



Ancient Order of
HIBERNIANS
Irish • Catholic • American



THE KELLY NEWSLETTER

Msgr. Charles A. Kelly, Jr. Division 44PO010007

September 2023 Edition Volume 13 Issue 9

2023

Division President's Message

Dennis Mulligan



Worthy Brothers

Welcome back from our long and very hot summer break. I hope you and your families had a safe and rested vacation. Please join us this Wednesday, September 13 at 7pm at St Joseph's Bon Air for our regular meeting to finish up our business for the year and prepare for the upcoming fiscal year. The fall season is a critical time of year for us for our division. I appreciate your input at our meetings. I like to have discussions at this meeting to nominate a slate of officers for our

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Upcoming Events

Ruan O'Donnell to speak in Richmond, Fredericksburg Sept. 17, 18

AUEAGLE SEPTEMBER 7, 2023



RUAN O'DONNELL is head of the History Department at the University of Limerick & the official histori-

an of the Robert Emmet Association. He has written for The Irish Times and several historical publications.

The AOH/LAOH & Irish Cultural Society of Virginia have arranged to have him give a presentation at Park Lane Tavern (Short Pump Mall) in Richmond on September 17 at 3:00 pm.

He we also be presenting at the Central Library Auditorium in Fredericksburg on September 18 in the evening. Exact time TBA.

Dr. Ruan O'Donnell is currently Senior Lecturer in History, University of Limerick. Previously he was Visiting Chair of Irish Studies at Notre Dame University and a Senior Fullbright Scholar at the University of Montana. He serves as the historian for the Robert Emmet Association. He has authored or co-

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Business Meetings

Regular Monthly Business Meetings are held at 7 PM on the 2nd Thursday of the month. No meetings are held during July and August.

Meetings are held at:
St. Joseph's Church
828 Buford Road
Richmond, VA 23235

2023 Business Meeting Schedule:

Our next regular Division Meeting is September 13, 2023

Socials at O'Toole's Restaurant & Pub, 13919 Midlothian Turnpike, Midlothian, VA 23114 on the fourth Thursday of each month starting at 5PM.

Ancient Order of Hibernians
PO Box 539
West Caldwell, NJ 07007



**A LETTER TO
IRISH AMERICA**

upcoming fiscal year. We are also looking for members who may be interested in holding an officer position in our Division. Please get in touch with me by phone or email if you are interested in taking an officer position or if you know someone who may be interested. Other items up for discussion in coming months are the annual budget, the Richmond Highland Games on Nov. 4th and 5th, our Christmas Dinner, and our yearly donation at Christmas time.

look forward to seeing you at our Meeting

Dennis Mulligan,
 President
 Msgr. Charles A. Kelly Division
 Ancient Order of Hibernians
 No. 44P001
 mulligan.dennis@yahoo.com

Sláinte mhaith agat!

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Ruran O'Donnell Presentation

authored numerous books and scholarly papers related to the Irish rebellions in 1798 and 1803 and the leading personalities. His theme will be “Robert Emmet: Ireland and America”; however, he can address may aspects of Irish history.

Richmond Highland Games

The Games are Scheduled for November 4th & 5th at Dorey Park in Henrico County. Please click on the link below for additional information.

[Festival | Richmond Highland Games | Richmond](#)



Bog Field, County Donegal, Ireland

A Bit of Irish History

Murder of an Irish Priest

The Ku Klux Klan terrorized communities in the southern states of America for well over a century. With its first wave established in response to the Union victory in the American Civil War which brought about the nationwide end of slavery, the organization's initial aim was to overthrow the federal government in the south through voter intimidation and violence against Black Americans and their allies.

Black people remained its primary target for the second and third waves, but the group also set its sights on almost anyone who wasn't, or who associated with those who weren't, white, straight, Protestant and American-born.

Just a few years into the Klan's second era, which began in 1915, the killing of an Irish Catholic priest by a Klansman highlighted that whiteness wasn't enough to protect a person from the wrath of white supremacists. Although he was the same race as those who made up the KKK, Fr James Coyle's card was marked for a number of reasons.

Fr. Coyle was born in Co Roscommon. He was ordained in Rome at the age of 23 and later set sail to the US with another priest in 1896.



He was an Irish immigrant, he was Catholic, he advocated for immigrants and poor people of all races in letters to local newspapers, and he married a white Methodist woman, who also happened to be the daughter of his killer, to a Catholic Puerto Rican man in 1921 Alabama.

