61 ft.
height of dome inside .....	126 ft.
height of dome outside to top of cross .....	145 ft.

It may be asked: why such an imposing structure? The question has been asked by people with different ideas about the value of churches in general. The Cathedral is situated between the Court-house, University College and the Regional Hospital. These are the principal buildings of the city: they have each a spaciousness and dignity corresponding to their function and importance. A Cathedral should have a dignity and grandeur worthy of its noble and beneficent function as the centre of the religious life of the people, the House of God where his word is preached, his sacraments are administered and his Eucharistic Presence is real. For a people of religious faith nothing is too good for the house of God; and in every age the finest achievements of art and architecture are found in temples and churches that men have built. Religion has been the great incentive that has inspired the erection of the greatest and noblest achievements of human genius. The total cost of Galway Cathedral with altars, seats, windows, organ and all equipment for heating and lighting did not exceed one million pounds. One rocket to the moon which went out of control and crashed a few days before I write cost twenty-six million pounds!



## DESCRIPTION OF THE CATHEDRAL

## I—The Exterior

THE USUAL approach to the Cathedral from the city is by the Salmon Weir Bridge. The Cathedral has been placed at right angles to the bridge so that the main altar and tabernacle are in direct line as one approaches from the bridge. When we enter the Cathedral precinct let us walk around to the right in order to get a full view of the whole structure and of the masonry. The limestone was taken from two quarries a mile north-east of the city. It so happened that the stone of one quarry was of a darker tint than the other, thus giving a certain diversity of texture to the wall. The stones were carved in rectangular shape and laid in courses, but their surface was left bold rock-faced finish. By contrast, the stones of the arches and pillars and around the windows and doors are finely chiselled and dressed.

As we walk from the door of the eastern transept to the right, we notice first the Mortuary Chapel with five small windows, where the remains of the faithful are laid generally on the evening before Requiem Mass. Proceeding from the Mortuary Chapel we pass four large windows in the east aisle with stained glass which can be better observed from within. Then we come to the eastern tower of the northern portal which rises to a height of 115 ft. and carries the Cathedral Bell, which was cast by Messrs. O'Byrne of Dublin. On the wall of the tower is the granite stone which was blessed by Cardinal D'Alton on October 27, 1957; it bears an inscription in Latin recording the event. Above this in the tower is a door and balcony which was designed to provide a means of blessing and addressing a large congregation outside the Cathedral.

Then, turning to the left, we come to the main entrance which faces north towards University College. The main portal projects beyond the two towers and carries a magnificent Romanesque arch which springs from the ground to the roof. This arch is a very unusual feature in Irish churches: it was suggested by a church in the city of Salamanca in Spain, where there was an Irish College devoted to the education of our priests during the Penal days, from which many priests of our diocese came in the eighteenth century.

Underneath the apse of the arch is a rose-window, the glass of which was designed by George Campbell of Dublin: there are six main panels—five depict the events of the Joyful mysteries of the Rosary and the sixth is a figure of Our Lady; they can be seen more clearly from inside the Cathedral. Under the rose-window is a statue in bronze of Our Lady carrying the Infant Jesus: it was designed by



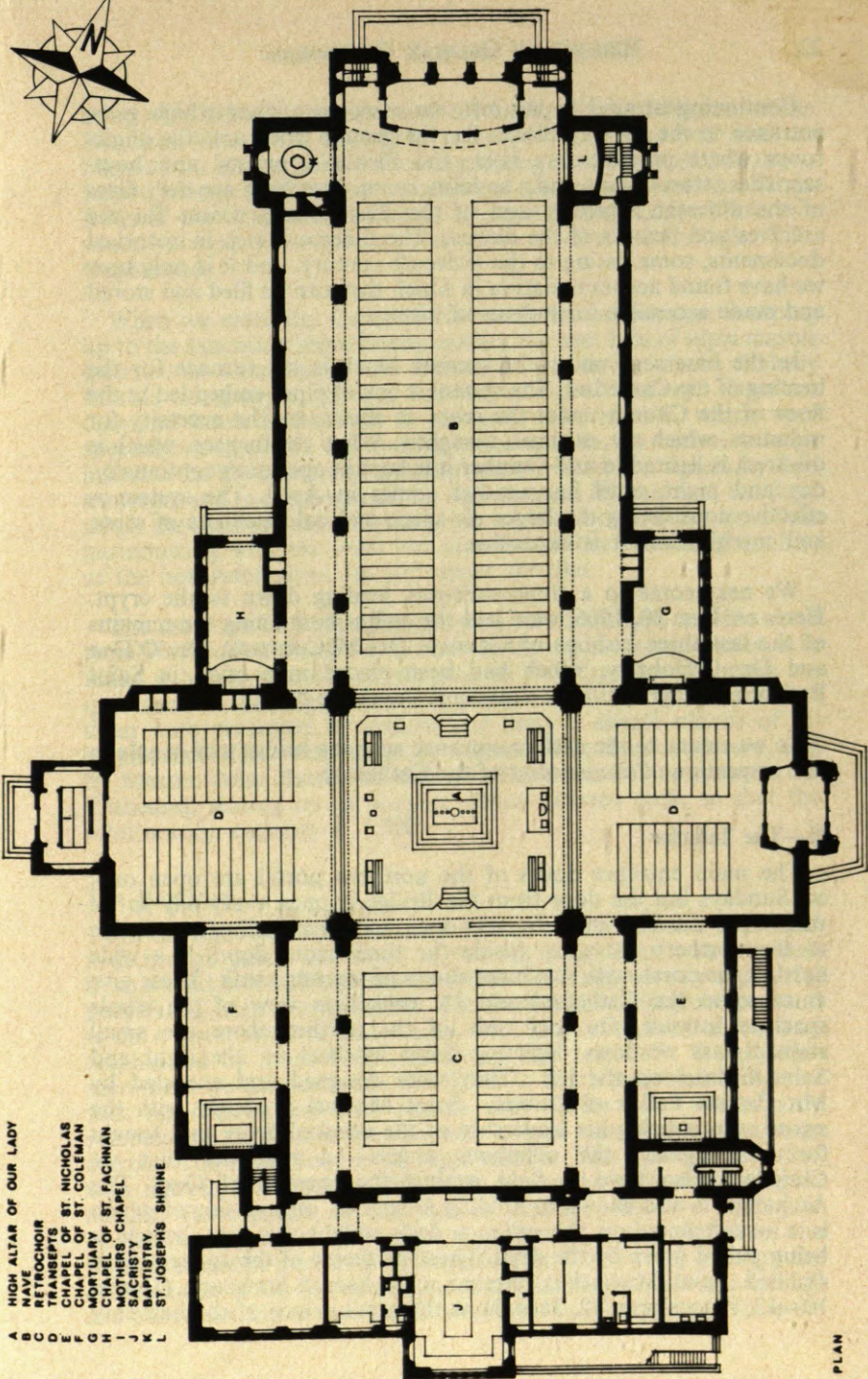
Mrs. Ian Stuart of Dublin and executed by Messrs. J. & C. McGloughlin of Dublin. It is 7 ft. high and stands on a stone pedestal under a canopy. The statue is somewhat original in that it does not show Our Lady holding the Infant Jesus within her arms as nursing him, but holding him out and up for the adoration of mankind. On either side of it are the arms of Pope Paul VI and of the diocese, carried on limestone slabs. There are three entrances, each with a round arch: the semi-circular space under the arch and over the door is called a tympanum. In each of these is a carving in portland stone representing a sacrament—to the left Baptism, in the centre Matrimony, on the right Ordination. These were designed and carved by Domhnall O'Murchada, Dublin.

