

Conflict over the Rectory of Cinel Luachain during the Fifteenth Century

Joseph E. Earley, Sr.¹ and Leonard E. Boyle, O.P.²

Published in
Breifne, the Journal of the Cumman Seanchais Bhreifne,
volume IX, number 35, 1999, pages 103 to 113.

Much of the vitality of Christianity in ancient and medieval Ireland was connected with successful harmonization of elements of Latin Christianity with older ways of thought and practice that had their origins in ancient Gaelic culture. A twelfth-century reform led by Máel Máedóc Ua Morgair (Saint Malachy), Archbishop of Armagh, introduced the Cistercian Order to Ireland³—weakening the preexisting Gaelic monastic settlements and threatening long-standing accommodations between Roman and Gaelic usages. This reform movement also resulted in

¹ Department of Chemistry, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, 20057-2315. USA
Earleyj@georgetown.edu.

² Late of *Collegio San Clemente*, Via Labicana 95, Rome, Italy. Father Boyle (formerly Prefect of the Vatican Libraries) died in Rome on October 25, 1999, after this paper had been accepted for publication.

³ Kenneth Nichols, in *A New History of Ireland*, Art Cosgrove, Ed.. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 436.

reorganization of the bishoprics of Ireland along territorial lines, rather than on the basis of kin-based principalities. As part of this reorganization, ownership of much church land was formally transferred from monastic groups to local bishops. Previous occupants retained use of these lands, on condition of annual payments to the bishop, and of providing 'hospitality' to that prelate on his visitations.⁴ The head of the family that held possession and use of a particular tract of church land held the title 'erenagh'—originally the designation of the head of a monastic settlement. In many cases an erenagh also was also called 'coarb'—successor of the venerable founder of a monastic community.⁵

One of the aims of Malachy's reforms was to foster clerical celibacy. That aim was not fully achieved,⁶ especially in areas of medieval Ireland where English influence was weak. One such area was the principality of Breifne, coextensive with the diocese of Tir Ui Bruine Breifne or Tir Brun, Latinized as *Tirbunensis*, that became officially centered at Kilmore, in the present County Cavan, in 1455.⁷ There is good evidence that the effective seat of the diocese was in the Kilmore area long

⁴ Nichols, *op. cit.*, p. 434.

⁵ Canice Mooney, O.F.M., *The Church in Gaelic Ireland: thirteenth to fifteenth centuries*. Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1969, pp. 10-18.

⁶ Mooney, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-60.

⁷ Ciaran Parker, "The Diocese of Tir Brun (Kilmore) in the Middle Ages", *Breifne*, 8, 1997, 808-824.

before the fifteenth century.⁸

This paper concerns certain controversies, outlined in the records of the Vatican in Rome, regarding Cinel Luachain—the ancient name of a region of Breifne that included the present parishes of Oughtheragh, Drumreilly Upper, and Drumreilly Lower, in the Diocese of Kilmore. This ancient region covered parts of the present counties of Leitrim and Cavan, in the vicinity of present-day Ballinamore. Several fifteenth-century popes were called on to adjudicate disputes among clerical families concerning this remote region. The bare bones of these events are recorded in the list of the clergy that served the Diocese of Kilmore,⁹ but much of the pungency that still exists in the Vatican records is necessarily lost in that compilation

In his history of the town and parish of Ballinamore, County Leitrim,¹⁰ the late Fr. Dan Gallogly pointed out that the earliest record of the parish of Oughtheragh (modern Ballinamore), in the Diocese of Kilmore, occurs in a papal bull of 1414. That document appointed one John Omaylmochori¹¹ (anglicized as Early or Earley) as perpetual vicar of that parish. The family to

⁸ Phillip O'Connell, *The Diocese of Kilmore: Its History and Antiquities*. Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1937. Chapter 2.

⁹ Francis J. MacKiernan, *Diocese of Kilmore, Bishops and Priests, 1136-1988*. Cavan, Breifne Historical Society, 1990.

¹⁰ Fr. Dan Gallogly, *Sliabh An Iarainn Slopes*. Privately published, Ballinamore, 1991.