He initially worked for the Catholic Church in Mobile, Alabama under Bishop Edward Patrick Allen. In 1904, the bishop appointed him to succeed the late priest at St Paul's Church, now the Cathedral of St Paul, in the Alabama city of Birmingham.

He would remain there for 17 years until he was killed by a fellow clergyman, though this clergyman was of a different Christian cloth. By the year of his death, Birmingham was not only a heavily segregated city, but a hotbed of anti-Catholic sentiment with a significant KKK presence.

A Local Methodist minister Edwin Stephenson worked next to



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the St Paul rectory at Jefferson County Courthouse, where he assisted couples in obtaining marriage licenses and performed wedding ceremonies. A former barber, he was also a member of the KKK who hated Catholics. Stephenson's daughter Ruth fell in love with a Puerto Rican man named Pedro Gussman. The couple reportedly met when Gussman was working at Stephenson's home, and were married five years later by Fr Coyle in a secret ceremony on August 11, 1921.

Months prior, Ruth told her father she had converted to Catholicism. When she was nowhere to be found on the day of her wedding, Stephenson tried to obtain a warrant to search St Paul's rectory for his daughter.

He could not find a judge and so returned home to get his pistol and storm the property himself. Fr Coyle was on the porch reciting prayers when Stephenson approached and fatally shot him three times in front of witnesses.

Stephenson claimed that when he arrived at the rectory and asked where Ruth was, Fr Coyle told him about the marriage, then hit him and seemed to reach for a pistol. It was at that point that Stephenson fired his own pistol, he said, though there is no evidence to suggest Fr Coyle actually had a gun.

Stephenson was charged with the priest's murder and the case went to trial. The KKK paid for his team of five defense lawyers, four of whom were Klansmen, led by future US Senator and Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black.

He was ultimately acquitted in what was considered a major miscarriage of justice. The judge assigned to the case, William E Fort, was a Klansman, as was Birmingham police chief and star witness to the defense Thomas Shirley, as well as most of the members of the jury, who acquitted Stephenson by reason of temporary insanity.

The defense's arguments also appealed to the racist and anti-Catholic sentiments of the time. They used the prosecution witnesses' Catholicism as a means to discredit their testimonies, and asserted

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In Memorium

Brother Mike Dougherty passed away suddenly on August 6, 2022.

Prayer List

Brother Dan Harrington: Being treated monthly for Lukemia., CKD, etc.

Brother Chuck Mulhern: in nursing home and is bed ridden

In Memorium

Deceased Brothers and Spouses

Joyce, Spouse of Brother Daniel Harrington

Irene, Spouse of Brother Mike McGee

Brother James Calpin

Glenda, Spouse of Brother Frank King

Brother William Murphy

Brother George and Spouse Kathleen Rodenberg

Brother Micheal Dougherty

Brother Robert Cavanaugh



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2023 Division Officers

President-Dennis Mulligan
mullighan.dennis@yahoo.com

Vice President- (Vacant)

Treasurer-John Frampton
firemedic45@comcast.net

Recording Secretary-Mike Norton
mnortonstn@aol.com

Financial Secretary-Larry Kelly
jlkelly1@verizon.net

Standing/Compassion Comm.-Sonny Dorish
fmdorish@yahoo.com

Marshal-Bob Cavanaugh
bobcavanaughnmb@gmail.com

Sentinel-Jim Dunn

Webmaster-Dan Harrington
joydan1073@verizon.net

Contact us at:

Ancient Order of Hibernians
 Msgr. Charles A. Kelly, Jr. Division
 2480 Batterson Road
 Powhatan, VA 23139

Email:

tizhmslf@gmail.com

Website:

www.aohkelly.org

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that Stephenson was justified in his anger at his daughter's marriage as he believed Gussman to be Black rather than Hispanic.

Stephenson faced consequences from neither the State nor the Methodist Church. He returned to his position as "the marrying person" at the courthouse and was given a seat of honor at Alabama Klan rallies.



While Fr. Coyle and the community he served never got justice for his killing, his legacy is still remembered to this day. The Cathedral of St Paul held a commemorative mass on the centenary of his death

in 2021.

Our Division History

The Msgr. Charles Kelly, Jr. Division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians was formed in December, 2009 and conducted it's first meeting on January 21, 2010 at St. John Neumann Church, Powhatan, Virginia. The next few meetings were taken up with election of officers and the many procedural items needed to get our group started.

Since that time we continue to grow, adding new members and supporting and donating to Catholic schools and Churches in the area, in line with our commitment to Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity.