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Title page of Holy Cross manuscript, *Triumphalia*, dated 1640; compiled by Father John Malachy Hartry, Cistercian of Holy Cross Abbey.

Holy Cross Abbey and the Counter Reformation in Tipperary

by Raymond Gillespie and Bernadette Cunningham

Introduction

One of the problems in understanding religious change in early modern Ireland is a lack of sources which show how the various religious communities of the island developed and how they related both to the laity and to each other. In particular, the role of the regular clergy of the various Catholic religious orders who spearheaded the Counter Reformation is very imperfectly understood.

From the dissolution of the monasteries in the late 1530s the regular clergy appear only fleetingly in the records; yet their numbers were considerable. According to Archbishop Eugene Mathews of Dublin, there were some 800 secular clergy in Ireland in 1623, with 200 Franciscans, 40 Jesuits, more than 20 Dominicans and a few other orders, including the Cistercians, who were one of the smaller orders.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century many of these orders were re-establishing permanent communities in, or close to, the original houses which had been suppressed in the sixteenth century.¹ The revival of the religious orders was not without controversy as each community sought to define its own role.

In the course of the seventeenth century some religious orders attempted to provide a rationale for their existence by chronicling their activities in formal histories. Histories which survive include those produced by the Franciscan historians at the beginning of the century and that of the Dominicans by O'Heyne at the end of the century.²

One of the most important of the contemporary chronicles of religious orders was prepared in mid-century by a Cistercian monk at Holy Cross Abbey in county Tipperary, Malachy Hartry, who compiled the volume now known as the *Triumphalia Chronologica Monasterii Sanctae Crucis in Hibernia*.³ The volume was in part a history of the Cistercian Order in Ireland, in part a contemporary chronicle of the re-establishment of the Cistercians at the abbey and in part a testimony to the power of the relic of the true cross of which the community had charge.

Hartry's work is made up of two tracts. The first, the *Triumphalia Chronologica* proper, was completed in July 1640 although there are some later entries in other hands from 1656, 1698 and 1723. The second tract, *De Cisterciensium Hibernorum Viris Illustribus*, was written between 1649 and 1651 and contains biographies of Irish Cistercians since the twelfth century, but mainly from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

At a first reading these works appear to be a serious attempt to chronicle the history of the community. Hartry brought to his task the techniques of the writing of history then developing in Continental Europe.⁴ He had spent ten years "in the white-robed order of Citeaux", both at the Irish College at Lisbon and in the abbey of Palazuelos in Spain.⁵

In his history he was careful to cite the sources of his information, whether it be the records of the monastery, continental records of the Cistercian order or oral tradition, and he also compared his conclusions with those of other contemporary historians. Thus Sir James Ware's work, for instance, was both corrected by Hartry and used to confirm the research behind the *Triumphalia*.



However, this semblance of objectivity conceals the fact that Hartry's text was fundamentally a polemical one. It was a response to the problems which the Cistercian community at Holy Cross experienced in re-establishing itself in the early seventeenth century.

The original Cistercian community of Holy Cross was a twelfth century foundation. It was never a wealthy establishment, but enjoyed a period of prosperity and popularity in the fifteenth century under the patronage of the Butlers, when a large building programme was undertaken. Unlike most other Irish Cistercian foundations, Holy Cross was not a target during the dissolution of the monasteries after 1537, possibly because of Butler influence. Rather it was transformed into a secular college of clergy under a provost, the former abbot Philip Purcell.

The lands of the abbey were granted to Purcell and £24 worth of gold silver and other chattels were appropriated to the State. In 1551 Purcell made over a life interest in the land to the earl of Ormond who, after Purcell's death, obtained a grant of the lands from the crown in 1558.