¹¹ This and other Gaelic names have been rendered in a variety of English spellings. Generally, the spelling used in a particular document will be used in discussing that document. Modern spellings will be provided (in parenthesis) when it seems useful to do so to prevent misunderstanding.

which this new vicar belonged had been active in ecclesiastical affairs in the principality of Breifne long before 1414. *The Annals of the Four Masters* records that "Muirchertach Ua Maelmoicheirge, noble bishop of the Ui Briuin Breifne, a noble senior," died in 1149.¹² *The Annals of Loch Cé*¹³ reports that in the year 1277, "Braen O'Maelmocheirghe, abbot of Cenannus (Kells) in Christo quievit (died)." (The monastery at Kells was close to the borders of Breifne.)

Surprisingly, in addition to this notice of 1414, fully thirteen other fifteenth-century papal documents that relate to the same family have been published in English translation.¹⁴ A good place to begin this rather convoluted story seems to be with a report,¹⁵ issued by the papal court at Bologna in August 1414. This document states that "Master Paul de Juvenacio, canon of Petras, papal notary, acting as vice chancellor of the Roman Church" had examined "John Omaylmochori, clerk, not married and not in holy orders, of the diocese of Kilmore." On the strength of the results of that examination John had been (or was to be) appointed as a papal notary. It is quite likely that this

¹² John O'Donovan, ed., *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the Earliest Period to the Year 1616* (Third Edition). Dublin, De Búrca, 1990, vol. 2, pp. 1087-1089.

¹³ *The Annals of Loch Cé*. William H. Hennessey, Ed. London: Longman, 1871, vol. 1, p. 481.

¹⁴ J. A. Twemlow, ed., *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*. London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1904-1955.

¹⁵ Twemlow, ed. *op. cit.* vol. VI (1904), p. 351. (R.L 161, fol. 225v),

examination took place in Bologna early in 1414. In view of practices for education of clergy that prevailed in that period,¹⁶ it seems likely that the young Irishman studied at the University of Bologna.

In medieval courts, as in ancient Rome, officials charged with the preparation of documents were called 'notaries.' Papal notaries were generally clergymen (at least in minor orders) and frequently were entrusted with diplomatic missions.¹⁷ '*Ars notaria*'—the art of the notary—was a prominent subject of instruction in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Bologna until 1457 when that subject was moved to the Faculty of Law.¹⁸

Between July and September of 1414, the papal court of John XXIII (located at Bologna) issued no fewer than five documents related to the business of the Omaylmochori family of remote Breifne. The new notary was using his skill and connections.

This was the time of the 'Great Schism' (1378-1418) when there were three claimants to the papal throne. John XXIII (Baldassare Cossa) had been elected in 1410 to succeed Alexander V, who was chosen as pope by the Council of Pisa in 1409, but lived only a short time thereafter. Since 1378, there had been two papal courts, one at Rome (Urban V, 1378-1389; Gregory XII, 1389-1423)

¹⁶ Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education and Canon Law, 1200-1400*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1981.

¹⁷ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, NY: R. Appleton, 1907-1914. Entry at 'notaries.'
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11122a.htm>.

¹⁸ *History of the University of Bologna, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*.
<http://www.unibo.it/avl/english/story/story10.htm>.

and another at Avignon in France (Clement VII, 1378-1394; Benedict XIII, 1394-1423). The Council of Pisa had intended to end the controversy by the selection of Alexander V, but instead added yet another claimant and a third papal court, this one at Bologna. The English church sided with the claimant headquartered in Rome, the Scotch were allied with Avignon. Until early in the present century, many scholars¹⁹ regarded the Council of Pisa as valid, and considered Alexander V and that John XXIII as having been legitimate occupants of the Holy See. More recently, that judgement has been reversed.²⁰ The Council of Pisa is now regarded as invalid.²¹ Neither Alexander nor John is now considered to have been a valid pope. In the fifteenth century, it was far from clear which of the three papal courts was legitimate and which of the three ecclesiastics was really pope. In 1414, John XXIII was quite busy, preparing for the Council of Constance (convened November 5, 1414) and eluding his enemies, the German King Sigismund and Ladislas, King of Naples. But the ordinary business of the papal court, including ruling on Irish disputes, went on.

