

Centenary

The Passionists in Broadway

REV. SYLVESTER PALMER, C.P.

THE Feast of Our Lady's Nativity, in this Holy Year of Jubilee, marks the centenary of the coming of the Passionists to Broadway, Worcestershire. Broadway is a name as dear as it is familiar to many Passionists in these countries, and their many friends. For, a little retired from the long street of that quaint and beautiful village that closes the eastern end of the Vale of Evesham and nestles at the foot of the sloping and wooded Cotswolds, stands the venerable church and monastery—venerable, and fragrant with holiness—and enshrined in the grateful memories of generations of Passionists. Here they made their novitiate and consecrated their lives to God's service before the altar of the village church.

The spirit of the place made the world they had left seem very far away; and here, where nature has spread with most careful hand her beauties of hill and valley, of home-stead and orchard, they studied and strove to put on the spirit of their Founder—St. Paul of the Cross—so that in due season they might yield in labour and sacrifice fruit worthy of their high vocation.

Broadway Mission.

THE mission was founded in 1827 by the V. Rev. Father John Augustine Birdsall O.S.B., President General of the English Benedictines. In 1829—the year of Catholic Emancipation—the present modest church was opened with due solemnity, and for the next twenty-one years, the spiritual needs of the small Catholic body in Broadway were faithfully and zealously provided for by the Benedictine Fathers. On the departure of the Benedictines, the mission was taken over by the Passionists.

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BEGINNINGS AT BROADWAY

IN 1850 the entire Catholic population of Broadway numbered about forty, but of these not more than fourteen could be said to be practical in their religion and its duties.

Soon, however, a better condition was effected: the indifferent and the lapsed became fervent, and quite a number of converts were received into the Church. The records for 1857 show these figures: Catholics, 200; Easter Communicants, 124.

Two adjacent missions, St. Catherine's, Chipping Camden, and Our Lady of Good Counsel, Evesham, were founded from Broadway, but are now in charge of the secular clergy.

—REV. FR. HERBERT, C.P.
in *Preachers of the Passion.*

Coming of the Passionists.

WHEN it became known in the year 1850 that the Passionists were about to leave Woodchester, Gloucestershire, and were seeking a suitable home for their Novitiate, the Very Rev. Fr. Jenkins who had succeeded Father Birdsall as Superior of the English Benedictines, offered the Broadway church and house as a new foundation to the Passionists. This took place about August 20th, 1850. On September 7th, the Rev. Fr. Vincent Grotti took formal possession, and on the following day—the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity—celebrated the first Mass ever celebrated by a Passionist in the little church and preached to the small congregation assembled.

Under the energetic guidance of the first Rector of St. Saviour's Retreat—Fr. Vincent Grotti, and the truly apostolic work of the Vice-Rector—Fr. Bernard O'Loughlin—the Passionists soon made their influence felt in



THE SANCTUARY, ST. SAVIOUR'S CHURCH, BROADWAY, WORCS.

the parish of Broadway and the surrounding districts. The Catholic community quickly increased from an original forty to almost two hundred, while the number of converts made in those early days—as many as sixteen names being inscribed in one day in the Register of 1851—gives striking evidence of the untiring efforts of those early Passionists to win back to the Faith the inhabitants of this ancient “Maryland,” for such was the name given to this hallowed district in the Domesday Book.

The Novitiate.

THE decision of the Passionist Superiors to accept Broadway as a home for their novices was, indeed, a wise and happy one, for even their Founder's love of solitude could not have discovered in this England of his dreams, for whose conversion he prayed half a century, a more fitting site for those destined to put on the armour of his spirit. Here indeed was a “Retreat” after the heart of St. Paul of the Cross. In the heart of this solitude were founded the hopes of the infant Province of the Order introduced into England by the Ven. Father Dominic

Barberi. Although called to his reward a year before his brethren entered into possession of their Broadway Retreat, Father Dominic's interest in its welfare was signalled by his two-fold apparition to the then Rector in the Spring of 1851.

With one short interval, Broadway continued to be the Novitiate of the Anglo-Hibernian Province till 1908. In that year it was transferred to St. Paul's Retreat, Moun. Argus, Dublin, and subsequently to the new foundation at “The Graan,” Enniskillen, which was formally opened in 1909. When the Anglo-Hibernian Province of St. Joseph was divided into two distinct Provinces in 1927—those of St. Joseph and St. Patrick—Broadway was again chosen as the Novitiate House of the Province of St. Joseph.

Broadway Catholic School.

THE building of this school was the very first work undertaken by the Passionists on their arrival. It was a very difficult task as the financial pressure of those early days was unceasing, but the present school with its inscription: “To the Virgin Mother of



THE OLD-WORLD VILLAGE OF BROADWAY

God," and dated 1851, bears eloquent witness to the zeal and self-sacrifice of those Pioneers, who gave Catholic education to the children of Broadway for the past one hundred years.

Among those present at the opening of the school, two persons of special eminence stand out. Of one, a Worcestershire newspaper, reporting the ceremony, said, with the bitterness characteristic of that time—"The Honourable Charles Reginald Pakenham, who has lately become a lay-brother among the Passionists, degraded himself by carrying the Cross" (at the head of the procession). Pakenham, then a recent convert, had indeed put off his guardsman's uniform for the rough habit of the Passionist, and was afterwards to become well known as Father Paul Mary. He was the first Rector of St. Paul's Retreat, Mount Argus, Dublin, and died there six years later in the odour of sanctity.

Another recent convert, who was at that time making his retreat for ordination in our Broadway monastery, stood quietly by, taking part in the ceremony and joining in the prayers, but refusing to say "a few words" on the ground that he was not a priest. He was afterwards to become known to the world as Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster.

IT is, perhaps, in the human order of things in which the present counts as all important to gloss over past efforts or to take too readily for granted the fruits of past labours and self-sacrifice. True, those Passionist pioneers of a century ago or even less, have entered into their reward, but ours it is to treasure with gratitude the memory of their long years of patient toil.

Twenty years have passed since an appeal was made for the renovation and re-decoration of the church. In this centenary year of the coming of the Passionists to Broadway, the Rector and Community are anxious to mark the historic event in a fitting manner. Accordingly, it has been decided to instal a new Lady Altar and have the little church consecrated.

It is, therefore, with much confidence, that the present Rector—Very Rev. Fr. Chrysostom Kelly—appeals through the medium of THE CROSS to a wider public than is possible in this small parish, for the funds necessary to erect the new Lady Altar and consecrate the little church, raised with so much effort in darker days, to house Him Who had been so long without a Home in Broadway.

Subscriptions in answer to this modest appeal may be sent to: Very Rev. Fr. Rector, C.P., St. Saviour's Retreat, Broadway, Worcs. England.