In each entrance portal there is a massive bronze door and on the doors a series of bronze plaques representing events of Our Lord's life and the first days of the Church. The doors were presented by Very Rev. James Canon O'Dea, P.P., Clarenbridge, in memory of the three bishops of the diocese who inaugurated and developed the fund for building this Cathedral and whose bodies now lie in the crypt—Dr. McCormack, Dr. O'Dea and Dr. O'Doherty.

On the eastern door—to our left as we face the entrance—the plaque on the left represents the Prodigal Son; on the right, the upper one depicts the Samaritan woman at the well, the lower depicts Mary Magdalene. The three themes of this door thus show the mercy and welcome which Our Lord has for sinners who come to his house. On the central door, the plaque to the left shows the curing of a paralytic; the upper one on the right, the calming of the storm and the lower one the curing of the blind man. So this door reminds us of the power of our Divine Lord to calm the storms of the human heart and to strengthen our weakness. On the western door, the plaque on the left shows the first martyr of the Church, Stephen; the upper plaque on the right, the commission to St. Peter to rule the flock of Christ; the lower plaque—the appearance of Christ to the doubting Saint Thomas. This door reminds us of the power that Christ gave to his Church: to believe, to preach and to die for him.

Continuing our way around we pass the western tower which contains the electronic carillon system presented to the Cathedral by Independent Newspapers Ltd. of Dublin. On the western wall of the tower is a limestone slab with an inscription in Latin recording the dedication of the Cathedral on August 15, 1965, by Cardinal Cushing. Over the slab is the stained glass window of the baptistry. Then we pass the four windows of the western aisle and come to a door which admits to the chapel of Saint Fachanan, patron saint of the diocese of Kilfenora. Next is the western transept: the door gives admission to the mother-and-babies chapel, which is supposed to be sound-proof. Over the door in the gable of the transept is the third rose-window: the glass of which we will see from inside.





- A HIGH ALTAR OF OUR LADY
- B NAVE
- C RETROCHOIR
- D CHAPEL OF ST. NICHOLAS
- E CHAPEL OF ST. COLEMAN
- F MORTUARY
- G CHAPEL OF ST. FACHNAN
- H MOTHERS' CHAPEL
- I ST. JOSEPHS SHRINE
- J BAPTISTRY
- K SACRISTY
- L CHURCH

PLAN

Scale of feet



*The ground plan*



Continuing around to the left, we come to a door which gives entrance to the sacristy block. On the ground floor are: the choir-room where practices are held; the Bishop's, priests' and boys' sacristies; store-rooms and a sodality room. Overhead are the offices of the diocesan secretary and of the Bishop, and rooms for the archives and records of the diocese. The diocese is rich in historical documents, some dating to the sixteenth century, and it is only now we have found accommodation in which they can be filed and stored and made accessible to students of history.

In the basement under the sacristy block is the furnace for the heating of the Cathedral. The system is one of pipes embedded in the floor of the Church under the seats. It eliminates the necessity for radiators, which are, at times, unsightly. When the furnace, which is oil-fired, is lighted in mid-October it is kept in operation continually, day and night, until fine-weather comes in April. The system is effective considering the larger air-space and cold surfaces of stone and marble: but it is expensive.

We next come to a stone stair-way leading down to the crypt. Here, on June 30, 1966, were laid the coffins containing the remains of the last three bishops of Galway, Dr. McCormack, Dr. O'Dea and Dr. O'Doherty, which had been placed in a crypt in Saint Patrick's Church until the Cathedral should be built.

So we return to the eastern entrance near the bridge and conclude our inspection of the exterior of the Cathedral.

## II—The Interior

The main entrance doors of the northern portal are open only on Sundays but the door from the Bridge is open every day so we may enter the Cathedral by this door and then walk down inside to the northern entrance. Inside the three main doors is a wide narthex or porch with five inner doors of muninga teak. These give entrance to the Cathedral and an immediate view of the whole spacious interior. On each side of the narthex there are small stained-glass windows depicting Saint Michael to the right and Saint Gabriel on the left. They were designed and executed by Mr. Patrick Pollen of Dublin. Saint Michael is shown with the sword, symbolizing his leadership of the celestial army that fought for God against the rebellious angels—a reminder that we Christians also have to fight against the enemies of God. The Archangel is also shown as holding a balance, on one side of which is a naked man, on the other a dark weight, his sins, which is being pulled down by the devil. Thus the theme of the Judgement is recalled. Saint Michael is referred to in Sacred Scripture, (Daniel 10—12, Apocalypse 12, Jude 9) as the great prince of the heavenly



army who defeated the devil and his angels. In the Offertory of the Requiem Mass he is called the standard-bearer who will lead the blessed into eternal life. The corresponding window on the left shows Saint Gabriel with the lily, symbol of the message of the Virgin Birth of Our Redeemer which he brought to Our Lady. These two windows were presented by Very Rev. Canon McCullagh, P.P., Oughterard.