It appears likely that the relic was little affected by these changes. The cross and community were still there in 1573 when a lease of the abbey and town of Holy Cross specifically excluded the cross and the altarages. There are scattered references to the relic in the later part of the sixteenth century, which suggest that it was certainly in the Holy Cross area, though not necessarily in the possession of the Cistercian monks.⁶

The early seventeenth century revival of the Cistercian community at Holy Cross was dated by Hartry to 1602-3 and attributed to the efforts of Abbot Bernard Foulow. This revival was short-lived, for when Abbot Bernard attempted to celebrate Mass at the abbey in 1603, probably as part of the wider recusancy revolt of the towns in that year, he was detected and forced to flee.⁷

A more dynamic influence on Holy Cross, according to Hartry's account, was Foulow's successor, Luke Archer, who was appointed abbot of Holy Cross in 1611. Ordained a secular priest in 1594, and having ministered in the vicinity of his home town of Kilkenny, Archer joined the Cistercian order in 1610 and became abbot of Holy Cross a year later.

He joined the Cistercians with the intention of abandoning his administrative duties in the church in Leighlin "to devote himself to God in greater retirement". In fact he remained on as vicar general of Ossory, while taking on duties within the Cistercian order also. Luke Archer's concerns were recorded by Hartry as "the salvation of souls" and to this end an increase in the number of monks.⁸

Archer was aided in building up the community by developments abroad. In 1615 a new reform was begun at Clairvaux, which developed into the Congregation of the Strict Observance to which the Irish community was affiliated until 1638, when a new Congregation of Saints Malachy and Bernard was set up for Ireland.⁹

Those who joined the Cistercian community at Holy Cross during Archer's 33 years as Abbot ranged from a lay brother Donald Mac Gilla Martin, born near the monastery, to priests such as John O'Dea, who had trained at Salamanca and came home to live and work at Holy Cross after Luke Archer took over as abbot. There was probably a community of between five and ten priests living at the Abbey at any one time during the 1620s and 1630s.¹⁰

The Holy Cross community was part of a Cistercian network with connections in Kilkenny, Drogheda and elsewhere in Ireland. It included priests who had spent many years on the continent, not least Hartry himself. His early years in the order were spent in Spain. In 1623-4 he was attached to the new Cistercian oratory at Drogheda, supervising three novices before they were likewise sent abroad for further education after taking their vows.

By 1628 Hartry was in Bruges, and in France and Belgium again in 1631.¹¹ Thus the Holy Cross community was not an isolated one; its connections with other Cistercian communities were far-reaching, and personnel moved from one Cistercian house to another as circumstances dictated.

This placing of Holy Cross in a wider world was important for its outlook. Continental links,



especially those with Spain, were strong. On the cover of the original *Triumphalia* manuscript are the arms of the Spanish Congregation of Castile, the Cistercian order in Spain to which the Irish community was attached while there were no formal structures for the order in Ireland. The activities of the Irish Cistercians were known in England also, and two of the chapters of the *Triumphalia* relate to a visit by English Catholics to the relic.¹²

The community at Holy Cross was not an Irish phenomenon only, but part of mainstream European culture and civilisation. This broader context allowed the Cistercians confidently to refute protestant attacks of "superstition" levelled against Catholicism in general and against the power of the relic in particular.

The choice of Holy Cross abbey as the centre of the Cistercian revival was dictated at least in part by the existence of the relic. All available means of communication with the laity needed to be exploited. In the work of transmitting the values of the Counter Reformation to a non-literate public, tangible visual elements of traditional devotional practices could not be disregarded.

The title page of the *Triumphalia* was composed of a series of visual images to exploit this.¹³ St. Bernard, for example, was depicted holding a cross decorated with the symbols of the Passion, and one of the origin legends of the monastery was also illustrated. The physical condition of the Abbey may well have been very poor, and certainly other venues were sought for the training of novices, possibly to allow scope for a more contemplative life than was possible at the centre of pilgrimage.

In 1623 the Cistercians addressed a petition to the pope, seeking permission in time of war and schism to live outside their monasteries in secular houses and carry out their religious work without licence from the local bishop.