One of these bits of business was an appeal²² by "Gelasius Omolmochoygy, rector of the parish church of Drumyrbeallaich or Kenealluochan in the diocese of Kilmore" concerning a papal decree of Alexander V (1409-1410). Alexander was said to have been "deceived by the false statements of

¹⁹ Wetzer and Welte, *Kirchenlexicon*, quoted in *The New International Encyclopedia*, vol. XV, pp. 312-313. NY: Dodd, Mead, 1912.

²⁰ Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., "The Other John XXIII," *Irish Rosary*, 63 (1), 1959, pp 15-18 (Dublin: St. Saviour's Priory).

²¹ Ludwig Pastor, *History of the Popes*, St. Louis, Herder, 1923. Vol. 1, pp 194-196.

Luke Orodochan, clerk, of the Diocese of Ardagh" and to have ordered the Dean of Elphin, and the Prior of Inchmacnearnin, to judge between Gelasius and Luke, both of whom claimed to be rector of Kenealluochan. On this occasion in 1414, Gelasius was appealing the decision of that Dean and Prior in favor of Luke. (That decision also imposed 'perpetual silence' on Gelasius.) In response to that appeal, John XXIII mandated that the Bishop of Achonry should investigate the matter and "decide what is canonical." (Kenealluochan designates Cinel Luachain; Drumyrbeallaich refers to Drumreilly. Gelasius is a Latinization of the Gaelic name Giolla Iosa.) The Orodochan²³ family provided the hereditary lay 'abbots' (erenaghs) of the ancient monastic settlement at Fenagh, only a few miles west of the two medieval parishes of Uactarachad (Oughtheragh) and Drumyrbeallaich (Drumreilly) that collectively constituted Cinel Luachain. The Orodachans were also coarbs of Saint Caillin, venerable founder (probably in the early seventh century) of the Fenagh monastic community.

In two closely-spaced actions (20 July²⁴ and 4 August²⁵, 1414), papal letters ordered the Archdeacon of Kilmore (*Tirbunensis*) and the Prior of Druymlethan (Drumlane) to confer the perpetual vicarages of Uactarachad (Oughtheragh) and Druymoirbealaich (Drumreilly) on John Omaylmochoir (presumably, the newly appointed papal notary). John was specifically "dispensed to

²² Twemlow, ed., *op. cit.*, vol. VI, (1904), p 509.: R.L. 185, 247v

²³ Anglicized as Roddy, O'Rody, Redehan, Redican or Rodahan.

²⁴ Michael Costello *De Annatis Hibernia*, p. 245: R.L. 180, 72r-73r

²⁵ Twemlow, ed. *op. cit.*, vol. VI, (1904), p. 481. R.L. 180, 171v-172v.

hold together for life the said vicarages... notwithstanding that his father is rector of Druymoirbealaich and notwithstanding his illegitimacy." The later action also explicitly authorized John to be promoted in orders, even though he was "the son of an unmarried man and an unmarried woman." It appears that John was the son of Gelasius, who at the same time was defending the rectorship of Drumreilly against Luke Orodochan. These documents note that the Uactarachad (Oughtheragh) vicarage was vacant because of the death of Simon Omaylmochoir, and Druymoirbealaich (Drumreilly) untenanted because of the demise of Fergallus Omaylmochoir. The deceased Fergallus was probably a relative of Gelasius who was contesting the rectory with Orodochan. The Omaylmochoirs seem to have been hereditary erenaghs of Cinel Luachain. The Gaelic form of the name Drumreilly is *Druim air bheallaig* –construed by O'Connell²⁶ as 'ridge of the eastern road.' (An alternative interpretation is 'ridge of the eastern passage' — referring to a feature of navigation on water rather than to a track across land.) Medieval martyologies designate January 15 as the feast of the 'seven bishops of Druimairbhealaigh.' Saint Everan is recorded²⁷ as the patron of the parish; presumably he was the founder of an ancient monastic settlement there.²⁸ Clearly, the Omaylmochoirs would have claimed to be the coarbs of St. Everan.

The next episode in our fifteenth-century story begins eight years after both vicarages were assigned to John (presumably the notary). After the death in 1418 of Tiernan Mór O'Rourke, King

²⁶ *op. cit.*, p.114.