When we enter the Cathedral the wide central passage sweeping up to the sanctuary immediately catches our eye. It is of sepia marble quarried in Connemara and carved in the works of the Galway Marble Company at Merlin, three miles east of Galway. There are diamond insets and panels in red and white marble, which were specially designed by the architect, not only in the central passage but also in the aisles and ambulatories around the sanctuary and transepts and in the floors of the side-chapels. By contrast, the floor under the seats is a red tile which was selected not only for its colour harmonizing with the seats but also for its heat retaining quality, as the hot-water pipes are laid under the tiles.

The seats are of *Utile mahogany*—a very hard and durable wood from West Africa which was sawn from the log in such a manner as to make it highly resistant to warping or twisting—an important requirement in the lengths needed for these seats. Nearly a hundred of them were presented by donors and carry a simple plaque of remembrance. They were made by Messrs. Sisk, the contractors, and by Messrs. John Barrett of Galway. There are 140 of them in the Cathedral, seating on an average eleven persons each, so that the total seating capacity is 1,500.

### The Baptistry

On the right side when we enter the nave is the Baptistry enclosed with bronze gates. The bowl of the baptismal font is constructed from a solid block of Irish black marble. It is supported on a graceful pedestal of Irish green marble. The floor surrounding the pedestal is on a lower level in accordance with the symbolism of baptism emphasised by Saint Paul (Epistle to Romans, 6:4): that by this sacrament we descend with Our Lord to death and burial and rise with his resurrection. The sunken part of the floor immediately surrounding the font is circular, with a large star of green and beige marble. The main floor is of beige marble. The walls are panelled with marble slabs, up to 10ft. high, separated with strips of gold mosaic. These panels are matched so that the veining of each pair of slabs corresponds. This effect may be seen in the chapels of the Cathedral and in the shrine of Saint Joseph. It adds very much to the artistic value of the marble surrounds and is obtained through the skill and craftsmanship of our marble workers. Marble is brought from the



quarries in large blocks, often ten cubic feet; the blocks are wet with water to show up the natural veining and are sawn into thick slabs against the natural bed. The slabs are carefully numbered in the order they lay in the block and then polished. Each alternative slab is polished on the reverse side and the slabs are erected side by side so that the natural markings of the marble form an artistic pattern. This process is known among marble workers as quartering.

The stained-glass window in the Baptistry, executed by Patrick Pollen, represents the baptism of Our Lord in the Jordan by John the Baptist. (*Luke 3:22, Math. 3:1*).

### **The Stained-Glass Windows**

From the Baptistry we pass into the right aisle. Here there are four large windows with stained-glass. We may pause to explain the general policy of the Cathedral in regard to artistic decoration and stained-glass in particular. There are as yet no paintings on wood or canvas in the Cathedral—only stained-glass, mosaic and the sculptures over the door and in the Stations of the Cross. We hope, in time, to have some frescoes in Saint Colman's chapel.

Nowadays stained-glass, even in churches, is often merely decorative, giving a design in varied colours but not showing a person or action. The Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy declared that the purpose of sacred art is to promote God's praise and glory by turning men's minds devoutly towards God. This it does by representing in vivid fashion the events of God's merciful dealings with man. Such is the tradition so gloriously maintained in the mediaeval cathedrals, which in their wealth of stone sculpture and of stained-glass presented to the eyes of the faithful the whole history of salvation as narrated in the Old and the New Testaments. The Vatican Council has added its great authority to this tradition and declared that there should be a wider and richer use of Sacred Scripture in the Liturgy. It affirms that Sacred Scripture is of paramount importance in the celebration of the Liturgy; for it is from Scripture that the readings of the Epistle, or Lesson, and Gospel and the psalms of the Introit, Gradual, Offertory and Communion are derived.

It is in accord with the spirit of the Council that the sacred art of our churches should help our people to recall and to visualize the figures and the scenes which will be presented to them in the liturgy of Sundays and of the great feasts. We, therefore, decided that all the windows of the Cathedral should be devoted to depicting biblical figures and events—that those on the upper storey should present the Old Testament story, beginning with the windows on the gospel side—which will show themes concerning Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham—continuing around the east transept, the retro-choir,



west transept and ending with the windows on the epistle side; that is twenty-six windows in all. So far, only eight of these have been executed and installed, which we will find and examine in the transepts.

The windows on the ground floor depict events of the New Testament, of the life of Our Lord. On the right, or epistle side, as we proceed up the aisle we see first "The Temptation of Our Lord in the Desert"; this window was presented by the Presentation Convent, Galway. Next is "The Multiplication of Loaves in the Desert"—a gift of the Galwaymen's Association of New York: next, "The Transfiguration of Our Lord", a gift of Mrs. Smallwood, formerly resident in Galway. The fourth, and last, window on this side is "The Sending of the Apostles"—a gift of Most Rev. Dr. Browne. These four windows were executed by Patrick Pollen in very brilliant colours, which, in the evening sun, throw resplendent reflections on the limestone walls.

### The Left Aisle

If we now return to the entrance and proceed to the gospel side, we find opposite the Baptistry a shrine of Saint Joseph, the Worker. The saint is represented at his bench in a mosaic designed by Patrick Pollen and executed by Irish Mosaics Ltd., Roscommon. It was the gift of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, Brentwood, Long Island, U.S.A. Around the mosaic and on the walls of the shrine is a beautiful panelling of Estromoz marble in matched slabs which show the beautiful veining of the marble—the same effect as we have seen in the Baptistry.