The request was apparently granted, and Luke Archer rented a house at Kilkenny which served as an extension of the activities of the Cistercians at Holy Cross.¹⁴ At Holy Cross Abbey itself the small resident community of Cistercians sought to serve to the best of their ability the needs of the Catholic community with whom they came into contact.

The newly re-established Cistercian community at Holy Cross, like all the revived religious orders in seventeenth century Ireland, had to come to terms with three major issues. First, they had to deal with the problem of religious division in Ireland, and in particular, to explain why the Reformation had happened and what their response to it was.

Secondly, they had to identify their position in the developing Counter Reformation organisation in Ireland. In particular, this involved establishing their rights and duties as against other elements in the Catholic Church, especially the parish clergy.

Thirdly, they had to devise a pastoral strategy for the spread of the faith and the consolidation of the ideas of the Council of the Trent in Ireland. The *Triumphalia Chronologica* was written in part to resolve these problems and to reinforce the strategies which the Cistercian community used to resolve them. It therefore provides a valuable insight into the process of the re-establishment of religious orders and of their role in early seventeenth century Ireland.

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Of the three problems which the Cistercian community had to address the most fundamental was that of the nature of the Reformation and the Counter Reformation and the controversy over the validity of each movement. Here history was of central importance, and was regularly used as a propaganda weapon in the religious debates of the seventeenth century.

The Catholic community claimed an historical descent from the early Christian church and contrasted this with the recently arrived ideas of Protestantism. Throughout Europe both sides contended to establish a link to the early church.



Hartry was no exception, and he stressed the continuity of the community at Holy Cross from the twelfth century. "Some Cistercian monks in our monastery of Holy Cross", he argued, "living up to the present day in an unbroken line, ... are forced by persecution to go away for a short time, and again through zeal for their Order and for the welfare of their souls they return to their former place of refuge".

On a wider scale he also stressed the continuity of the Cistercian order from Malachy and Bernard, and indeed back to the Benedictines of the sixth century. The order, he claimed, "with like certainty it is preserved, continued, and spread in the same unbroken line to this day in Ireland, under God's guidance, that what God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Malachy and Bernard planted may not perish".¹⁵

Claims of this magnitude clearly required some substantiation, and this was found in the presence of the relic of the true cross of Holy Cross. Hartry recorded a number of origin legends for the cross, all of which had a miraculous element intended to prove that the relic was "in the monastery pre-ordained for it, in which it is preserved and venerated with piety and honour".

Much of Hartry's history was concerned with the demonstration of the power of the relic and with a theological discussion of the importance of miracles. Using biblical evidence, Hartry contended that Protestants who denied that miracles occurred made light of Christ's promises as recorded in the Bible: "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible to you".¹⁶

He was aware of Protestant opposition to the idea of miraculous interventions in normal life by saints and of antagonism towards relics and the Holy Cross relic in particular. He countered the view that miracles encouraged mere superstition by citing Thomas Aquinas and arguing that "man is led on by supernatural effects [miracles] to some supernatural knowledge of what he is to believe". He asserted that miracles sometimes took place through the mercy of God to grant favours to those who needed and asked for them, and "sometimes in proof of the sanctity of some person which God wishes to make known for the edification and consolation of others".¹⁷

The veneration of relics was likewise unacceptable to Protestant teachings. Hartry examined the practice by reference to the writings of John Chrysostom, St Bernardine and other fathers, and concluded that the relic of the Holy Cross should be "venerated and adored with supreme worship and Christian reverence"; and that paintings and carvings of the cross should be worshipped and adored. "Blessed indeed are they who go forth and touch it with chaste lips and holy mouth", he answered.¹⁸

If Hartry's argument for the supremacy of the Catholic Church and the heresy of the Protestant church was to be credible to his readers, he needed to address the problem of why God allowed the persecution by heretics of what he argued was the true church. Hartry himself provided the evidence for such persecution. Catholics had been imprisoned or even martyred, and the monasteries, including the Holy Cross, had been spoiled.