²⁷ Phillip O'Connell, *Schools and Scholars of Breifne*, Dublin, Browne and Nolan, 1942, pp. 114-115.

²⁸ A subsequent article is planned on this topic.

of Breifne, there were two 'half-kings' (Tagh and Art O'Rourke) with influence restricted to the western part of Breifne²⁹—the O'Raghillaighs under Eoghan Na Fearsoige were ascendant in the eastern part of the region.³⁰ In May 1422, Pope Martin V gave³¹ a mandate to the Dean and Archdeacon of Ardagh concerning "the rectory of the parish churches of Drumyrbealaych (Drumreilly) and Wacturacht (Oughtheragh) called the rectory of Cinel Luachain, which churches are wont to be governed by one rector only." The mandate was to assign those rectories to Maurice Ofloynd.³² The previous controversy is recalled by the observation that the said rectories are "void by the death of Luke Orodochan, or by the resignation of Gelasius Ymolmochory, priest of the same diocese."

In 1446, from St Peter's in Rome, came yet another mandate concerning these remote parishes. The Abbot of St Mary's, Granard, and the Dean of Ardagh were instructed³³ to assign the rectory of "Drummeruely (Drumreilly), alias Kynnalochan (Cinel Luachain)", to one "Maurice Omolmocary, clerk of Kilmore (*Tribunensis*), lately dispensed by the authority of the ordinary as the son of

²⁹ Domhnall Mac an Ghallóglaiigh, "Bréifne and its Chieftains, 1300-1560". *Breifne*, 8 (1), 1989-90, pp. 62-79.

³⁰ Kieran Parker, "The O'Reillys of East Breifne, C.1250- C. 1450," *Breifne*, 8(2), 1991, p. 155-182: idem., "Cavan: A Medieval Border Area", in Raymond Gillespie, ed., *Cavan, Essays on the History of an Irish County*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1995.

³¹ Twemlow, ed., *op. cit.* vol. VII, p. 228. R.L. 123, 227v.

³² Anglicized as Flynn or O'Flynn.

unmarried parents to be promoted in minor orders." The rectory was said to be "so long void by the resignation of Gelasius Yeridigan.... that its collation lapsed to the Holy See, or vacant by the death or resignation of Gelasius Ymalmocary." Even though by 1446 the Great Schism had ended and the number of claimants for the See of Rome had been reduced to one, conflict continued over Cinel Luachain. Orodachans, Omalmochoirs and Ofloinds had been in contention there from the 1409-10 action of Alexander V (appealed by Gelasius Omalmochoire in 1414) until 1446 and for another half-century after that.

In October 1453, Pope Nicholas VII instructed³⁴ the Abbot of St. Mary's, Granard, in the diocese of Ardagh, to look into charges brought by one John O'Mulmochory against "Bernard Ofloind, perpetual vicar of Drumorbealaid" (presumably Drumreilly) "and Fergal, also Ofloind, perpetual vicar of Uactarachub" (presumably Oughtheragh). John's complaint was that the Ofloinds, "being notorious fornicators, have dilapidated and alienated and uselessly consumed the possessions of the said vicarages, and that Bernard has committed simony and Fergal perjury, and that they are greatly defamed about these things in the said parishes, to the shame of the priestly order." The matter was referred to the Abbot of Granard because John claimed that "for fear of the power of Bernard and Fergal [he] has no hope of obtaining justice in the city and diocese of Kilmore." Apparently Andrias Mac Braidagh (Bishop of Kilmore, 1444-1455) favored the Ofloinds against the Omulmochorys. The Abbot was instructed, if he should find John's charges valid, to "deprive and remove" Bernard and Fergal and to assign both vicarages, "which are so near that they can be served by one man," to

³³ Twemlow, ed., *op. cit.* vol. IX, p 506. R.L. 419, 185d

³⁴ Twemlow, ed., *op. cit.* vol. X, p 616-617,. R.L. 483, 185d.

John. The same document notes that John "was lately dispensed by the ordinary, on account of illegitimacy as the son of a priest and an unmarried noblewoman, to be promoted to all, even holy orders."