Moving up the left aisle we find four stained-glass windows depicting scenes from Our Lord's life as narrated in the Gospels. These, like the windows in the right aisle, follow the sequence of Our Lord's life. The first depicts the "Adoration of the Magi": it was presented by Mrs. Spelman of Gort. Second is "Our Lord teaching by the Lake of Galilee", presented by Mr. Michael Creedon of Dublin: third, "The Giving of the Keys to Saint Peter", presented by the Sisters of Mercy, Galway. Fourth is "The curing of the Paralytic", presented by Mrs. O'Malley, Galway, in memory of her husband Dr. Michael O'Malley. These four windows were designed by Mrs. Quirke of Dublin.

It should be noted that these eight windows are not the only scenes or events depicted from the New Testament. The three rose-windows present the events of Our Lord's life which are recalled in the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary: the window in the Mothers' Chapel shows the Last Supper: the windows in the mortuary chapel show the three raisings from death performed by Our Lord, and, as we have seen, the nine bronze plaques on the main doors also present other important elements of the New Testament narrative.

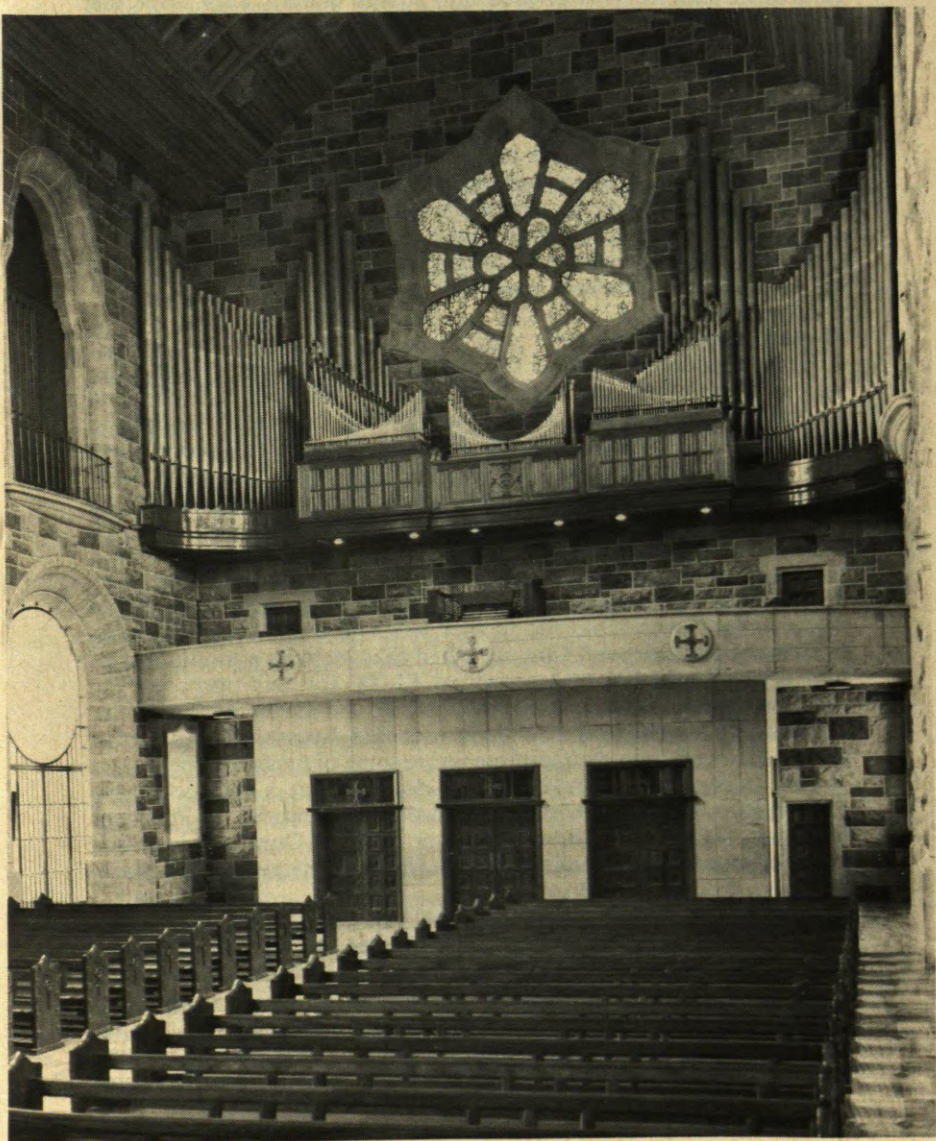


When we have reached the fourth window in the aisle we should move into the nave and glance back to observe three interesting features. Over the narthex is the organ gallery, with a stone balustrade which stretches the whole width of the nave. It can accommodate a choir of one hundred. It contains an organ built by the Liverpool firm of Rushworth & Dreaper at the cost of £25,000. The organ, which took twelve months to assemble in the factory and a further four months to instal in the Cathedral, contains some 2,000 pipes ranging in height from six inches to 21 feet. The majority of the pipes form an attractive display across the north gable, arranged so as to frame the beautiful rose-window. The detached three manual console, constructed in polished utile wood, contains fifty-six draw-stop knobs and is sited in the centre of the gallery. In all that concerned the selection of maker and design of the organ the Cathedral had the advice of Rev. C. O'Callaghan, B.Mus., Professor of Sacred Music, Maynooth,—who very kindly brought the College choir to sing at the dedication of the Cathedral—M. Van Dessel of Saint Patrick's, Dundalk, and H. Ireson. Shortly after the installation of the organ its wonderful qualities of tone and volume were proved at a recital on December 6, 1966, when Mr. Gerard Gillen, M.A., B.Mus., played and a local choir sang, with Miss Bernadette Greevy as soloist.

Above the organ and partially encircled by its pipes is the rose-window of the north gable. It has six large panels, or petals, with five smaller ones in between and six central petals. The stained-glass of the whole window was designed by Mr. George Campbell of Dublin and executed by the Dublin Glass and Paint Co. In the large panels, beginning from the lower left, are shown the five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary: on the sixth—the lowest panel—is the figure of the Immaculate Conception. It will be recalled that when Our Lady appeared to Saint Bernadette in Lourdes and was asked her name she replied: "I am the Immaculate Conception". This window was presented by the Most Rev. Dr. Browne.

