



Reflections on the Visit of the Congress Bell

— KITTY HUGHES

That rings a bell is a familiar phrase. When the Congress Bell visited the parish in late July like all bells it had a message, an invitation 'to come to the Eucharistic Congress, June 2012 in Dublin'. The organisers have chosen a bell as the key symbol for this the 50th Congress and the particular bell touring Ireland with this message of invitation is formerly from the Dominican Convent in Portstewart, Co Derry.

It is thought that bells were first introduced into the church in the 5th century. Part of the prayer to bless a bell goes: Lord, may your people hasten to your church when they hear the call of this bell'. We have Mass bells, funeral bells and joyful wedding bells. Every church has its Angelus bell and eager altar servers vie with each other to ring the smaller sanctuary bell used during Mass. In our own St Mel's Cathedral the chimes mark the hours and 'sing' a hymn at noon and six as they call us to pause and pray the Angelus.

Life is marked in many ways by bells. Early morning sees children hurry to school before the bell rings and in the afternoon listening eagerly for the same bell to signal the end of class for another day. It is no coincidence that the same word 'clog' is used in Irish for bell as for clock, for the bell marked time for many centuries. The 'clog teach' a round tower, was a familiar sight adjacent to ancient monasteries like the one still standing at Clonmacnois.

Campanology is the art of bell ringing and a campanile is a bell tower. In olden times teams of bell ringers pulled the heavy ropes of the bells and chimes to mark special occasions. On New Year's Eve crowds still gather to hear the chimes of Christchurch in Dublin traditionally ring out the old and ring in the new. One of the most famous campaniles is the Leaning Tower beside the cathedral in Pisa in Italy. The World Peace Bell in Newport, Kentucky is one of the largest bells in the world, though the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia sounded on 4th July 1776 to herald American Independence is probably more famous. Hear Ye! Hear Ye! was the cry of the medieval town Herald as he rang his bell and announced the news of the day or the orders of the Mayor long before the era of mass media. In those days too the curfew bell was the signal for all to 'cover the fire' and go to bed.

Children sing 'oranges and lemons say the bells of St Clements' an English rhyme referring to several churches in London and the solemn tones of Big Ben mark the hours over Westminster Parliament and are familiar to fans of the 'news at ten' on TV. The 'Lutine Bell' resides at Lloyds of London and news of a major disaster is said 'to ring a bell at Lloyds'. The last time it



Staff members at St. Joseph's Care Centre carry the bell to the Famine Memorial Garden.

rang was after the 9/11 attack in New York.

The telephone – invented by Alexander Graham Bell – a constant bell in today's world. Sporting events too use bells; boxers in the ring feeling the pressure often say they were 'saved by the bell' a saying said to have its origins during a medieval epidemic when a rope from a bell was placed in the grave lest the person was not dead but in a coma and could pull the rope and so be unburied and thus 'saved by the bell! Bells were alarms, the fire-brigade had a loud bell to demand a passage way to the scene of a fire. Sailors on watch told the time by the bells. In convents and abbeys each nun had a bell number and could be summoned by ringing their allocated number of peals.

It is said that prize winners in ancient Rome were presented with a bell and that may be the origin of

today's custom of winners receiving a cup – an upturned bell – as a trophy. Bells feature in art and literature. J F Millet's picture 'The Angelus' hangs in many homes. We sing of the Bells of Shandon made famous by Father Prout. Ernest Hemmingway wrote 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' and Bing Crosby starred in the film 'The Bells of St Mary's'. In Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' 'the curfew tolls the knell of passing day' and the saintly scholar John Donne wrote in 1624 as part of a meditation 'No man is an island of himself alone .. Therefore ask not for whom the bell tolls – it tolls for thee'.

This year the Congress bell tolls for us. In 1932 our Grandparents flocked to Dublin in their thousands for the great public ceremonies – let us too in 2012 answer the ring of the Congress Bell. It's for you!

Just for a laugh!

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible.
– George Burns

After a very long and boring sermon the parishioners filed out of the church saying nothing to the preacher. Towards the end of the line was a thoughtful person who always commented on the sermons. "Pastor, today your sermon reminded me of the peace and love of God!" The pastor was thrilled. "No-one has ever said anything like that about my preaching before. Tell me why." "Well - it reminded me of the Peace of God because it passed all understanding and the Love of God because it endured forever!"

Two priests and a rabbi were discussing what portion of the weekly collection they kept for themselves. The first priest explained that he drew a circle on the ground, stepped a few paces back and pitched the money towards the circle. What landed in the circle he kept and what landed outside the circle god kept.

The second priest claimed that his method was almost the same, except that what landed outside the circle went to the priest and the money that landed inside the circle God kept.

The rabbi said, "I've got you both beat. I throw the money into the air and what god wants, God takes."

A pastor was leaving his area and was saying farewell to his congregation at the Church doors for the last time. He shook the hand of an elderly lady as she walked out. She said "Your successor won't be as good as you." "Nonsense", said the pastor, in a flattered tone. "No, really", said the old lady, "I've been here under five different ministers, and each new one has been worse than the last."

One beautiful Sunday morning, Samuel, a priest, announced to his congregation: "My good people, I have here in my hands, three sermons ... a \$100 sermon that lasts five minutes, a \$50 sermon that lasts fifteen minutes, and a \$10 sermon that lasts a full hour. "Now, we'll take the collection and see which one I'll deliver.

International Community in Longford Parish



Names: Kenneth & Jane Isah & family
From: Ishan, Nigeria
Arrived: Oct '02
First impressions: Good place to raise children
Miss most: Family



Name: Saavedra family
From: Mindando, Philippines
Arrived: 5 years, 8 months ago
First Impressions: Friendly people here
Miss Most: Family



Names: Biji Joseph and Leona Sebastian
From: Kerala, India
Arrived: 5 years ago
First Impressions: Nice and peaceful place
Miss Most: Family



Name: Pawelec family
From: Lublin, Poland
Arrived: Nearly 7 years ago
First impressions: Very small but peaceful and quiet
Miss Most: Family