A question arises as to the relationship between the John Omolmochori appointed papal notary in 1414 and John Omulmochory, the complainant in this 1453 dispute. In view of items appearing later in the record, it seems likely that there were two persons of the same name. Both were claimants to the vicarages of Oughtheragh and Drumreilly (collectively designated Cinel Luachain), and both were sons of priests—at least one of them a son of a previous rector in Cinel Luachain. It seems likely that the two clerics named John were connected through Maurice, mentioned as claimant of the vicarages in 1446. Maurice (also born illegitimately) appears to have been the son of that Gelasius who complained against Luke Orodachan in 1414, and the brother of John, the papal notary. Since John the notary is not mentioned in these documents after 1414, he may not have returned from Italy to take up the vicarages that he was awarded then. On this basis, John, the complainant of 1453, would have been the son of Maurice, grandson of Gelasius (complainant of 1414) and nephew of John, papal notary.

One might wonder why these papal documents are addressed to officials of surrounding dioceses (Elphin, Achonry, and Ardagh) rather than to the ordinary of the Diocese of Kilmore, in which Cinel Luachain is located. The several Omalmochoire claimants may have done considerable venue-shopping to pick abbots and archdeacons likely to be favorable to their case and been able to get their choices written into Roman pronouncements (perhaps through John the notary and his contacts).

The remark about the power of the Ofloinds in the "city and diocese of Kilmore" might suggest that

these documents concern a contest between an ancient Gaelic hereditary coarbship, passed on from father to son for many generations, and the quite different system envisioned by canon law. Mandatory clerical celibacy, whenever and wherever enforced, had the effect,³⁵ if not the intention, of weakening the family-dominated structure of medieval society. One might suppose that the diocesan authorities in Kilmore were intent on enforcing celibacy of the clergy. But this is called somewhat into question by the report³⁶ that Siobhán, daughter of Andrew MacBrady (Andrias Mac Braidagh), Bishop of Kilmore, was married to Thomas, a cleric, one of the many sons of Cathal Óg MacManus Maguire, Dean of the rural deanery of Lough Erne. Since that well-known Dean died in 1498, the marriage of his son to the Bishop of Kilmore's daughter must have occurred about the same time as the Ofloind-Omalmochoire controversy in Cinel Luachain.

In November of 1459, Pius II, issued,³⁷ from Mantua, a document describing John Omulmothory as "canon of Kilmore," and relating that "Gelasius Ofloind has resigned as perpetual vicar of Baccarachú (presumably Oughtheragh), before witnesses for want of a notary." The same document details charges (again brought by John Omulmothory) that "Bernard Ofloind, perpetual vicar of Drumermolaygh" (presumably Drumreilly) has "openly kept a kinswoman as his concubine and committed simony and perjury." This papal letter is addressed to certain canons of Kilmore, and

³⁵ Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

³⁶ Canice Mooney, O.F.M., *The Church in Gaelic Ireland: thirteenth to fifteenth centuries*. Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1969. Page 58.

³⁷ Twemlow, ed. *op. cit.* vol. XII, p. 83. R.L. 557, f 131.

"the official of the same"³⁸ and notes that the present pope "has lately made provision of a canonry with reservation of a prebend of Kilmore, and reservation of a benefice of Ardagh" for John Omolmothy. In the event that those officials find evidence to support John's charges against the Ofloinds, then the two vicarages are to be converted into prebends of Kilmore for John's lifetime. A striking change has taken place in the few years between 1453 and 1459—the years in which the Tir Brun diocese became permanently centered at Kilmore. In 1459 one of the Omalmochores (rather than the Ofloinds) is influential in 'the city and diocese of Kilmore.'

A curious document was issued³⁹ by Pope Sixtus IV at St Peter's, Rome, in June of 1474. One Gerald Orodocayn, a clerk of Ardagh, is reported to have accused a certain John Omulmochore, clerk of Kilmore, of simony in obtaining "the rectory of the land de Chinarocam in the Diocese of Kilmacduagh, then void by the death of Maurice Ymulnotore." Two canons of Kilmore and the prior of Drumleathain (Drumlane) were assigned to sort the matter out. This probably refers to some rectory other than Cinel Luachain, and perhaps even to another John Omolmochore, but since an Orodican was the 1414 claimant for Cinel Luachain, some connection to the rest of this story cannot be ruled out.