Then, looking still higher, we see the coffered timber ceiling of the Cathedral, which stretches in a beautifully designed pattern over the whole surface of nave and transepts. It is barrel-vaulted in shape and is made throughout of western red cedar from the Pacific coast of America—between North California and Alaska—from trees which are 1,000 years old and reach a height of 200ft. This timber was specially selected by the architect for its durability and resistance to decay of all kinds: it has high insulating quality with excellent grain and colour. It was carved in Messrs. Sisk's joinery works and erected in the natural timber finish without any surface treatment or varnish. Where the ceiling joins the walls, on each side of the nave and transepts, there is a long border, four feet wide, of tongued and grooved sheeting. Inside this the vault rises in a majestic sweep of a very





*The Organ Gallery*



diversified pattern: it is divided into square coffers, each three feet wide, some recessed, some embossed. There are two rows of embossed coffers followed by three rows of recessed, rising in gentle sweep from wall to wall. The centres of some of the coffers have been left open to provide for a double purpose—ventilation and lighting. It will be noticed that in the Cathedral there are no hanging lights to distract the eye. Immediately inside the openings in the ceiling are placed lamps of high voltage which are focussed so as to give a most effective lighting to every part of the church; in particular, the altar and sanctuary are very clearly lighted. Experts have declared that this lighting system is remarkable for its efficiency, as well as having all its lamps and pendants concealed.

### **The Mortuary Chapel**

Having reached almost to the sanctuary on the Gospel side, after we have examined the fourth window in the left aisle we find on our left the Mortuary chapel, whither the bodies of the faithful departed are brought for the funeral ceremonies. Here there is a mosaic representing Our Lord rising from the tomb. On each side of the mosaic are two heads, also in mosaic: that on the right represents John Fitzgerald Kennedy, President of the U.S.A., who was assassinated in Dallas on November 23, 1963. He had visited Galway the previous June, had received the Freedom of the City and a wonderful popular reception. He so captured the hearts of our people that, when his tragic death occurred, the Mayor and Borough Council asked that there be a monument to him in the Cathedral and presented £1,000 for this purpose. The head on the left is that of Patrick Pearse, the leader of the Easter Rising in 1916, who was associated with this diocese, as he lived for some years in Rosmuck and there wrote some of his finest poems and stories. After much thought it was decided that a mosaic of the Resurrection would be the most appropriate memorial of President Kennedy, for it recalls the victory over death of Our Lord in which all who believe in Him and who serve Him and his people will share.

There are five windows in this chapel in which stained-glass shows three miracles of raising from death performed by Our Lord. On the first window near the door we see the miracle of Naim—the widow, with her black head-dress, clasps her young son sitting on the bier and looking towards Our Lord. The next window shows the daughter of Jairus rising from the death pallet with four candles and looking towards Our Lord: behind her are her father and mother. The third window shows Lazarus, clothed in the grave-cloths, as he stood when called forth by Our Lord from the tomb. The fourth window depicts Our Lord looking to the three whom he raised from death. Behind him, in the fifth window, are Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus. These five windows were designed and executed by Mr. Patrick Pollen of Dublin. As the windows are small and narrow no



little art and ingenuity were required to represent these three great manifestations of Our Lord's divine power and mercy.

As we leave the mortuary chapel we notice on the aisle wall a sculpture, in white Portland stone, of the Fourth Station of the Cross, the meeting of Jesus with his Mother on the way to Calvary. The figures are life-size and were carved by Mrs. Gabrielle O'Riordan of Celbridge, County Kildare, whose reputation as a sculptor first achieved national acclaim for the stone frieze done by her in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Kildare Street, Dublin. As we turn to the left into the east transept we see the Third Station—Jesus falls the first time—which she has done. At the time of writing the Seventh and Twelfth Stations have also been finished and erected; and it is our earnest hope that Mrs. O'Riordan will be able to execute the remaining stations.

### The East Transept

In the east transept the four windows at the upper level depict events of the Old Testament history of salvation, following the plan already mentioned. (We can see more easily if we move towards the centre of the sanctuary rail under the episcopal chair.) The first window on the left represents Melchisedech, the priest of the Most High God who blessed Abraham and offered sacrifice in bread and wine according to Genesis, Chap. 14 and is referred to in the Sacred Scripture, (*Ps.* 109 and *Ep.* to *Hebrews*) and in the Canon of the Mass as the prototype of the priesthood of Jesus and the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

The next window shows the great test of Abraham's faith when he was ready to sacrifice at God's command his son Isaac (*Gen.* 22). The opposite window on the right wall shows the patriarch Jacob, son of Isaac, in his vision of the ladder reaching heaven (*Genesis* 28). The fourth window shows the selling of Joseph, Jacob's son, into slavery by his jealous brothers (*Genesis* 39)—the event which was to lead to the sojourn of the Chosen People in Egypt, their ill-treatment and their eventual deliverance. These four windows were designed by John Murphy of Murphy-Devitt Studios, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, and executed by these Studios. They are of a different style from the windows we have already seen in the nave: their colouring is somewhat darker but the design is bold and effective and has received high praise from many experts.

In the centre of the east transept is the entrance to the Cathedral which is nearest to the city centre and is most used by the citizens and visitors. The massive external portal is all of glass so that there is a clear view of the interior of the Cathedral and of the High Altar as one approaches from the bridge. On the large plate-glass panel over the entry doors there is depicted by engraving the Last Judgement—



showing Our Lord seated in judgement with Our Lady on his right and Saint Peter on his left and angels on either side receiving the elect or banishing the wicked. This theme of the Last Judgement is almost invariably found in the great medieval Cathedrals, generally in stone over the main entrances. This window was designed by Patrick Heney, A.N.C.A.