There was a time, he asserted, when the monastery, "was nothing else but a den of robbers, a stall for horses, oxen and brute beasts". It was a time when "only rarely and in secret could a priest be found or seen throughout the whole of this kingdom, so fiercely did the wrath of the protestants display itself each day against the priests of God", and the "foreign heresy" had inundated Ireland, "injuring and persecuting with all its might the ancient orthodox and Catholic religion".¹⁹

These events were explained in terms of divine punishment, for "God, who loves peace and charity allows these things on account of our sins, yet only for a time. For according to his fatherly and divine providence he takes watchful care of souls, those especially that stray from the ancient path of the orthodox faith and the light of salvation, that they may not be choked by the darkness of heresy."²⁰

The fact that the faith was orthodox and could be sustained was demonstrated by the power of



the relic." I beseech you, at these gloomy times of ours, and see how the wonder working cross of Christ by God's mercy is triumphant in this monastery, for by it frequent miracles were and are wrought each day."²¹

If further proof were needed, Hartry included a number episodes in his text as warnings. Terence Creagh from Killogh near the monastery, for example, "became for many a notable example and warning against the profession of such error [becoming Protestant] for he was deprived of the use of his hands, feet and tongue and fell into a state of savage madness". Fortunately "though outwardly this man seemed a heretic, inwardly he was a Catholic, like many alas" and after reconversion was cured by the relic.

Thus the power of the relic of the true cross was dramatically displayed. It was episodes such as this which Hartry used to demonstrate the veracity of the mission at Holy Cross and to provide evidence of the heresy of Reformation, not only to those who were "wavering and limping owing to the contrary teaching" but also to the community itself.²²

— 2 —

If the theological difficulty of the nature of religious division was relatively easy to resolve, the more practical problem of the relationship of the community of Holy Cross with the wider Counter Reformation church structures proved more difficult. The form of church organisation advocated by the Catholic reformers of the Council of Trent was not that of the monasteries and religious orders, but rather of secular parishes under the direct control of the bishop.²³ The religious orders, on the other hand, argued that an abbot was not under episcopal jurisdiction since his status was almost that of a bishop.

Hartry, for example, was in no doubt that the status of abbot was "very close to the episcopal dignity as regards his own subjects, and from the beginning of the early church it has been held in great honour, though after the episcopate". To support the point Hartry recorded the tradition that the archepiscopal cross had always been lowered when the archbishop entered the territory of Holy Cross.²⁴

Although it was an experience shared by the Catholic church throughout Europe, the dispute between regular and secular clergy was a bitter one in Ireland. The conflict of interest arose simply enough in many cases. While many monastic communities has been scattered, monastic buildings has continued as centres of worship and became parish churches under the administration of Counter Reformation priests.

The re-establishment of monastic communities brought conflict between the new religious orders and the parish clergy who had appropriated the monastery and its associated rights as a parish church. The result was often bitter conflict between two contrasting outlooks on the religious life and ecclesiastical organisation.²⁵

Hartry, for example, was deeply antagonistic towards the secular priest who had been working in the parish of Holy Cross prior to Luke Archer's successful attempt to re-establish the Cistercians there. What was at stake was not simply ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but the right to collect dues from parishioners. Those who ministered at weddings and funerals, for example, could expect to collect the dues offered by those they served. Relics, such as the cross, were also an important economic asset since offerings made by pilgrim visitors to the shrine could be lucrative and so control of the relic was of some importance.

Thomas Walsh, the archbishop of Cashel, complained to Rome in 1632 that "the abbot set over the monastery of Holy Cross. . . without obtaining or even asking permission . . . carries the relic at his will outside the diocese and province"²⁶ The ecclesiastical hierarchy was in no doubt that the activities of the Cistercians, and especially their use of the relic, should be curtailed because of the



ecclesiastical and economic advantages gained through their ministry to pilgrims visiting the relic.

A challenge from the local bishop and the parish priest, David Henesy, to the control of such an important ecclesiastical and economic asset was only to be expected. This was the most serious challenge to the efforts of Luke Archer to re-establish a Cistercian presence at Holy Cross Abbey in the second decade of the seventeenth century.