In June of 1479, Pope Sixtus IV approved the petition of John Omolmochore "rector of the poor hospital in the place of Drumerbelaidd (Drumreilly) in the Diocese of Kilmore" on the occasion of "the voidance of the rectory of the said place by the resignation of the late Maurice Omulmochore.... the said rectory which is without cure (has no congregation), and the holder of which has from time

³⁸ Tadgh Mac Duibne was Bishop. 1455-1464.

³⁹ Twemlow, ed., *op. cit.*, vol. XIII-I, p. 361, R.L. DCCXCII, 271r.

immemorial has not had himself promoted to holy orders." Further, "the late John,⁴⁰ Bishop of Kilmore, seeing that the fruits, etc. of the hospital were insufficient for the keeping of hospitality therein" had united the hospital and the rectory of the same name. Futhermore, "in virtue of said union the said Maurice, then rector of the hospital, took possession of the rectory." It seems fairly safe to identify John, the hospital rector, with the enterprising Canon John encountered previously. It is less clear whether Maurice, recently resigned rector of Drumerbelaidd and formerly rector of the hospital of the same place, is the same person whose claim to that rectory was recognized by the papal letter of 1446. Tenure of thirty-three years is long, but not impossible. If he were the same Maurice, this action would seem to confirm the ancient hereditary succession, since Maurice, as noted above, seems to have been John's father (his mother being an unnamed noblewoman). The remark that 'from time immemorial' the holders of this rectory have not been in holy orders indicates that this hereditary coarbship was regarded in the mid 1400s as being already quite ancient. It also suggests that priesthood was not deemed essential to the function of the rectors (erenaghs) of Drumerbelaidd, or of Cinel Luachain. The 'hospital' may have been the residue of the earlier monastic settlement at Drumreilly.

John Omuluchochori, as canon of Kilmore, appears as addressee of a papal document⁴¹ of 1484 and John Omulmhochore, as canon of Kilmore, is addressee of another papal letter⁴² of the same year. (At that time there were two claimants for the see of Kilmore—Tómas Mac Braidagh and Corbmac Mac Samdharain.) These references suggest that the charge of simony of 1474 was aimed

⁴⁰ Séan O'Raghaillogh, Bishop from 1465? to 1475?. Cf. Parker, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ Twemlow, ed., *op. cit.*, vol. XIII-I&II, p. 170, R.V. 644, 135r.

⁴² Twemlow, ed., *op. cit.*, vol. XIII-I&II, p. 173, R.V. 645.

at another John, or did not stick—and confirm that the papal notary appointed in 1414 was a different person from the John first mentioned in 1453.

What appears to be the end of the second John's ecclesiastic career is signaled by a letter⁴³ of Pope Alexander VI, dated 11 September 1495, forty-two years after John's complaint against the Ofloinds. This letter is addressed to certain canons of the church at Achonry and is in favor of one Gelasius Omulmochore. This Gelasius maintained that the perpetual vicarages of the parish churches at Knocdhrauhd (Oughtheragh) and Drumemeryld (Drumreilly) of the Diocese of Kilmore had long been vacant, "although John Omulmochore who bears himself as a priest of the said diocese has detained them without any title or support of law, as he still does." Apparently, Canon John, surely well advanced in years in 1495, did not relinquish his duties and privileges easily or graciously. The addressees were instructed to inquire into the charges, and if satisfied, to remove John and erect a prebend in Kilmore to be held by Gelasius for life. The same letter notes, parenthetically, that Gelasius, too, is the son of an unmarried man and an unmarried woman – but "has been marked with clerical character otherwise duly and received as a canon."

It appears that so far as the rectory of Cinel Luachain is concerned, the fifteenth century ended as it began, with a rector named Omulmochore—the offspring of unmarried parents (quite likely the son of a previous rector). A major difference is that at the end of the century Cinel Luachain was rather closely connected with the diocese, then permanently located at Kilmore. The income from the church lands in Cinel Luachain was devoted to the maintenance of a functionary of the diocesan cathedral. The religious needs of the people may (or may not) have been tended to by a curate.