Above it we can see the rose-window of the eastern gable, with five large panels of stained-glass which show the events commemorated by the five sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary. This window was designed by George Campbell, R.H.A., and executed by Dublin Glass and Paint Co. It was the gift of Most Rev. Archbishop Hurley of St. Augustine, Florida, who, with the priests of his diocese, contributed generously to the Cathedral.

### **St. Nicholas' Chapel**

From the eastern transept we pass into the chapel of Saint Nicholas. Saint Nicholas was bishop of Myra in Asia Minor about the year 300 A.D. He was renowned for his charity: while still a young man he gave secretly through a window three parcels of gold to a neighbour which enabled him to settle his three daughters in honourable marriage. This gift is the origin of the figure of Santa Claus—the eastern abbreviation of the name. The cult of Saint Nicholas spread widely over the Church, both in the East and West, and when Christianity reached Russia, he was adopted as the national patron of that country. He was also recognised as the patron of sailors, and so when the city of Galway was founded he was chosen as the patron of the parish church. When the diocese of Galway was established in 1831 it was dedicated to Our Lady Assumed into Heaven. So the Cathedral preserves its historic traditions in having as its titulars Our Lady and Saint Nicholas. The high altar was dedicated to Our Lady: this side-chapel and altar are dedicated to Saint Nicholas. The walls are of limestone, the floor of Galway marble. The marble altar was presented by Mrs. Cahill, William Street, Galway, in memory of Thomas and Mrs. Margaret Cahill; the tabernacle on the altar is the gift of Mr. C. Garavan, Galway.

Over the altar is a triptych in limestone, representing the Coronation of Our Lady by the Blessed Trinity. These carvings date back to the 17th century and are our oldest and most venerable link with the Catholics of that troubled century. The iconography, or style of carving, of the figure of God the Father, of Our Lord with his cross and of Our Lady with flowing tresses all belong to the forms in use in the 17th century—of which there are several examples still in Galway in Saint Francis Church nearby. We know from a Tour of Ireland written by Bishop Pococke of Meath about 1752 that he found these three carvings in the vestry of Saint Nicholas' Church when he visited Galway. They were probably commissioned by the





*17th Century Triptych*



Catholic clergy of the city during one of the periods when they had possession of their old church—1643-1652 and 1689-1691—but were not placed in position because their tenure was too short. Our next information of them is based on an oral tradition that a Protestant warden of Saint Nicholas', who did not like religious images, had them taken in a cart to be dumped into the sea; but on the way the carter met a priest who enquired where he was going with the figures and, on hearing that they had been expelled from St. Nicholas' told the carter to leave them at the parish chapel. There they were set up on the right interior wall between the windows as three separate figures and were there as long as living memory goes back. The people had special veneration for the figure of Our Lord, and touched his shin with their hands so that the smoothness of the stone is clearly visible. We are indebted to Mr. John Hunt of Limerick, an antiquarian of recognised authority, for the information that in the iconography of the 17th century these figures or plaques would be set in a wall as one composition, or triptych, and so when this chapel was being completed they were taken from the Pro-Cathedral and erected here—a most precious link with the Catholic people of the 17th century and a proof of their devotion to Our Lady and the doctrine of her Assumption into heaven.

There are four stained-glass windows in this chapel. The first represents Saint Nicholas: it bears an inscription in Irish that it was presented by Alfred O'Dea in memory of his brother, Louis—a distinguished Galway lawyer who died February 19, 1955. The second window depicts the Holy Family and was also presented in memory of Louis O'Dea by his brother Thomas. The third window shows Jesus blessing children and bears an inscription in Gaelic that it was presented by the Galway Gaelic Athletic Association in memory of Fr. Michael Griffin who, when a curate in Galway, in November, 1920 was killed by English forces. The fourth window depicts the Wedding at Cana and was presented by Mrs. Jane Tarpey, Ballyglass, Ardrahan, in memory of her parents, brother and sisters. It will be noted that the central theme of the three windows is marriage, children and family: which is appropriate in a chapel of Saint Nicholas, who, as we have mentioned, earned fame as Santa Claus by his gifts which enabled three girls to be settled in honourable wedlock. These four windows are being designed and executed by Patrick Pollen of Dublin at the time of writing.

### **The Retro-choir**

Leaving the Saint Nicholas chapel we pass into the retro-choir, the space between the High Altar and the southern gable. Here the dominant feature is the great mosaic of the Crucifixion which was designed by Mr. Patrick Pollen and executed by Irish Mosaics Ltd., Roscommon. It had been originally intended to have another rose-window here but such a window, facing south, would bring the



morning sun into the eyes of worshippers in the nave making it difficult for them to see the action of the liturgy on the altar and sanctuary.

The Crucifixion was the supreme act of Redemption of Our Divine Lord and its mystic renewal in the sacrifice of the Mass is the centre of the sacred liturgy of the Catholic Church. Hence it should occupy a dominant position in the Cathedral. The fresco represents Our Lord at the moment of expiration—of complete exhaustion. On either side are the figures of Our Lady and Saint John. Beneath, on our left, the seamless robe and the dice are shown: on the right, the spear with which Our Lord's side was pierced and the rod on which the sponge with vinegar was fixed. In the centre is the rock on which the cross was planted and within it a skull.

It has been traditional in Christian art to represent a skull at the foot of the cross. The reason may be that the place of crucifixion was called in Hebrew 'Golgotha'—which means 'the place of a skull'—which in Latin is translated 'Calvary' (*Matt. 27:33*); this name may be due to the fact that the hill was low and round like a skull. But there is another explanation which dates back to the great Christian writer, Origen, of the third century, who held that the name derived from the fact that Adam's skull was buried there. This theory has appealed to many Christian writers down to our own day (*c.f. Rahner, S.J. 'Catholicism' p. 2*) as showing the providential association of Christ's redemption with the first man, from whom sin came on all mankind. So Saint Paul did not hesitate to call Christ the new Adam (*Rom. 5:14*). This legend found expression in later Christian art in a famous series of frescos by Piero della Francesca in Arezzo.

Over the arms of the cross angels are shown. As is customary with mosaic the presentation of the whole theme is hieratic and traditional rather than realistic, though it must be admitted that the figure of the body of Christ shows very vividly the pathos and tragedy of death.

