

**March 8**

**Venerable Fiacre Tobin and John B. Dowdall**

Good day, good people! May the Lord give you peace!

One of the primary functions of religion is to be like glue. It holds varying aspects of our society together. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century we see this understanding at play in Ireland. Cruel efforts were enacted by England to break apart the Irish society and church. The protestant reformer, Cromwell, lobbied for the re-conquest of Ireland by outlawing the Catholic faith. Brutal laws were passed by the English Parliament and huge tracts of land were confiscated. So harsh were these penal laws that the name Cromwell continues to live in the memory of the Irish people. Such was the context for the Irish Capuchin friars Fiacre Tobin and John B. Dowdall.

Central to the enactment of the penal laws was the forbidden celebration of the sacraments. Sacraments, however, are fundamental to the Catholic faith. They are celebrated at peak moments in one's faith journey. For example, Baptism celebrates our birth as children of God. Eucharist nourishes and strengthens us for the challenges of life. Marriage makes a couple living witnesses to Christ's abiding union with his church. The Sacrament of the Sick is an assurance that God draws near even in moments when illness leaves us feeling weakened and alone.

The servants of God we welcome into our company today, gave their lives to celebrate the sacraments and keep the Catholic faith alive. They chose witnessing over compromise. In many ways they spoke truth to power and were killed for it. They are examples of daring and virtue.

Let us pray.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time. Enjoying one moment at a time. Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace, taking as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that you will make all things right if I surrender to your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with you forever in the next. Amen.      **-Serenity Prayer (Reinhold Neibuhr)**

Venerable Fiacre Tobin and John B. Dowdall are friends of God, the company we welcome today.