Archer faced “not so much the persecutions of his [protestant] adversaries as the ambitions and spiteful turbulence of some secular priests and especially David Henesy [who] most absurdly used to say that the cure of souls within the territory of the monastery was derived from the archbishop or his vicar, and not from the Abbot and community”. Despite being excommunicated, Henesy, supported by the archbishop, denied the abbot’s power to inflict such a censure and continued to minister to the parishioners “to the injury of many pious persons”, according to Hartry.

The matter was resolved in favour of the Cistercians in 1621 when Henesy submitted to the authority of Luke Archer as abbot, and was re-appointed by Archer to the post he had filled. One of the main conditions to which Henesy agreed was not to “apply or show any relic or cross inside or outside the aforesaid monastery without the special command and permission of the Lord Luke [Archer], the abbot, or his successor”. Henesy was replaced by a Cistercian priest some years later.

It seems that the issue flared up again in 1630, when the Franciscan Thomas Strange was called upon to arbitrate between the archbishop of Cashel and the Cistercians over the placing of a parish priest at Holy Cross.²⁷ The relationship between the Cistercians and the archbishop of Cashel remained an uneasy one throughout the century.

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Having come to terms with the theoretical and practical problems of the Counter Reformation, there remained the difficulty of devising a strategy to spread the ideas of the Council of Trent in Tipperary. This effort was focussed on the relic of the true cross, which had not only a theological significance (as discussed above) but also a pastoral one. The cross provided tangible evidence through the miracles of God’s goodness if approached in faith.

The pilgrimage to Holy Cross was thus, at one level, a devotional exercise undertaken for spiritual benefit. A pilgrimage ritual similar to that at other shrines in Ireland was probably involved, since stations involving seven altars were referred to at one point in Hartry’s narrative.²⁸

Hartry strongly advocated the devotional practice of venerating the cross and recorded that “when entering or going out of our monastery of the Holy Cross, we have seen pious persons almost beyond number who had come on a pilgrimage for devotion sake, worshipping seven times and more in the day at present and oftener formerly, the Cross, which has been preserved here for many centuries with great respect”.²⁹ This suggests that Hartry himself, though living in the monastery, may not have been ministering directly to the pilgrims; he is depicted as a passive observer of the devotional pilgrimage engaged in by lay visitors.

Full observance of the Cistercian rule would have been incompatible with active involvement in routine parish work; but such detachment may not always have been possible, and elsewhere in the text Hartry indicates a more direct personal involvement. He recorded that “two monks at least are appointed to be always ready at hand for the comfort of the faithful, to look after the welfare not only of their bodies but also of their souls, of which fact I am witness, since I was often present and shared in their labours”.³⁰

The Cistercians at Holy Cross ministered to pilgrims by offering daily mass and providing for confession on demand. They probably preached sermons to the assembled pilgrims, and presumably encouraged their veneration of the cross.

The popular perception of the relic by the pilgrims coming to the Abbey shrine was often rather



different to that set out in the theology of the Cistercian monks. Relics fulfilled a deep need in the minds of the poor and the sick; for many pilgrims a visit to Holy Cross was the last resort. A man who had abandoned hope of a cure without supernatural intervention resolved in 1633 to visit many different holy places of which Holy Cross was one.

Another individual who was not particularly devout was persuaded by others to come and seek a cure. Yet others came to intercede on behalf of sick relatives who could not themselves make the journey. Gatherings of over 200 people to witness miracles worked through the Holy Cross relic were recorded by contemporaries.³¹