### St. Colman's Chapel

Adjoining the retro-choir to the west is the chapel of Saint Colman Mac Duagh, the patron and founder of the diocese of Kilmacduagh. It corresponds with the Saint Nicholas chapel except that it has five windows. The floor is of marble: the marble altar was the gift of Mr. Edward A. McAlister, 2 Rector Street, New York, in memory of his wife's mother. The reredos is of marble specially chosen and designed. Over the altar it is hoped to have a fresco of Saint Colman, which Fr. Aengus Buckley, O.P., has undertaken to execute. Fr. Buckley made the remarkable series of frescoes in the church of Ennistymon, which depict the fourteen Stations of the Cross in a continuous series along the full length of the wall of the church.



### The Western Transept

We pass next into the western transept. If we take up position at the centre of the sanctuary rail and look towards the gable we will observe that the porch or entrance had been formed into a "Mother and babies' chapel" which is cut off from the main building by a glass partition and so made sound-proof. Hither small children can be brought without disturbing the congregation if they become obstreperous. Over the chapel is a stained-glass window of the Last Supper which was designed by Manus Walsh and executed by the Dublin Glass and Paint Company.

Over this again in the western gable is the third rose-window, the glass panels of which present in colour the five Glorious Mysteries. The first mystery, the Resurrection, is on the panel to the right, at the point corresponding to two o'clock on our watches. The other mysteries—The Ascension, Decent of the Holy Ghost, Assumption of Our Lady—follow clockwise and the fifth—the Coronation of Our Lady—is in the twelve o'clock position. The stained-glass was designed by the same artist who designed the other rose-windows, George Campbell, R.H.A. This window is dedicated to His Eminence Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, who, as already mentioned, was appointed by Pope Paul VI as his Legate to dedicate the Cathedral on August 15, 1965.

On each side of this transept are windows which, in stained-glass, continue the series of events from the Old Testament. The first on the left shows Samuel anointing Saul as the first King of Israel (1 *Kings* 10). The next window shows the young David slaying the Philistine giant, Goliath (1 *Kings* 17). This window was presented by former officers and men of the Connaught Rangers—a regiment which had its headquarters in Renmore, Galway, up to 1922. Then, coming to the opposite wall of the transept is a window depicting David as King and Psalmist. David is a central figure in the Old Testament as the great king, the fore-runner and ancestor of Christ, the Messias, who fulfilled all the promises of glorious and universal rule made to the house of David. He is also of particular interest because seventy-three of the Psalms were attributed to him. In 1 *Kings* 16 he is described as a skilful harpist, even in his youth. So he is represented in this window as King and Psalmist. This window is the gift of the Sisters of Mercy, Seamount College, Kinvara. The fourth window in this transept represents David's son and heir, Solomon, and reminds us of that for which he was justly famous—his wisdom—as exemplified in his classic Judgement: when two women disputed as to which of them a baby belonged, he ordered it to be divided by the sword and half given to each. One agreed to this: the other, rather than see the child killed, cried out to give it to her opponent. Whereupon Solomon said "This is the real mother: give the child to her."



The four windows of this transept were designed by Manus Walsh and executed by the Dublin Glass and Paint Co. Underneath the fourth window is the stone figure of the Crucifixion—the Twelfth Station—executed by Mrs. O’Riordan. It was presented to the Cathedral by the Sisters of Mercy of St. Vincent’s Convent, Galway.

### **St. Fachanan’s Chapel**

Turning from the west transept into the aisle, we come to Saint Fachanan’s chapel on the left. He is the patron saint of Kilfenora, which was for many centuries an independent diocese with a bishop, cathedral, chapter of canons and nineteen parishes. In 1750 it was united with the neighbouring diocese of Kilmacduagh, for in these days, when roads were sadly deficient, travel between the dioceses was much easier by sea—between the ports of Kinvara, Ballyvaughan and Liscannor. As Kilfenora belonged to the province of Cashel and Kilmacduagh to Tuam province, it was arranged that the first bishop, Peter Kilkelly—a Dominican Father and native of Ballinderreen—be bishop of Kilmacduagh and Apostolic Administrator to Kilfenora and reside in Kilmacduagh. His successor, Laurence Nihell, a native of Limerick, was Bishop of Kilfenora and resided in Kilmacduagh. This arrangement, which was unique in Irish church history and seems to us odd, was adopted by the Holy See in order to satisfy the demands of local patriotism which has often been very tenacious of the rights and traditions of parish and diocese. As we have already seen, the arrangement lasted until 1883 when Kilmacduagh was united to Galway, but a relic of it remains in that the Bishop of Galway is not Bishop of Kilfenora but Apostolic Administrator, which means that he administers the diocese in the name of the Holy and Apostolic See of Rome.

It was appropriate that there should be a chapel in honour of St. Fachanan in the Cathedral, for the people of Kilfenora contributed generously to the diocesan collection for the building of the Cathedral during the years 1958-1965 and the Bishop who was largely responsible for inaugurating the project, Most Rev. Dr. O’Dea, was himself a native of Kilfenora. This chapel, like the other three, has a floor of Galway marble. The altar and predella are of white marble with a reredos of the same material. The altar was donated by Miss Betty Gallagher of Salthill. In the centre of the reredos, place is left for a fresco which we hope will be designed and executed by an Irish artist.

There are five windows in this chapel which we hope will in due course be filled with stained-glass figures of Saint Patrick, Saint Brigid and Saint Colmcille who are recognised as our great national Saints and of Saint Enda and Saint Fachanan who were identified with Kilfenora. Saint Enda, who is patron saint of Spiddal parish, crossed from Aran to preach the faith there and the



parish of Killeany in Lisdoonvarna was dedicated to him from its foundation. In the neighbouring parish of Carron, Glencolumcille preserves the memory of the famed monastic saint, Saint Columcille, and up to a century ago a great pattern was held there on his feast-day, June 9th. The local Protestant landlord, however, put on a rival attraction on that day in the shape of a horse-races which in due course provoked fierce faction fights between Galway and Clare contingents, and brought the pattern to an end.