⁴³ Anne Fuller, ed., *Calendar of Papal Letters*, 1986, p. 460., R.L. 977, f 165v-168v.

This story continues through the sixteenth century. *The Annals of Loch Cé* report⁴⁴ that "the comarb of Druim-Oirbhelaigh (Drumreilly), i.e. Cathal, Son of Seonín, son of John O'Maelmocheirghe a prosperous man of great⁴⁵ wealth, died in 1536.⁴⁶ Cathal appears to be the grandson of John, the canon we have encountered previously. The canon appears to have managed the church lands of Cinel Luachain quite effectively, for his own benefit at least. The same source records⁴⁷ that "John O'Maelmocheirghe, i.e. comarb of Druim-Oirghialla (Drumreilly), the most eminent man in Erin for keeping a general house of hospitality for the men of Erin and of the world, (as many of them as he could supply) died" in 1579. On the basis of our previous inquiries, we may suppose that hospitable John was grandson (or great grandson) of John the prosperous canon. It does seem doubtful that the enterprising canon of the fifteenth century would have fully approved of the lavish hospitality of his sixteenth-century namesake—a descendant of his and his successor as coarb of St. Everan.

⁴⁴ *The Annals of Loch Cé*. William H. Hennessey, Ed. London: Longman, 1871 (vol 2, p.291).

⁴⁵ 'Buan chonúigh,' literally, 'of perpetual wealth.'

⁴⁶ *The Annals of the Four Masters* (O'Donovan, ed., *op.cit.*) report that "Hugh O'Maelmoicheirghe, Coarb of Drumlane" drowned in 1512. How this is to be interpreted is not clear. Perhaps the centuries-old succession of the O'Faircellach (O'Farrelly) family as coarbs of Drumlane was interrupted in the early 1500s. It is also possible that the annalists confused Drumreilly and Drumlane, and that Hugh and Seonín were two names for the same person.

⁴⁷ *The Annals of Loch Cé*. William H. Hennessey, Ed.. London: Longman, 1871 (vol. 2, p. 425).

The Annals of Loch Cé also state⁴⁸ that George Bingham, English military governor of Sligo, in the course of a 1590 campaign against the O'Rourkes, "took pledges from the coarb of Fidnach (Fenagh) and the coarb of Druim-Oiriallaigh (Drumreilly)." This suggests that at least the memory of some sort of monastic settlement persisted at Drumreilly until the end of the sixteenth century. The succession of Omulmochore coarbs may still have been in operation for nearly a hundred years after the last Vatican entry in 1495.

No records of the clergy of the Diocese of Kilmore for the sixteenth century are now known to exist. The recent listing⁴⁹ of clergy of the Diocese of Kilmore indicates that no priest with the surname of Early is known to have worked in that Diocese from the seventeenth century (when records resume) to 1988. Earlys remained relatively numerous in the area, and served with distinction in religious orders⁵⁰ and in other dioceses.⁵¹

The Vatican records quoted here demonstrate that the Gaelic system of hereditary clerical families—erenaghs and coarbs—was remarkably persistent. Whatever its shortcomings may have been, this set of traditional arrangements provided the social basis for a steady flow of talented and well educated individuals into ecclesiastical work. It seems likely that this background contributed in no

⁴⁸ *The Annals of Loch Cé*. William H. Hennessey, Ed.. London: Longman, 1871 (vol. 2, p. 513). Quoted in Betty Mac Dermot, *O Ruairc of Breifne*. Manorhamilton, Drumlin, 1990, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁹ Francis J. MacKiernan, *Diocese of Kilmore, Bishops and Priests, 1136-1988*. Cavan, Breifne Historical Society, 1990.

⁵⁰ Nicholas Varga, "Father John Early: American Jesuit Educator," *Breifne*, 6(24), 1986, 375-389.

⁵¹ James J. MacNamee, *History of the Diocese of Ardagh*. Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1954. Pages 744, 796, 799.

small way to the vigor and tenacity that Irish Catholicism displayed during the Reformation and in succeeding years.

Acknowledgements: We thank Rev. Liam Kelly for valuable comments on a previous draft of this paper. We are also grateful for the assistance of Rev. Ignatius Fennessey, O.F.M. and Ms. Caroline Gray.