

SILK STOCKINGS

From an early age I knew of the Ladies of Mary as we were then known.

My home was not far from Castlecor. Indeed we had to pass the front gate each time we went to Ballymahon, our nearest town.

I first heard that Sisters had bought Castlecor when I was about ten years of age. While attending the funeral of a young mother, whose children were my playmates, I overheard men talking in Shrule graveyard. They said that “Bing Crosby had bought Castlecor for American nuns”. The rumour machine was active then too!

Roll on ten or more years. I was in the Novitiate. Mary Francis, who was our novice mistress, was telling us some of the history of the Irish Foundation, as we sat in St. Brigid’s looking out at the rolling countryside and the flowing Inny River.

The Sisters in California had a strong desire to open an Irish Foundation. This seemed an impossible task, but their faith in Our Lady’s intercession was strong. (In her memoirs Sister Mary Kevin emphasises this)

Sister Mary Francis was a delegate to the General Chapter in Belgium that year. Since she was coming to Europe, through Ireland, a friend asked her to take a small package to mail when she got to Ireland. The package contained a pair of nylon stockings for her Irish friend, Agnes Donlon. In the letter which accompanied the stockings, the lady said that these Sisters were looking for a suitable property in Ireland.....Providence, chance, coincidence, call it what you will! Castlecor was on the market and Agnes Donlon’s niece was married to the owner’s son. She wrote back to her friend with the details and the rest is history.

Knowing the Sisters’ devotion to Our Lady and the part her intercession played in bringing this project to birth, Miss Donlon commissioned an outdoor statue of Our Lady to be moulded in a factory in Waterford. It is according to the design of Murillo of Our Lady’s Assumption. It was made in cast iron and is perfect to this day

This statue held pride of place on the front lawn in Castlecor until the property was sold. Now it is here in the garden in Tallaght.

I have fond memories of gathering at the statue many times, as we sang our favourite hymns and as we ended our May Processions.

Putting a crown of fresh flowers on Our Lady’s statue was considered a special privilege... to the strains of “Bring flowers of the fairest...”

Margaret Mary Fox