The windows of Saint Patrick and Saint Brigid have been donated by Mr. and Mrs. McKinley, Washington, and that of Saint Enda has been presented by Professor Maol-Chróin of U.C.G.

### **The Sanctuary and High Altar**

Leaving Saint Fachanan's chapel we come to the central and most important part of the Cathedral, the sanctuary, high altar and dome. On the pillar to the right hangs the magnificent polished bronze lamp which shows that the Blessed Sacrament is preserved in the tabernacle on the high altar. This is in accordance with the instruction given by His Holiness Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical on the Blessed Eucharist of June 1964, wherein he says that the Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in the most dignified place in a church. This lamp was presented by Mrs. Lettice Smallwood who had many associations with the county and city of Galway. The honour of lighting the lamp for the first time was given to President de Valera (at the High Mass) on August 15th, 1965, when, after the dedication of the Cathedral by Cardinal Cushing of Boston a solemn Pontifical High Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Conway of Armagh and the ciborium containing the Sacred Host was placed in the tabernacle for the first time.

The sanctuary area of the Cathedral is contained within the four great pillars which support the dome: they are linked by the communion-rails and kneeler on each side. Each of the four rails and kneelers is of marble and is 52ft. long: the communion-rail is of a very special design: instead of pillars resting on the base and supporting the communion-rail there are white marble circles forming a continuous chain. The communion-rail and kneeler cost £12,800. Inside is a space 3ft. 9ins. wide where the priest can circulate to distribute communion. Then five steps lead from the front and rear gates of the communion-rail to the sanctuary area which is quite spacious, being 44ft. 6ins. square.

Within the sanctuary are, on the left, the bishop's chair with seats for the bishop's assistants: opposite the bishop's chair are the seats for the celebrant, deacon and subdeacon of High Mass. On each side of the bishop's and celebrant's chair are benches containing three seats, twelve seats in all, for the twelve canons of the Cathedral Chapter. In ecclesiastical usage, the word 'chapter' (*'capitulum'* in



General view  
of the  
Interior





Latin) is used to signify a corporate body of persons. From the earliest centuries certain of the most distinguished clergy of the diocese were appointed as Canons of the Cathedral to serve as a senate or advisory body to the Bishop. Before the Reformation, both Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora had their Cathedral chapters, but the confiscation of the cathedrals, parish churches and lands deprived the Catholic bishops and priests of all temporal means of support—except the free offerings of their devoted people. Only at the end of the eighteenth century could Catholics begin to build very modest parish chapels, and it was in 1921 that Bishop Thomas O'Dea, in view of the building of our Cathedral, obtained from the Holy See the erection of a Cathedral Chapter for his diocese. So, with the bishop's chair, the seats of the canons of the Chapter are the distinctive sign of a Cathedral sanctuary. The chair and seats are of utile wood, a West African mahogany, and were made and presented as a gift by Messrs. John Sisk, the builders of the Cathedral.

The sanctuary floor, on which the seats rest, consists of Portuguese Beige marble into which are inserted various other marbles, giving a very artistic and pleasing pattern. The floor covers an area of 220 square ft. and cost £8,500, of which £5,000 was presented by an anonymous donor. From it three steps lead to the predalla, or platform, (19ft. long by 16ft. 6ins. wide) in the centre of which the altar is placed so that there is ample space for the celebrant and ministers to walk around it for the incensation at Solemn Mass.

The altar itself consists of a marble support on which rests a single massive slab of Carrara white marble (10ft. by 5ft. by 5½ins.) and because of its size is most suitable for the ceremony of concelebration (i.e., when several priests join in offering the Holy Sacrifice). This is now the appointed rite for the Solemn Pontifical Mass of the consecration of the Holy Oils on Holy Thursday, when priests of the diocese concelebrate with the Bishop.

The altar has the advantage that it is clearly visible from every seat in the Cathedral, so that the congregation can follow all the ceremonies of the sacred liturgy. Not only is the celebrant visible, he is audible as well, for loud-speaking apparatus has been installed to carry the voice both from the altar and from the lectern in the sanctuary. We cannot claim that the acoustics of the Cathedral are perfect: because of its size and because of the stone on the interior walls there is, in places, a disconcerting echo or a muffling of sound.

At the corners and in the centre of the table of the altar five crosses are carved on the surface to symbolize the five wounds in the body of Christ; and in front of the tabernacle is the carved receptacle containing the relics of saints and covered with a slab. The altar was consecrated by His Eminence Cardinal Cushing in a



special ceremony on the evening before the Cathedral was dedicated. It was presented to the Cathedral by Lord Hemphill of Tulira in memory of his grand-uncle, Edward Martyn, who was one of the earliest patrons and benefactors of the Cathedral. He was most interested in sacred art and wrote a book on that subject. He has also a special claim to fame in that he was responsible for the foundation of the Abbey Theatre, for at a meeting at Duras in the parish of Kinvara, where Lady Gregory and Yeats had been talking about the project, he clinched the matter by undertaking to bear the cost.

The tabernacle on the altar is of a special spherical design with circular door: it was presented by Mr. Paul O'Dea of Galway. The six massive candlesticks were the gift of Mr. Finan of Salthill.

Around the sanctuary area there rises four massive arches borne on the four great pillars in which the walls of the nave, transepts and retro-choir terminate. On these arches rest the dome which forms the internal canopy of the altar and the external sign of the Real Presence. Between the dome and the four arches are four spaces, called pendentives, within which the figures of four arch-angels have been depicted in mosaic.

Over the pendentives is a circular band on which is inscribed in mosaic the words "*Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*"—the words of the hymn sung by the angels at Bethlehem when they announced to the shepherds the glad tidings of the birth of Our Saviour. These words have been taken by the Church to form part of the liturgy of the Mass: they express the sublime purpose of the Blessed Eucharist—to give glory to God and peace to men. They express the purpose for which the Cathedral was built and for which it is maintained and attended. So with these words we conclude our description of the building and its contents.







## THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE

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