Relics were also a link between the world of traditional Catholicism and that of the Counter Reformation. The native Irish annalists, for example, recorded the coming of the Reformation largely in the concrete terms of the destruction of relics. The Annals of Loch Cé, in an entry for the year 1538, for instance, noted the destruction by the English of images and relics which were reputed to have had miraculous powers. The annalist concluded that "there was not in Éirinn a holy cross, or a figure of Mary or an illustrious image, over which their power reached that was not burned." And furthermore, there was not an Order of the seven Orders in their power that they did not destroy. And the pope, and the church abroad and at home, were excommunicating the Saxons on account thereof, but they had neither respect nor regard for that". Thereafter, the annalists were largely silent on the matter of religious persecution in Ireland.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a resurgence in the popularity of relics. The link between martyrdom and relics was strengthened and new relics were enthusiastically sought. Hartry, for example, recorded the taking of the clothes and blood of Catholics executed in the sixteenth century. The annalists recorded at the execution of Connor O'Devany, bishop of Down and Connor, in 1611 that "the Christians who were then in Dublin contended with each other to see which of them should have one of his limbs [and] they had fine linen in readiness to prevent his blood from falling to the ground; for they were convinced that he was one of the holy martyrs of the Lord". The head of the executed Archbishop Dermot O'Hurley was preserved by a number of women as a relic.³²

One reason for this growth in interest in relics was undoubtedly theological. Through their miraculous qualities they provided contemporaries with apparent proof of the heresy of Protestantism and the goodness of God to the true faith.

A further reason for the continued interest in relics was their special function. Hartry's record shows that the relic was used in many different ways. It was used as a protection against theft, and inhabitants of the Holy Cross region used the buildings there to store grain "under the protection of the Holy Cross". The relic was also used in response to witchcraft. Most important was the traditional use of relics in the resolution of disputes and in swearing oaths.³³

There are instances of the use of a wide variety of relics for such purposes in Ireland throughout the middle ages, and there are indications that the Holy Cross relic may have been particularly popular in this regard.³⁴ In 1600 Adam Loftus and George Carey, the Lords Justice, reported that the earl of Tyrone planned "to meet with the supposed earl of Desmond and other traitors of Munster about the Holy Cross, which is the place where it is like they will conclude and confirm all their combinations and consecrate them with new oaths afore that idol, whom the Irish nation do more superstitiously reverence than all the other idolatries in Ireland". It was the relic rather than the venue which was of critical political significance. Thus when it did not prove possible for the earl of Tyrone to visit the abbey in 1600, it was reported by an English observer that the relic was brought to him at Fercall in Leinster by priests from Holy Cross.³⁵

While the relic of the true cross formed the main attraction of Holy Cross abbey, the site was a complex of relics and holy places. There were at least two holy wells to which Hartry attributed



cures, and a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, displayed in the church, was also held to have miraculous powers.³⁶

A special shrine was erected for this statue in 1628 and placed over the arch of the high altar. There was a tabernacle supported on columns, decorated in gold, silver, and other colours in which the statue was “worshipped respectfully and devoutly by the faithful”. The statue, of Spanish origin, was reputedly the gift of the wife of the earl of Thomond, and its popularity is indicative of the continuation of a tradition of Marian devotion.³⁷

Relics and other holy places associated with miraculous cures formed a bridge in the popular mind between the natural and the supernatural, and it was in this that their pastoral power lay. The relic was a source of power which could be used to combat evil forces.

Thus the cross was used in at least two cases in which witchcraft was involved. There was also a magical connotation to the story of the Kilkenny farmer whose field would not produce grain until blessed with water in which the relic had been submerged. This sort of explanation was important in an age when disease or other misfortune was seen to be the result of malevolent intent or the offending of a supernatural force.

When a platform collapsed at the fair of Holy Cross in 1602, only two people were injured “who by their swearing had been wanting in due reverence to the holy Cross”. In another case a Roscommon man who worked on a holy day “all of a sudden he lost his senses, mind and reason”. It was this perception of the causes of misfortune which led the abbot, Luke Archer, to exhort one of those hoping for a cure “to repent of his past sins and to better his life in future”. Of the 31 miracles that dealt with identifiable problems, about a quarter involved what may be termed “moral defects”. Thus the relic represented a link between the natural and the supernatural which Protestantism could not provide.³⁸

Relics, of course, were not unique in providing this bridge between the natural and supernatural. The cult of the saints could well provide another bridge. Lives of the saints were certainly familiar in early seventeenth century Ireland. Local devotion to a particular saint nurtured through the ministry of the clergy was an important element in medieval spirituality and popular belief.

Holy wells, for instance, were usually associated with local patron saints. This very localism, which suggested a personal devotion to a personalised saint, was a core element in the cult of saints. The Irish manuscript versions of local saints lives were being collected by the Franciscan Micheál Ó Cléirigh in the early seventeenth century and subjected to scholarly scrutiny.

However, this very act of collecting and analysing the lives of saints reduced their power as a pastoral tool. As would be expected, lives of saints as collected by Ó Cléirigh showed strong regional variations, as each saint was set in a particular locality through special stories incorporating local placenames and persons.

Fr John Colgan, the Franciscan hagiographer at Louvain, complained in 1645 that there were stories about at least 12 St Brigids, all with distinct birth places and family connection, 14 St Brendans and 120 St Colmans.³⁹ The aim of the seventeenth century hagiographers was to introduce some uniformity into the situation and produce standard lives of each saint. By doing this local connections were, however, undermined and the popular appeal of the saint reduced.

In contrast to holy wells and the cult of local saints, the pilgrimage to Holy Cross and the veneration of the relic had a broader regional appeal. The relic attracted pilgrims mainly from the south and midlands and from Clare. It provided a focus for south-west Ireland in the way that Lough Derg did for Ulster, and it did so over a very long period of time.

There were other pilgrimage sites for other parts of the country each with their own attractions, such as Lady’s Island in Wexford or Croagh Patrick in Mayo. Other attractions, such as that



provided by Cistercian miracle worker, Fr Candidus, in the south-east of the country in the 1620s were more transient.⁴⁰

Just as the appeal of the relic at Holy Cross was geographically coherent, there may also have been a significant degree of social cohesion among those attracted there as pilgrims. Most of the cures recorded in the *Triumphalia Chronologia* were not effected on the rich. Most were people “of moderate means” - small farmers, a piper, two carpenters and a convicted criminal for instance. Almost one-third were women.

This was a different group of people from those who were the intended audience of Counter Reformation theological literature. Certainly, works such as Geoffrey Keating’s *Three Shafts of Death* were being targeted at the gentry rather than at the poor who would have been pilgrims at Holy Cross.

The re-establishment of a Cistercian community at Holy Cross abbey during the seventeenth century was not an easy task, and proved only moderately successful. Problems, both practical and theological, had to be resolved before the community could be made viable. At Holy Cross the task was perhaps easier than at many other centres in the country. The relic ensured some continuity of activity through the disruptions of the sixteenth century; provided a focus for the community; and helped to resolve locally problems of pastoral care and theological controversy.

The experience of Holy Cross was not unique; but it is probably the best served by the survival of contemporary documentation. The *Triumphalia Chronologica* provides a central document in reconstructing the patterns of religious life in seventeenth century Tipperary.

FOOTNOTES

1. P.F. Moran: *History of the catholic archbishops of Dublin* (Dublin 1864), 290-1; the refoundation of the houses can be traced in Aubrey Gwynn, R.N. Hadcock: *Medieval religious houses: Ireland* (London, 1970).
2. Brendan Jennings (ed.): ‘Brussels Ms 3947: Donatus Moneyus de Provincia Hiberniae S. Francisci’ in *Analecta Hibernica* no.6 (1934) 12-138; Ambrose Coleman (ed.): *The Irish Dominicans of the Seventeenth Century*, by Father John O’Heyne (Dundalk, 1902).
3. The complete text with translation and introduction is in Denis Murphy S.J. (ed.): *Triumphalia Chronologica Monasterii Sanctae Crucis in Hibernia* (Dublin, 1891).
4. Bernadette Cunningham: ‘Seventeenth century interpretations of the past: the case of Geoffrey Keating’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxv no 98 (1986) 116-8.
5. *Triumphalia*. 293-7.
6. Geraldine Carville: *The heritage of Holy Cross* (Belfast, 1973) provides a narrative history of the abbey. On the architectural features see Roger Stalley: *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland* (London, 1987). On the dissolution see Brendan Bradshaw: *The dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland under Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1974), 20-22, 25, 103, 106. For the land transactions, National Library of Ireland, D2826, D2860, D2860a, D3009; John O’Donovan (ed.): *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1854), V1 Sub anno 1600.
7. *Triumphalia*, 77-9. The event was also recorded by the Jesuit, Christopher Holywood; E. Hogan: *Distinguished Irishmen of the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1894), p.41.
8. *Triumphalia*, 83-87, 285-87.
9. C.O’Conbhuidhe: ‘Studies in Irish Cistercian history: 11, The Irish Cistercians under the Stuarts’ in *Citeaux*, xvi (1965), 177-87.
10. *Triumphalia*, 99-101.
11. *Triumphalia*, 21, 83, 103.
12. *Triumphalia*, 159-61.



13. The title page is reproduced in Thomas Morris: *Holy Cross Abbey* (Dublin, 1986).
14. 'History of Holy Cross Abbey and its relics' in *Catholic Bulletin*, xxix (1939), 673: *Triumphalia*, 105-7, 184, 186.
15. *Triumphalia*, 31, 33.
16. *Triumphalia*, 59. The text is Matthew xvii, 19.
17. *Triumphalia*, 117-21.
18. *Triumphalia*, 15.
19. *Triumphalia*, 71, 73, 77.
20. *Triumphalia*, 71.
21. *Triumphalia*, 213.
22. *Triumphalia*, 137-9.
23. P.J. Corish: *The Catholic community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Dublin, 1981) 15, 27-27.
24. *Triumphalia*, 61, 63.
25. Aidan Clarke: 'Colonial identity in early seventeenth century Ireland' in T.W. Moody (ed.): *Nationality and the pursuit of national independence* (Belfast, 1978), 66-70.
26. P.F. Moran (ed.): *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, i (Dublin, 1847), 177. For offerings made at the relic, *Triumphalia*, 135, 141, 147, 157.
27. *Triumphalia*, 87-97; Brendan Jennings (ed.): *Wadding papers* (Dublin, 1953), 441.
28. *Triumphalia*, 143, 149.
29. *Triumphalia*, 15.
30. *Triumphalia*, 143.
31. *Triumphalia*, 147, 131, 133.
32. *Triumphalia*, 255: *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, sub anno 1611*; Colm Lennon, *The lords of Dublin in the age of the reformation* (Dublin, 1989), 149, 157. O'Devany's body was also associated with miraculous cures; *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, i, 123.
33. *Triumphalia*, 121, 125, 127, 129.
34. A.T. Lucas: 'The social role of relics and reliquaries in ancient Ireland' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, cxvi (1986), 5-37.
35. *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1599-1600*, 21-22, 353, 436, 456, 465, 468.
36. *Triumphalia*, 39, 57, 167-77.
37. *Triumphalia*, 177; on foreign statues generally, see Catriona MacLeod; 'Mediaeval statues from the seventeenth century' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, lxxvii (1947), 121-28. Hogan: *Distinguished Irishmen*, 493.
38. *Triumphalia*, 127-9, 161, 125, 141, 147, Carville: *Heritage of Holy Cross*, 121. Pilgrims were also seen as coming under the protection of the relic and attacks on them were seen as disrespect. William Hennessy: *The Annals of Loch Cé ii* (London, 1871), p.455. The link between 'moral defects' and miracles was common; Hogan: *Distinguished Irishmen*, 236, 469-70, 481, 492, 493.
39. John Colgan: *Acta Sanctorum* (Louvain, 1645), preface, sig B 1.
40. Carville; *Heritage of Holy Cross*, 115, 117; Fr. Colmcille, *The Story of Mellifont* (Dublin 1958), 179-83.
41. *Triumphalia*, 141.

